on reference: for the demonstrative to refer to an object there must also be a
causal-perceptual link between that object and the use of the demonstrative.
So we have two separate conditions on successful reference, descriptive and
causal, which must both be met for the demonstrative to refer. On Evans’s
account, this is how we actually use perceptual demonstratives.9

The problem with this is that it assimilates demonstratives to descriptive
names, in the following sense: it implies that if you make a mistake about the
location of the object, you are not in a position to refer to the object at all. So
you cannot refer demonstratively to an object which you see through a prism
that you do not know is there. This view has no plausibility at all. It implies
that you cannot even think demonstratively about an object you can see per-
fectly well, because you are subject to some illusion about its location.

The background problem is Evans’s explanation of why location mat-
ters for visual demonstratives, and in particular his conception of the “fun-
damental level of thought.” It seems evident that we cannot sustain this
conception of a level of thought, more fundamental than the level of per-
ceptual demonstratives, at which predicates of physical things are first
introduced and explained. In the case of physical objects, we have to
acknowledge that predicates such as “flashing” must be first introduced and
explained at the level of perceptual demonstratives, in the context of judg-
ments such as “that light is flashing.” The idea that observational predicates
have to be first introduced in the context of some other level of thought than
demonstrative thought, so that the importance of location can be explained
in terms of its link to that level, cannot be sustained. The reason why location
matters for the meaning of a visual demonstrative has to be explained rather in terms of the special role of location in attention and binding.9

NOTES

1. Sydney Shoemaker, “Self-Reference and Self-Awareness,” in his Identity, Cause, and
2. For a review of the literature, see Anne Treisman, “The Binding Problem,” Current
4. Ibid., 106.
5. Ibid., 107.
6. Ibid., 111–12.
7. Ibid., 139.
8. Ibid., 132–35.
9. An earlier version of this essay was presented to the Cornell symposium on Sydney
Shoemaker’s work, and I am grateful to participants for discussion. Thanks also to
Christopher Peacocke, Jim Pryor, and Timothy Williamson. Much of the background
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On Self-Blindness and Inner Sense

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1

Some philosophers and psychologists have claimed that the awareness a
subject has of facts about his own conscious states of mind—e.g., my cur-
rent awareness that I hope to get to bed soon—should be understood as very
much like visual or auditory awareness. According to these writers, when I
speak about my own beliefs, desires, fears, or emotions, I am typically
reporting on facts that I have learned via a perceptual (or quasi-perceptual)
mechanism—a kind of inner sense.2 In a number of papers, Sydney
Shoemaker develops an ingenious argument that might be thought to under-
mine many or all such accounts of inner awareness. In broad outline, the
argument goes as follows: If our awareness of facts concerning our own
states of mind were mediated by an inner sense, it would be possible for this
mechanism, like any perceptual mechanism, to break down, e.g., as a result
of trauma or disease. The victim of such a breakdown, like a person who
has lost her sight or her hearing, would retain her rationality and her con-
cept-mastery. But she would be “self-blind,” i.e., she would lack the sort of
first-personal access to her own states of mind that the rest of us enjoy. This
sort of perceptual deficit is, however, impossible—not just neurologically,
but conceptually; we cannot so much as imagine it. When we attempt to
imagine a fully rational agent whose inner sense has failed, we wind up
envisioning someone with no deficit at all. To posit an inner sense, there-
fore, is to posit a mechanism that accomplishes nothing, and our ordinary acquaintance with our own states of mind should not be understood as depending on any such mechanism.

I’ll be drawing on material from two of the papers in which Shoemaker presents an argument along these lines: “On Knowing One’s Own Mind” (hereafter referred to as “OKOOM”) and “Self-Knowledge and Inner Sense,” Lecture II: The Broad Perceptual Model” (hereafter referred to as “SKIS II”). My own view is that this sort of argument does not, after all, represent a viable strategy for bringing out what is wrong with the inner-sense idea (i.e., the idea that our ordinary acquaintance with our own mental states and events should be explained by appeal to an inner sense). Although I agree that we ought to reject this idea, I’ll argue that Shoemaker does not offer us an adequate justification for doing so. In the concluding section, I’ll suggest what I think is a more satisfactory strategy for arguing against the inner-sense idea.

II

Let’s begin by considering the self-blindness argument as it makes its first appearance in OKOOM. Here’s the set-up:

What I wish to maintain is the impossibility of something that I shall call “self-blindness.” A self-blind creature would be one which has the conception of various mental states, and can entertain the thought that it has this or that belief, desire, intention, etc., but which is unable to become aware of the truth of such a thought except in a third-person way. In other words, a self-blind creature could frame and understand assertions to itself of various mental states, but would be incapable of knowing by self-acquaintance whether such self-ascriptions were true. (OKOOM, 189)

Shoemaker goes on to say that this “deficiency is supposed to be perceptual, or quasi-perceptual, rather than cognitive or conceptual” (OKOOM, 194). Self-blindness would entail no deficit in normal human intelligence, rationality, or conceptual capacity.

What is Shoemaker’s reason for thinking that self-blindness, so defined, is impossible? He asks us to try imagining a man, George, who is self-blind. What would such a man be like? How would his self-blindness manifest itself in his behavior? We might expect George to make Moore-paradoxical utterances, to say things like “It’s raining outside, but I don’t believe it.” After all, a self-blind man would make claims about his own beliefs based on the same evidence that others rely on to make claims about their beliefs. Quoting Shoemaker, “It seems entirely possible that the total evidence avail-

able to a man at a given time should support the proposition that it is raining, while the total ‘third-person’ evidence available to him should support the proposition that he does not believe that it is raining” (OKOOM, 193). Thus, it seems that our George would, at least occasionally, display his deficit by producing very odd-sounding utterances.

But would he really? Shoemaker reminds us that George’s deficit is supposed to be one of perception, not of rationality or conceptual capacity: George should be “as conceptually sophisticated as any of us” (OKOOM, 194). Although people disagree about just what is wrong with Moore-paradoxical utterances, it seems pretty clear that such utterances are somehow self-defeating, and this, says Shoemaker, is something that George should be able to recognize. Shoemaker goes on, “Since we can assume him [George] to be a rational man, we can assume that this recognition would lead him to avoid Moore-paradoxical utterances” (OKOOM, 194). The paper’s most important paragraph follows:

But it would seem offhand that if George’s conceptual grasp could have the effect of leading him to avoid Moore-paradoxical utterances, it should also have certain related effects. If asked “Do you believe that P?” he ought to answer “yes” just in case he would answer “yes” to the question “Is it true that P?” Similarly, he will recognize that the meaning of “believe” makes it appropriate for the words “I believe” to function as a kind of assertion sign, but will be capable of appreciating the Grecian considerations that lead to its omission except when there are special reasons for including it (e.g., when the assertion is guarded or hesitant); so it is to be expected that he will prefac his assertions with “I believe” in just the circumstances in which this is pragmatically appropriate. But now George is beginning to look just like a normal person. It would appear that there would be nothing in his behavior, verbal or otherwise, that would give away the fact that he lacks self-acquaintance. And how can we be sure . . . that self-blindness is not the normal condition of mankind? But rather than conclude that self-acquaintance provides no benefits that would not be available without it, and that it is questionable whether we have it, it seems better to take the considerations just mentioned as a reductio ad absurdum of the view that self-blindness is a possibility. (OKOOM, 194–95)

This argument might been broken down into steps as follows:

1. Prima facie, it seems easy to imagine the behavior of a self-blind man: he would, e.g., be inclined to make Moore-paradoxical utterances. When we really try to imagine such a person, however, we find that his rationality would prevent him from making such utterances. Moreover, he would use the words “I believe” as a kind of assertion sign, just as we do.
Thus, when we try to imagine a self-blind man, we find ourselves imagining someone who behaves just as we do (who looks "just like a normal person"), someone without any apparent deficit.

Rather than posit a faculty of inner sense that "provides no benefits that would be available without it," we should conclude that self-blindness is impossible.

For now, let's bracket step (3) of the argument and notice that there is an obvious gap between steps (1) and (2). It's one thing for George to avoid Moore-paradoxical utterances; it's quite another thing for him to behave just as a normal person would. If, in order to avoid Moore-paradoxical utterances, George needs to think a lot about pragmatics—reminding himself (perhaps aloud) that such utterances are self-defeating and so must be avoided—then he is not a normal person and won't appear to be one. If George develops the unthinking habit of using "P" and "I believe that P" more or less interchangeably (preferring the latter when there are good reasons to make a guarded assertion), but, even so, seems often to be surprised at the opinions that he hears himself expressing thereby, again he will appear abnormal. Shoemaker, of course, realizes that this battle cannot be won in a single paragraph; he devotes quite a number of pages over the course of several papers to the task of entitling himself to step (2) of the argument as I have outlined it. In what immediately follows, I'm going to focus on just one problem that he encounters along the way.

Here's the problem: Is there a way to show the impossibility of someone's being self-blind with respect to desires? Obviously, if George is to be indistinguishable from a person who enjoys ordinary self-acquaintance, it won't suffice for him to use "I believe" appropriately. He'll also need to be able to say what he wants and fears, when he's angry or afraid, etc., more or less as we do. From what we've seen so far, Shoemaker's argument shows, at most, that any fully rational human being who has the concept of belief will be able to speak about his own beliefs as a normal person does and, thus, that we cannot imagine what might be called belief self-blindness. If ordinary self-acquaintance extended only to beliefs, then perhaps this argument would suffice to overturn the idea that self-awareness is perceptual. But ordinary self-acquaintance extends beyond beliefs; we are able to speak about our own desires, fears, anger, joy, and much else without needing to judge on the basis of our own behavior. An inner-sense theorist might simply grant that belief is a special case—that the words "I believe" function as a kind of assertion sign and so don't express any real self-knowledge—while retaining the view that we generally know our other attitudes and emotions (perhaps even our past beliefs) thanks to an inner sense. Shoemaker doesn't say very much about the possibility of a rational agent who is self-blind to his own fear or anger or joy, but he does defend the claim that we cannot imagine (what might be called) desire self-blindness.

In the next section, I shall discuss Shoemaker's most recent defense of this claim—that found in SKIS II.

III

As in the earlier OKOOM, in SKIS II, Shoemaker aims to show that something called "self-blindness" is impossible or unimaginable:

What I shall be arguing ... is that if someone is equal in intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity to a normal person, she will, in consequence of that, behave in ways that provide the best possible evidence that she is aware of her own beliefs and desires to the same extent that a normal person would be, and so is not self-blind. (282)

Before discussing desire self-blindness, Shoemaker argues against the possibility of belief self-blindness, presenting a version of the argument from OKOOM that I quoted in section II. During the course of this discussion, he points out that a rational agent with normal conceptual capacities "will answer affirmatively to the question 'Do you believe that P?'; if and only if she will answer affirmatively to the question 'Is it true that P?'" (SKIS II, 282). Shortly thereafter, Shoemaker writes:

Similar remarks apply to desire. The rational agent who wants X and has normal mastery of language will, ceteris paribus, respond affirmatively to the question "Shall I give you X?" And given her mastery of the concept of desire, she will respond affirmatively to the question "Do you want X?" if she will respond affirmatively to the question "Shall I give you X?" So she will, unless she has devious motives, give correct answers to questions about what she wants. (SKIS II, 283)

According to Shoemaker, we cannot really imagine a fully rational agent who has acquired all the relevant concepts yet seems self-blind to desires—for a rational agent with the relevant concepts would learn to answer the question "Do you want X?" as she answers the question "Shall I give you X?" As a result, she'd give correct answers when asked about her desires. Moreover, she'd be able to volunteer information about her desires even when no question had been asked of her:

Since she knows, given her mastery of the relevant concepts, that it is true to say "I want X" just in case it is true to answer affirmatively to "Do you want X?", and that these are similar in their effects on others, whatever motivates her to answer affirmatively to the question of whether she has a certain want can
Now, presumably, being rational, George would not answer in this way (except perhaps as a joke); he would realize that his brother wasn’t offering to give him children. More generally, he would understand that treating questions of the form “Do you want X?” as equivalent to “Shall I give you X?” is at best a defeasible strategy for dealing with them. But, then, how would George address his brother’s question?

Here, I want to reply: “Being self-blind to his desires, George would try to say whether he wanted children in the same way that he might say whether someone else wanted children—on the basis of behavior.” Is there something wrong with this reply? Have I slipped into imagining a George who is not fully rational? Shoemaker’s Shall-I-give-you argument does not show that I have. Indeed, Shoemaker’s argument doesn’t rule out the possibility that a rational George would respond to his brother’s question as follows: “Other people—you, for example—seem able to answer the sort of question you just asked me without considering the evidence of your own behavior. I don’t mean a question about children, I mean any question concerning whether you want a particular thing, when no one around is in a position to give it to you. Or when someone is in a position to give it to you, but you don’t want to take it from him. I’m unable to do this. It’s as if I lack the sort of access that other people have to their own desires.” The Shall-I-give-you argument fails to show that “if someone is equal in intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity to a normal person, she will, in consequence of that, behave in ways that provide the best possible evidence that she is aware of her own... desires to the same extent that a normal person would be” (SKIS II, 282).

The Shall-I-give-you argument is supplemented in SKIS II by the following consideration. In a fully rational agent, wanting that P involves:

... conforming one’s practical reasoning to the injunction “In the absence of reasons for not doing this, so act as to promote the likelihood of P’s being the case.” And the rational agent will know that in certain circumstances, namely when one is in the company of people who are cooperative and obliging, or willing to trade favors, presenting evidence that one wants something to be the case will increase the likelihood of its becoming the case. So when she is in such circumstances, the rational agent who wants it to be the case that P will be disposed to present evidence that she wants this, presumably including saying things like “I want it to be the case that P.” (SKIS II, 284)

An inner-sense theorist might simply grant Shoemaker this point. Recall that Shoemaker’s strategy is to show that when we try to imagine a fully rational human being whose inner sense has failed, we wind up imagining someone whose behavior is indistinguishable from that of a normal person—someone without any real deficit. Thus to posit an inner sense is to posit a
mechanism that accomplishes nothing. But now: from the fact that George sometimes says, "I want it to be the case that P," when so saying will increase the likelihood of P's becoming the case, it simply does not follow that his behavior vis-à-vis his own desires is indistinguishable from that of a normal person. A normal person is able to say what he wants when so saying doesn't make it the slightest bit more likely that his desire will be realized. (Think about confessing a sinful desire to a priest, or writing in a diary.) Indeed, honesty sometimes demands that we avow desires even though we know that the avowal of them makes them less likely to be realized. Our George still seems to have a real deficit.

After presenting the Shal-I-give-you-argument (along with its analog for belief), Shoemaker writes:

From an evolutionary perspective it would certainly be bizarre to suppose that, having endowed creatures with everything necessary to give them a certain very useful behavioral repertoire—namely that of creatures with normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity, plus the ability to acquire first order beliefs about the environment from sense-perception—Mother Nature went to the trouble of installing in them an additional mechanism, a faculty of Inner Sense, whose impact on behavior is completely redundant, since its behavioral effects are ones that would occur anyhow as the result of initial endowment. (SKIS II, 285)

But, as we’ve seen, Shoemaker fails to show that a faculty of inner sense could make no behavioral difference to the life of a creature with normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity.9

IV

What conclusion ought we to draw at this point? It would be premature to conclude that Shoemaker’s self-blindness argument sheds no real light on normal human self-acquaintance. Consider the following response to my complaints about the argument: “Shoemaker claims that when we try to imagine a fully rational human being whose inner sense has failed, we wind up imagining someone whose behavior is just like that of a normal person. In section III, you argued that he hasn’t quite entitled himself to this claim. Even if you’re right, Shoemaker has shown that when we try to imagine a rational human being whose inner sense has failed, we find ourselves imagining someone who exhibits quite a bit of the behavior that we associate with normal self-acquaintance. (Our imagined George is able to say what he wants and believes across a broad range of situations without needing to observe his own behavior.) This means that quite a bit of the behavior that we think of as exhibiting self-acquaintance requires no inner sense. The point that you made in section III comes to this: Shoemaker would need to do more work in order to secure a conclusion that he’d like, viz., that to posit an inner sense is to posit a mechanism that we have absolutely no use for. Still, he has entitled himself to a somewhat weaker, but still quite significant, conclusion—that to posit an inner sense is to posit a mechanism that we don’t have much use for. If Shoemaker hasn’t yet finished off the inner sense idea, he has taken a big bite out of it.” In this section, I want to mention two reasons why we might be dubious about this assessment of the extent to which Shoemaker has succeeded in inflicting real damage on the inner-sense idea.

1. I’ve been focussing on desire. But desire does not present the most difficult case for Shoemaker’s self-blindness argument. The really hard cases, it seems to me, involve the emotions. It does seem possible to imagine a rational agent who is so out of touch with his own anger, jealousy, anxiety, and revulsion that it would be correct to say that in him, these states of mind are always unconscious. I don’t see how Shoemaker could extend the sort of considerations discussed above so as to produce an argument for the claim that we can’t imagine a rational agent who lacks normal first-person acquaintance with his own anger, jealousy, anxiety, and revulsion. A philosopher or psychologist might grant that much or all of the awareness that we manifest when we say, “I want . . .” requires no inner sense, yet still insist that a great deal of what we speak about with first-person authority is known to us via such a mechanism.

2. Shoemaker’s overall argumentative strategy is to undermine the idea of inner sense by demonstrating that self-blindness is impossible or unimaginable. Until now, I’ve been arguing that Shoemaker fails to show that self-blindness really is impossible or unimaginable. But what if he could show this? Would it follow that our ordinary acquaintance with our own inner states should not be understood to be a kind of perceptual awareness?

Here we should look a bit more closely at what the self-blindness argument is directed against. In SKIS II, Shoemaker says that he means to argue against any view of self-acquaintance according to which our ordinary acquaintance with our own states of mind

... should be construed in terms of what [in the lecture preceding SKIS II] I called the broad perceptual model. The core of the stereotype of perception underlying that model consisted of two conditions, one of them (call it the causal condition) saying that our beliefs about our mental states are caused by those mental states, via a reliable belief-producing mechanism, thereby qualifying as knowledge of those states and events, and the other (call it the independence condition) saying that the existence of these states and events is independent of their being
known in this way, and even of there existing the mechanisms that make such knowledge possible. (SKIS II, 271)\textsuperscript{10}

If I’m reading him correctly, Shoemaker believes that anyone who understands ordinary self-acquaintance to be a kind of *perceptual* awareness (so, anyone who deserves to be called an inner-sense theorist) should be committed to thinking that it conforms—at least by and large\textsuperscript{11}—to these two conditions.

Shoemaker says that he takes it to be a consequence of the independence condition that “for each kind of mental fact to which we have introspective access, it is at least logically possible that there should be creatures in which such facts obtain ... but who are self-blind with respect to them” (SKIS II, 273). He believes, therefore, that if he can show that self-blindness is not logically possible, he will have shown that the independence condition should be rejected. Moreover, on the assumption that any inner-sense theorist should be committed to both conditions, Shoemaker will have demonstrated that ordinary self-acquaintance should not be explained by appeal to an inner sense.

Of course, this argumentative strategy depends on Shoemaker’s being right in thinking that the possibility of (various kinds of) self-blindness is a consequence of the independence condition. Is he right about this? It might appear obvious that he is. The independence condition says, in effect, that our first-order mental states could exist even if we did not have access to them by way of inner sense. And isn’t this tantamount to saying that self-blindness is possible?

Well, no. Recall that as Shoemaker has defined “self-blindness,” the deficit to which this expression refers “is supposed to be like ordinary blindness in not entailing any cognitive deficiency” (SKIS II, 281). In order for a man to count as self-blind to his own, e.g., desires, it is not enough that he have desires none of which he knows about via inner sense. In addition, he must not be cognitively deficient—his intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity should not be subnormal—due to the fact that he lacks this sort of access to his desires. An inner-sense theorist might hold that the latter condition on someone’s counting as self-blind cannot be met even though she accepts both the causal condition and the independence condition. Imagine an inner-sense theorist who says: “What Shoemaker calls ‘self-blindness’ is impossible because in order to enjoy completely normal rationality and conceptual capacity, one needs to be inwardly acquainted with one’s own mental states via the inner sense. To say this is not to deny the possibility that someone’s inner sense might break down and fail to function. But the victim of such a breakdown would not count as self-blind because he would not enjoy fully normal rationality.” This inner-sense theorist might go on to say: “Shoemaker is not entitled to assume that the possibility of self-blindness follows from the independence condition. We should accept that self-acquaintance conforms, by and large, to the independence condition; we should accept that a person’s first-order desires—e.g., my current desires for dinner and sleep—do not typically depend for their existence on my being inwardly acquainted with them. Admitting this is consistent with holding that were it not for the acquaintance with my own desires that inner sense affords me, I would not be able to engage in certain kinds of practical reasoning and so would not exhibit completely normal rationality. What Shoemaker calls ‘self-blindness’ is not possible even though self-acquaintance conforms to the independence condition.”

Notice that this inner-sense theorist agrees with Shoemaker in thinking that anyone who exhibits completely normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity should also exhibit normal acquaintance with his own states of mind. She maintains, nonetheless, that this self-acquaintance comes by way of an inner sense. On her view, inner sense is part of what enables us to have normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity.

The inner-sense theorist I’ve asked you to imagine represents a hole in Shoemaker’s overall argumentative strategy. Shoemaker would justify his rejection of the independence condition by arguing against the possibility of self-blindness. But in order for such a strategy to work, it would have to be shown that anyone who thinks our ordinary self-acquaintance conforms, by and large, to the independence condition should also think that self-blindness is possible.

A defender of Shoemaker might object that the inner-sense theorist I’ve asked you to imagine is someone who holds (or wants to hold) an incoherent combination of views. Such a complaint might be stated as follows: “In order to claim that self-acquaintance comes by way of inner sense, one must recognize a distinction between perception and other mental operations (e.g., practical reasoning); otherwise, one gives up the very idea of perception—and so of inner sense. Let’s grant that if a normal subject were somehow stripped of self-acquaintance, he would not continue to reason normally about what was in his own best interest. An inner-sense theorist should view such a subject as exhibiting a perceptual deficit, not a deficit of practical (or any other kind of) rationality. An inner-sense theorist ought to say that such a subject would enjoy normal, unimpaired rationality while lacking the sensory information needed in order to determine what was in his own best interest. But this is not what the (so-called) inner-sense theorist you’ve asked us to imagine would say. On her view, a subject who lacked self-acquaintance via inner perception would be, thereby, deficient in rationality. To say this is just to give up the distinction between perception and other mental operations, and so to give up the idea of inner sense.”\textsuperscript{12}
I don’t see that we should be persuaded by this line of thought. Some philosophers (e.g., John McDowell) think that in order for a creature to so much as have contentful mental states, it must be able—at least sometimes—to take in how things are via impressions made by the world upon its senses. According to such a view, a human being who was never able to perceive anything would have no thoughts at all. To hold such a view is not to give up on the very idea of perception, nor is it to commit oneself to the absurd claim that a human being who was incapable of having a thought might yet enjoy normal rationality. If we assert that without some perceptual capacity (or set of capacities), a subject would be rationally impaired, we do not, thereby, concede that the capacity in question isn’t really perceptual after all. We needn’t assume that perception provides mere input to a self-standing faculty (or faculties) of rationality.

I won’t pursue this debate further here. Perhaps Shoemaker could somehow show that anyone who deserves to be called an inner-sense theorist ought to be committed to the possibility of self-blindness. But I don’t see that he has shown this, and until he does, there is room to worry that even if he were able prove the impossibility or unimaginability of self-blindness, he would not be able to undermine the view that our ordinary acquaintance with our own mental states should be understood as a kind of perceptual awareness.

V

Before concluding, I want to recommend an alternative strategy for arguing against the idea that our ordinary acquaintance with our own states of mind may be understood by positing an inner sense. I pursue this strategy elsewhere, in what follows, my aim is not to present a complete argument, but only to indicate the direction in which an argument against the inner-sense idea might move.

Let’s begin by considering the case of someone who seems to suffer from what we might think of as a lapse in ordinary self-acquaintance. Take my friend Jane for example. Again and again, Jane’s behavior makes it apparent that she is angry at her father—as, indeed, she has ample reason to be. (He’s been a terrible father.) Still, when Jane is asked about her relationship with her father, she denies that she’s angry at him. Of course, it’s possible that Jane is lying, but I don’t think she is. No, it seems to me that, with regard to her anger at her father, Jane suffers from a kind of local failure of ordinary self-acquaintance. Of course, we have a word for this sort of thing. We say that Jane’s anger is unconscious.

If we wish to understand our ordinary acquaintance with our own states of mind, we need to understand what Jane lacks vis-à-vis her anger at her father. We need, in other words, an account of what it is that distinguishes a conscious mental state from an unconscious one. The inner-sense idea may be seen as providing such an account—one that might be stated as follows: What makes a subject’s mental state conscious rather than unconscious is her perceiving that she is in it via an inner sense.

Now, we can begin to see what’s wrong with this claim by considering the following question: What is it that an inner sense is supposed to enable a creature to do? The answer, I take it, is that it should enable a creature to acquire knowledge concerning its own states of mind—to learn, e.g., whether it is angry and at whom. But—and this is the crucial point—one might know that she is, e.g., angry at her father even though she is not consciously angry at him. Imagine that Jane’s therapist, whom Jane has good reason to trust, convinces her that she is unconsciously angry at her father. Jane might, thereby, come to know that she harbors unconscious anger toward her father. A person might even acquire perceptual knowledge of her own mental state without the state’s becoming conscious. Imagine someone who realizes that she is afraid when, upon glancing in a mirror, she sees the fear in her own face. If she takes herself to be afraid entirely on the basis of what she sees, then her fear is not conscious.

The inner-sense theorist proceeds as if, in order for ordinary self-acquaintance to be made intelligible, what’s needed is an explanation of a subject’s coming to know something. But we should distinguish between someone’s knowing her own state of mind, or knowing it perceptually, and her being consciously in it. If we wish to understand our ordinary acquaintance with our own states of mind, what’s needed is an explanation of the latter. Such an explanation is not provided merely by positing an inner sense.

Shoemaker’s strategy for arguing against the inner-sense idea is to try to show that when we attempt to imagine a rational agent whose inner sense has failed, we find ourselves envisioning someone who suffers from no real deficit. I think we’d do better to proceed in the opposite direction: Begin by imagining someone who does suffer from what might be thought of as a lapse in ordinary self-acquaintance. Then, think about whether what such a person lacks can be understood as of a piece with the knowledge that we acquire via the senses.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to James Conant, Paul Franks, Andrew Janiak, Kimberly Keller, Richard Moran, and Jennifer Whiting for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. See, for example, N. Humphrey, *The Inner Eye* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1986). Humphrey writes:

Like other sense organs, the inner eye provides a picture of its information field that is partial and selective, but equally like other sense organs it has been designed by evolution so that its picture is a useful one, a "user-friendly" description which tells the subject just so much as he requires to know in a form that he is predisposed to understand—allowing him... to see his own brain-states as conscious states of mind. (170)


5. For a discussion of past beliefs, see OKOOM, 202–4.


7. In OKOOM, Shoemaker seems concerned that he may not be able to adduce a completely satisfactory argument against the possibility of desire self-blindness in part because "there seems to be no formula for satisfying the request ‘Tell me some of your desires’ that is comparable with the one I suggested for satisfying the request ‘Tell me some of your beliefs,’ namely treating this as equivalent to ‘Tell me some things that are true’." (OKOOM, 205). Later, in SKIS II, no such reservations are expressed.

8. An acknowledgment by Shoemaker of this point is suggested, not only by the remark from OKOOM that I quoted in the last footnote, but by the ceteris paribus clause in the first passage that I quoted above from SKIS II, 283.

9. We should, anyway, be suspicious of the inference that Shoemaker invites us to draw in the quoted passage. To see why, let’s grant, for the moment, his claim that the "impact on behavior" of an inner sense would be "completely redundant" in a creature with normal human intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity. Does it follow that Mother Nature would not have to go the trouble of installing an inner sense in us? This inference would be justified only if we were to assume that a mechanism of inner sense did not precede our sort of intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity in the evolution of our species. But what entitles us to this assumption? Other sensory mechanisms appeared in our distant ancestors long before any creature on Earth exhibited anything like our sort of intelligence. Perhaps it’s true that, were there a creature which enjoyed our degree of intelligence, rationality, and conceptual capacity, yet lacked an inner sense, Mother Nature would not bother to install such a mechanism in it or its descendants. This doesn’t rule out the hypothesis that we characteristically know our own states of mind via an inner sense.


11. Note that external perception does not always conform to the independence condition. Consider the following case: Martina, a ten-year-old girl, regularly plays tennis with her father. He wins easily whenever they bother to keep score. One morning, Martina plays extraordinarily well and beats her father in straight sets. Afterwards, she is happy—not only because she played so well, but because her father saw her do it. Martina’s father saw her extraordinary performance on the court. But surely it would be wrong to say of what he saw that its "existence was independent of [its] being known in this way, and even of there existing the mechanisms that make such knowledge possible." The point is not merely that if Martina had lacked a working visual system, what her father saw could not have occurred. What Martina’s father saw could not have occurred if his visual system had been inoperative. The object of perception was not independent of his perceiving it. (On one fairly natural interpretation of the independence condition, the mere fact that some of what I see before me on my desk—doodles, notes I’ve written by hand, etc.—would not have existed had I been born blind constitutes an exception to it.)

12. Thanks to Richard Moran for suggesting a defense of Shoemaker along these lines.


16. In such a circumstance, we could say, "Jane is conscious of her unconscious anger at her father." The intelligibility of such an utterance brings out the need to distinguish between two kinds of usage to which the word "conscious" (or "unconscious") may be put. On the one hand, we speak of someone’s being conscious of something or conscious that such and such. Here, "conscious" means aware. ("Rachel suddenly became conscious of the policeman walking beside her."). On the other hand, we can say that an attitude or emotion is conscious (or unconscious), where neither "of" nor "that" follows the word "conscious." Someone may be aware of—i.e., conscious of—her own anger, even though her anger is not conscious; she is not consciously angry.

17. The point is that not in order for her fear to become conscious, she would need some further basis. It is, rather, that a person who is consciously afraid is able to think and speak of herself as afraid without needing any epistemic basis. So—changing examples—we can imagine a future neuroscientist who learns that he is afraid when he looks into his own brain and sees that he is. Perhaps he sees the very neural states and events toward which the inner sense is supposedly directed. Still, if his relation to his own fear is such that he requires some such basis in order to speak about it, he is not consciously afraid.

18. An inner-sense theorist might reply to this objection by trying, in one way or another, to specify how it is that the posited inner sense, unlike any of the outer senses, manages to make its objects conscious. In "Detection, Expression, and First-Person Authority," cited in n. 14, I argue at some length that no such reply is likely to prove satisfactory. As my present aim is merely to outline an argument strategy, I’ll leave off the discussion here.