



On the Phenomenon of Inserted Thoughts: A Critique of Shaun Gallagher's Neurophenomenological Account of Thought Insertion

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Abstract

This paper explores the phenomenon of thought insertion, an experience reported by some schizophrenics where it is believed that other persons or forces are inserting thoughts into their minds. This relatively circumscribed symptom of schizophrenia raises difficult questions concerning our sense of agency for our thoughts. How is it possible that persons can think that their thoughts are not their own? Gallagher, drawing on Husserl's early work on time-consciousness, provides a subtle and sophisticated answer to this problem, suggesting that protention may underlie our sense of agency for thinking and that the experience of inserted thoughts may occur in the event of an intermittent failure in this protentional function. More recent Husserl scholarship suggests, however, that this account may face problems on phenomenological grounds. It is argued here that our sense of agency for thinking requires more than protention, and, consequently, that the absence of protention cannot fully explain the loss of agency for thinking characterizing the experience of thought insertion. In order to contextualize this discussion of the phenomenon theoretically and, in the process, to provide an introduction to the difficulties in explaining it, this paper proceeds with a consideration of Frith's early cognitive account of thought insertion and the contribution of Stephens and Graham in this regard. In conclusion, it is argued that, despite the merits of all three accounts presented, they remain unable to account for the phenomenon of inserted thoughts, and that we might more fruitfully understand this experience as being a type of uncontrollable passive or autochthonous thinking.

Introduction

What does it mean when persons claim that other persons or forces are inserting thoughts into their minds? A person may claim, for example, that "Thoughts are put into my mind like 'Kill God'. It's just like my mind is working, but it isn't. They come from this chap Chris. They're his thoughts" (as cited in Frith, 1992, p. 66). In similar vein, a patient explains: "I look out of the window and I think that the garden looks nice and the grass looks cool, but the thoughts of Eamonn Andrews come into my mind. There are no other thoughts there, only his He treats my mind like a screen and flashes his thoughts

onto it like you flash a picture" (Mellor, 1970, p. 17). Jaspers (1997) suggests that claims of this kind are what make schizophrenia¹ "quite incomprehensible, difficult to imagine and not open to empathy" (p. 122). There are clear difficulties in attempting to

¹ Although classically associated with schizophrenia, thought insertion is not a complaint restricted to this disorder. It has been found to be present in, for example, mood disorders, psychotic depression, and the atypical psychoses. It is, however, sufficient for a diagnosis of schizophrenia if present for at least one month in the absence of an organic or mood disorder. See Mullins and Spence, 2003.

understand this type of experiential claim. For example, it must be the case that the person's thought, in which he thinks "this is not my own thought", is his own thought, which thus implies that only some thoughts are or can be experienced as inserted.

In order both to provide some background to the central theme of this work and to elucidate some of the problems surrounding the conceptualisation of this symptom, I will first briefly review two attempts to render intelligible the experience of inserted thoughts and explain how it may manifest. Christopher Frith has argued in his *The Cognitive Neuropsychology of Schizophrenia* (1992) and earlier papers (for example, Frith, 1987) that the experience of thought insertion may be understood in terms of a breakdown in self-monitoring such that "intentions to think" are no longer recognised. Frith has more recently abandoned this view (see, for instance, Frith, 2004), but it is nevertheless reviewed here in that it is often uncritically invoked in contemporary literature and provides for a good introductory understanding of the problems inherent in explaining this type of experience. One of the central problems that emerge from Frith's work on the difference between intended and unintended thoughts is successfully resolved by Stephens and Graham (2000) in their *When Self-Consciousness Breaks: Alien Voices and Inserted Thoughts*. However, their explanation of why a person claims that some of his or her thoughts are inserted runs counter to phenomenological intuition and leaves several key questions unresolved.

The next section is devoted to a detailed explication of Shaun Gallagher's (2005) "alternative neuro-phenomenological account" as developed in his *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, with the same argument drawn upon here detailed by Gallagher in several other publications (including, but not restricted to, Gallagher, 2000, 2004). Here Gallagher offers a sophisticated and robust account, drawing on Husserl's analyses of time-consciousness, in which he suggests that thought insertion may be understood if we supposed that the neurological mechanism underlying protention intermittently failed. Although Gallagher's account successfully resolves a number of problems inherent in the earlier models, and further goes some way towards accounting for perceptual disturbances in schizophrenic experience, it appears unable to account for the experience of inserted thoughts on phenomenological grounds. This argument is detailed in section four, where it is argued that our sense of agency for thinking requires more than protention, and, consequently, that the absence of protention cannot fully explain the loss of agency for thinking associated with the experience of thought insertion. This leads to a different way of

understanding the phenomenon of inserted thoughts, which I suggest, by way of conclusion, is a type of uncontrollable autochthonous or passive thinking, where "autochthonous thinking" is understood as the experience of "rambling thoughts that occur automatically and continuously" (Honda et al., 2004, p. 474), for which we never have any sense of agency.

Two Early Accounts of Thought Insertion

The most widely cited and uncritically invoked explanation of thought insertion is Frith's early cognitive model, which is derived from explanations of motor control and cast in terms of a more general theory designed to account for passivity-phenomena such as delusions of control as well as auditory hallucinations. Frith's explanation relies on the components of "efference copy" and a self-monitoring system or "comparator": hypothetical components which have served successfully in explaining aspects of motor action, such as how we distinguish between self-initiated movements and involuntary or passive movements (for example, a muscle spasm or someone else lifting my arm, respectively). Frith proceeds to extrapolate from such explanations of motor action and suggests that thought insertion results from a defect in a self-monitoring system whereby a thought may arrive as unintended and thus be interpreted as alien. To explain, he supposes that the experience of thought insertion "implies that we have some way of recognizing our own thoughts. It is as if each thought has a label on it saying 'mine'. If this labelling process goes wrong, then the thought would be perceived as alien" (Frith, 1992, p. 80).

With respect to self-initiated actions, Frith refers to the "monitoring of intentions to move" and accordingly assumes that willed-thinking is preceded by an intention to think. He makes this quite clear in an earlier paper where he asserts that the "experience of thoughts being initiated without any *intention* to have them would be described by the patient as thought insertion" (Frith, 1987, p. 639). Thus, for Frith, the problems manifest in schizophrenia with respect to action, such as delusions of alien control², are not simply the result of an impairment in the monitoring of actions, but indicative of an impairment in the monitoring of the intentions to act. In delusions of control, the problem resides, in this account, in a failure to monitor willed-intentions; the patient acts on the basis of willed intentions, but, as a result of a defect in central monitoring, the patient is unaware of

² As the term suggests, this is a symptom of schizophrenia in which the person believes that his or her actions are under the control of another person or force.

her intentions to act. The central defect for Frith is, therefore, a defect in metarepresentation, a second-order reflexive awareness of our intentions. He thus suggests that, if thinking is like a motor process, then thought insertion may be explained in terms of a failure to register the intention to think at the central monitor. In his now (in)famous formulation he states:

Thinking, like all our actions, is normally accompanied by a sense of effort and deliberate choice as we move from one thought to the next. If we found ourselves thinking without any awareness of the sense of effort that reflects central monitoring, we might well experience these thoughts as alien and, thus, as being inserted into our minds. (Frith, 1992, p. 81)

The sense of the willed generation of thoughts is thus, in Frith's model, dependent on the sense of *effort* associated with thinking. It is the effort that reflects central monitoring that characterises intended thoughts, with unintended thoughts being 'stimulus-driven'.

A great deal of critical ink has been spilled to show the implausibility of this account of thought insertion. Various commentators have noted the seeming "regress of intentions" involved in Frith's account, as well as difficulties associated with distinguishing between willed and stimulus-driven intentions, particularly with regard to thoughts, and the fact that his theory does not allow for a clear distinction between thought-influence³ and thought insertion, and consequently cannot explain why the unbidden thought is experienced as arising from an external agency. There are many more difficulties with Frith's account of thought insertion than those listed here, but perhaps the most problematic is that, in our normal phenomenology, thinking is not always accompanied by a sense of *effort*. While it may be evident on occasion, it is certainly not a general characteristic of thinking, which is usually experienced as fluid and effortless. Further criticisms levelled at Frith's account will be outlined in the course of explicating other explanatory models.

Stephens and Graham (2000) argue for a clarification of Frith's notion of intended and unintended thoughts and, in the light of Frith's suggestion that "my sense that I did not intend to think a particular thought is

³ The difference between thought insertion and thought influence resides in the fact that, in the latter case, the person does not deny that the thoughts are his or her own but rather claims that his or her thinking is being influenced by another agency or force.

intimately tied up with my sense that this thought is not mine" (p. 152), offer two ways of understanding how a person might experience a thought as his or her own. On the one hand, we can speak of the sense of *subjectivity* of the thought, where the thought is understood as belonging to one's psychological history. On the other hand, we can speak of the sense of *agency* for the thought, whereby one understands the thought to be something one *thinks*, and as such a result of one's own activity as opposed to something that merely happens to one. Stephens and Graham thus show that it is conceptually intelligible for a person to claim that a thought is both one's own and not one's own, as one is expressing the fact that one can be the *subjective owner* of the thought without being the *agent* of that thought. This renders coherent the possibility of the phenomenon of thought insertion, where it is suggested that the two distinct strands of self-consciousness - subjectivity and agency - unravel. However, this does not explain why the subject attributes the unbidden or passive thoughts to another agency or force. In this regard, Stephens and Graham suggest that our sense of agency is grounded in or founded on our recognition that our actions, thoughts, beliefs and desires *fit in with* our overall conception of ourselves and the kind of person we consider ourselves to be. Following on from this theory of agency, they hypothesise that the patient denies "that she is the agent of a given thought because she finds that she cannot explain its occurrence in terms of her theory or conception of her intentional psychology" (2000, p. 162). If we find ourselves doing, saying or thinking things that do not make sense in terms of our overall conception of ourselves, we have, according to the authors, one of two options: we may (1) revise our theory of our own intentional psychology, and accordingly broaden our conception of ourselves to include what was an unexpected anomalous thought, desire or action, or (2) deny that the episode was the product of our own agency and attribute the thought, action or desire to an external agency or force.

Stephens and Graham (2000) thus propose that all that is necessary is that the active thoughts are "inexplicable" when seen in terms of one's own intentional psychology: "what our account of the sense of mental agency presupposes is that the subject will not accept as agentically her own thoughts whose occurrence she finds inexplicable by reference to her conception or self-referential description of her intentional states" (p. 170). However, a further step is still required to explain why the subject claims that such inexplicable thoughts come from an external agency or force; the explanation thus far still fails to explain why the person does not simply dismiss such thoughts as wanderings of the mind, that is, as passive

thinking. Why, we might also ask, do Stephens and Graham assume that the inserted thought is actively produced? Their account introduces and relies upon a distinction between active and passive thinking, and yet they assume that the inserted thoughts are the result of active agency which is then denied as it does not fit with the patient's self-referential narrative. Passive thoughts, by contrast, already lack a sense of agency and, if only for this reason, thus seem better candidates for being labelled "inserted".

Stephens and Graham (2000) suggest that it is because the thoughts *appear as* intentional that active agency is assumed. Although the thoughts do not make sense for the subject in terms of her underlying intentional psychology, they do appear as "personally salient" and "intelligently structured". The authors suggest that this is in contrast to unbidden and passive thoughts, which are "notable for their lack of fit" (p. 172) with the contextual situation. This explains why the authors place the emphasis on the misidentification of active agentic thinking as opposed to passive thinking, and makes sense in terms of the theory of mind that they subscribe to. The inserted thoughts appear coherent and salient and thus seem to betray another intentional agency, given the subject's lack of a sense of agency for thoughts that do not mesh with his or her self-referential narrative or intentional psychology. However, if we accept that the person may deny agency for such thoughts, in light of understanding agency as being self-attributed when thoughts are found to be incompatible with one's conception of oneself, then the explanation of why a person would then attribute such thoughts to another agency becomes unconvincing. Agency, in Stephens and Graham's account, is self-attributed when the thought, action or desire fits in with our overall intentional psychology. Presumably our attributions of agency to another depend on how compatible we see their overt actions to be with what we have already seen and know of that person's (overt) behaviours. This makes the attribution of agency to others problematic and seemingly dependent on knowing a reasonable amount about the other. But, in the case of thought insertion, we often find that the patient finds only particular repetitive phrases to be inserted, such as "Kill God", which does not seem sufficient to betray a sense of agency, particularly in light of how the authors evidently understand the attribution of agency to another. However, the major concern with this account must be that the explanation of agency as being self-attributed when a thought, action or desire fits in with our intentional psychology is not in keeping with our normal phenomenology. When I move my arm, or think a thought, I rarely find in my experience the need to verify that I was in fact the

agent. The sense of agency is already contained in the act itself. In respect of the latter objection, I now turn to Gallagher's account of how we have a sense of agency in thinking and how we may explain the phenomenon of thought insertion.

Gallagher's 'Alternative Neurophenomenological Account'

Gallagher (2005), like Stephens and Graham, has developed his model of thought insertion on the basis of the conceptual difficulties associated with Frith's early model. Gallagher agrees with Stephens and Graham's distinction between the senses of agency and subjectivity (although he substitutes the term *ownership* for subjectivity) and with their contention that in schizophrenia these two aspects of self-consciousness may somehow separate. However, he argues that, in the case of normal active voluntary movement or thought, the sense of agency and ownership are indistinguishable. In that the sense of agency is, furthermore, implicit in the action or thought itself, there is no need, contrary to Stephens and Graham's view, for one to introspectively determine whether or not one is the agent in terms of one's overall intentional psychology. Agency, for Gallagher, is built into our voluntary actions and is not something one decides upon or verifies after the fact. Neither the appeal to *intentions* to think, nor the notion of a feeling of *conscious effort* in thinking, is in keeping with our normal phenomenology. Gallagher's model seeks to overcome two further problems for any neurocognitive account of psychotic symptoms, namely that symptoms are episodic (that is, they do not manifest all of the time), and that they are specific (that is, the contents of such experiences are not random and meaningless, but are, rather, coherent and consistent, salient and personally relevant).

In proposing his alternative neurophenomenological account of thought insertion, Gallagher (2005) appeals to Husserl's (1928/1990) analyses of time-consciousness. He proposes that Husserl's insights into the nature of time-consciousness, where experienced time is broken down into the three abstract phases of the "primal impression" or "now", "retention" and "protention", may be of value in understanding the problems of agency and ownership with respect to thinking. It is Gallagher's suggestion, in brief, that it may be retention that underlies the sense of ownership for thoughts, and protention that provides for a sense of agency in our thinking. By virtue of being pre-reflective - or, as Gallagher puts it, prenoetic - the structures of time-consciousness, when cashed out in cognitive and neurological terms, may be the most parsimonious way of accounting for

how the senses of agency and ownership are built into or implicit in the very process of thinking itself.

To explain in some detail: the primal impression refers to the present or now-phase of the temporal object, which needs to be understood as any intended object (including a thought or thoughts), which is then retained in a retentional continuum of decreasing affective force *as having just been*. This is most easily illustrated by considering a tonal sequence, for instance C, D, and E. When D replaces C as the primal impression, C does not disappear but is held in retention, as also when E succeeds D. Thus, “when I hear tone E, I am still conscious of the tones D and C, but not only that. I am still *hearing* these two tones (and neither remembering nor imagining them). This is not to say that there is no difference between our consciousness of the present tone E and our consciousness of the tones D and C” (Zahavi, 1999, p. 64). As indicated, C will have less affective force than D. Over the course of a melody, then, we see how a chain of diminishing retentions is formed. Within this temporal horizon one also has protention implicitly anticipating what will occur next, although not necessarily in a determinate manner. Thus, following our example, when tone C is given in the now-phase, the protentional aspect of consciousness will be implicitly anticipating D and E. More concretely, if we know the melody well, we may have a quite determinate sense of what is about to occur; but even if we are completely unfamiliar with the melody, we can see protention operating when something unexpected or unusual occurs, for instance when the wrong note is hit.

Furthermore, retention has two aspects - the longitudinal and the transverse - which pertain, respectively, to the retention of the antecedent phases of consciousness itself and the continuity of the experienced temporal object. Whereas the latter relates to our retention of the tones as objects of consciousness, the former pertains to consciousness *as* retentional. Thus, while longitudinal retention allows me to be conscious of myself as experiencing, and as such pertains to the synthetic unity of consciousness that is necessary for the experience of any object at all, transverse retention retains the past phases of the experienced object, as such allowing for temporal continuity. It should be noted at this point that it is misleading to speak of transverse or longitudinal *intentionality* in respect of temporalizing consciousness, as the temporal processes are pre-phenomenal or subtentional (pre-phenomenal, or pre-reflective, in Gallagher’s terms), allowing for the possibility of intentionality; as such, the terms thus cannot be consistently used as though they had equivalent senses.

To further clarify these distinctions: as these words are read, for example, the meanings are held in transverse retention, and an indicative sense of where the sentence is going is given in protention. Furthermore, as you read these words, it is longitudinal retention that allows you to recognize that it is *you* that is reading the words. That is, not only the intended objects as just past are held in retention, but also the past intentional acts, thus providing for the continuity of identity throughout temporal experience.

Gallagher (2005) extends this line of thought and suggests that there may be both a transverse and a longitudinal aspect to protention also. As such, the protentional sense would provide not only implicit anticipation of where this sentence is going, but also a sense that your experiences in the immediate future will be experiences *for you*. Gallagher accordingly argues that, “in effect, protention also has what Husserl calls a longitudinal aspect - it involves a projective sense, not only of what is about to happen, but of what *I* am going to do or experience” (p. 193).

His next step is to distinguish between a type of active thinking where thought is generated in a “willed and controlled fashion”, and a more passive type of thinking where “unbidden thoughts, memories, fantasies, and so forth, invade our current stream of consciousness”. With respect to the form of active thinking implied, he cites the examples of thinking through a set of instructions, solving a problem, or narrating a story to oneself. In these cases, Gallagher (2005) asserts, “I have a sense of promoting my thinking along a path that is, or is becoming, relatively well-defined. In such cases, *the protentional aspect of consciousness* operates to give me the sense of where the thinking process is going *in its very making*, that is, as it is being generated and developed” (p. 193). In the case of what Gallagher calls passive thinking, we do not have a sense of agency. We may, in fact, even be actively resisting such thoughts. We need here think only of the familiar examples of passive thinking - such as daydreaming, intrusive thoughts, and so forth - that I deny I am the agent of even though they are undeniably occurring within my own stream of consciousness. Gallagher notes that “protention, in such cases, may be working perfectly well, providing a sense of where these thoughts are coming from and where they are heading [or, for that matter, a protentional sense of uncertainty about where they are heading], as they are being passively generated, even within the framework of an unwanted memory or unwelcome fantasy” (p. 194).

What would happen, however, if the protentional function itself failed? Gallagher (2005) suggests that “thinking would continue to happen, but there would be neither a sense of agency, nor a sense that these thoughts were being passively generated in my cognitive system, even though they were appearing in my stream of consciousness. I would be unready for such thoughts. They would appear as if from nowhere, and their occurrence would be sudden and unexpected” (p. 194). It needs to be remembered here how protention is necessary for the sense of agency for thought, yet is still present in passive thinking, even if only in providing for a sense of indeterminacy. Gallagher continues:

Thought generation, like any experience, is normally protentional. Without protention, thought continues, but it appears already made, not generated by me Indeed, this may also be the case with intended thoughts for which I would normally have a sense of agency. . . . My non-observational, pre-reflective sense of agency for my own thinking, which is normally based on anticipatory aspects of experience, will be deferred by the lack of protention In this case, I experience thoughts that seem not to be generated by me but seem to have anticipated what I want to think. (p. 195)

Thought insertion is thus, for Gallagher, a first-order experience, as Frith also holds, but, contrary to Frith, Gallagher’s account does not depend on a failure of metarepresentation.

Importantly, Gallagher (2005) goes on to consider what could cause a failure in the protentional mechanism in light of the episodic nature of the symptoms and the fact that they have specific contents. His suggestion is that there needs to be a personal-level trigger, which could be affective content, that is, “experiential content that generates prenoetic emotional effects” (p. 200). Gallagher’s suggestion, then, is that particular affective contents, fears or anxieties, significant persons or situations, or even patterns of thought, could trigger a failure in the protentional function. Moreover, he suggests that “it is also possible that this disruption of the protentional function could cause a looping effect that would reinforce the affective trigger” (p. 200).⁴

⁴ This analysis further links up with the diathesis-stress model of schizophrenia. Gallagher (2005, p. 201) notes that “some personal-level event may trigger the original disruption of auto-affective protentional functions - functions that in some people, in terms of their neurological underpinnings, may be genetically or developmentally predisposed to disruption”. Moreover, dopamine seems to

Finally, this account must still answer why the schizophrenic person may attribute agency of some of his or her thoughts to someone or something else. Drawing on work on what is termed the “Who?” system, Gallagher suggests that protentional problems may disrupt the integration of signals in the brain that are responsible for differentiating between self and other. In this regard, the “Who?” system research, and the research on mirror neurons, demonstrates that there are overlapping areas in the brain that are activated both during one’s own movement and in the observation of another performing those same movements. It is Gallagher’s tentative suggestion that a failure of protentional synthesis in different neurological centres responsible for differentiating between self and other (or non-self) causes a confabulation that feeds directly into the first-order experience, thus raising the possibility that the misattribution of agency may be a genuine report of experienced pathology. We turn now to address the issue of whether Gallagher’s suggestion of a failure in protention is phenomenologically possible, and, if not, how this changes the aspects of his theory that seem both intuitively and empirically plausible.

Some Phenomenological Problems

An initial concern with the above account is that more recent scholarship makes it clear that Husserl thought that there is more overlap between retention and protention than he detailed in his early work. In Husserl’s early theory, we can clearly discern that “protentions are ‘motivated’ by retentions, meaning that what I anticipate in my immediate future is based upon what has just transpired” (Rodemeyer, 2003, p. 130). For example, in my thinking now, my thoughts just prior are held in retention such that I remain aware of what I have just thought, which in turn influences the direction of my present thinking. However, Husserl held that *retentions are also motivated by protentions*. The thought just past is held

be correlated with and intimately involved in the process whereby things become meaningful for us. One of the more recent formulations of the function of dopamine is the motivational-saliency hypothesis. The suggestion is, in essence, that dopamine is the neurochemical mediator that underpins those aspects of self-experience and the environment that become salient or prominent for us. Normally, dopamine does not control this process, but it is hypothesized that, in schizophrenia, there is a “dysregulation of dopamine transmission which then becomes the ‘creator of saliencies, albeit aberrant ones” (Kapur, 2003). This explanation appears to link the phenomenology with the neurochemistry and the psychopharmacology. But it needs to be noted that the phenomenology must take precedence, as Gallagher rightly indicates, if the problems of episodicity and specificity are to be overcome.

in retention both as the past thought and as the thought formerly protended, thus implying that retentions include in themselves the protentions as fulfilled or unfulfilled. As Rodemeyer explains, there is a complicated way in which the “constituting temporal flow overlaps itself Retentions are retained as both retentions of what came before (as fulfilment) and as their former protentions; each retention has a retentional and a protentional aspect” (p. 131). Husserl’s later analyses thus replace the “now-point” or “primal impression” with the idea of fulfilled or unfulfilled protentions. Referring to “fulfilled protention” and “fulfilled retention” allows us to denote a “zone of actualisation” that avoids the effect of “reifying” the temporal processes into a momentary “now”. Moreover, and importantly for our present analysis, the “zone of actualisation” can now be seen to be “contingent upon the form of retention-protention, and on their being fulfilled” (Rodemeyer, 2003, p. 131).

To update Gallagher’s analysis, then, it can be stated that retentions that provide for a sense of ownership “contain” protentions that provide for a sense of agency. The sense of previous agency is “contained” in the retentional sense as agency and ownership. This makes good sense. While longitudinal retention thus holds the protended moments together, transverse retention links happenings to one another as events. Protentions and their fulfilments, similarly, have their longitudinal aspect, consecutively linking from moment to moment, or, in the transverse, protending toward unities interpreted as events in themselves. A question we should ask at this point, however, is this: is there a distinction to be made with respect to the longitudinal and transverse aspects of protention and retention that impacts upon these considerations of agency and ownership? Gallagher (2005, p. 193) notes that, for Husserl, transverse retention is only possible on the basis of its longitudinal aspect; that is, the retention of objective content is dependent on consciousness as retentional. Given Gallagher’s assumption of symmetry with respect to transverse and longitudinal aspects, the same must hold for protention. We see, therefore, that it is the longitudinal aspect of protention that is crucial for a sense of agency in Gallagher’s account, although he never explicitly addresses this issue. In fact, after invoking the distinction, Gallagher does not again refer to the longitudinal and transverse aspects of protention. It must be the case that the longitudinal aspect of protention is being put forward by Gallagher as the carrier of the sense of agency, as transverse protention can be unfulfilled and thus absent without there being any impact on the sense of agency. However, if for some reason longitudinal protention failed or was interrupted, then there would be no

protention whatsoever and thus no sense of agency, which is what Gallagher requires.

Following Gallagher’s examples, and re-introducing this distinction, it appears that his analysis faces some problems. We recall here that, in the case of active thinking, protention provides the sense of where the thinking is heading “as it is being generated or developed”. If we divide the protentional aspect into its longitudinal and transverse moments, we see that there is a protention that is ahead of the thinking itself in moments that are serially linked (i.e. longitudinal), and that there is a protention that prefigures the intended objects as a part of a series that may or may not be fulfilled (i.e. transverse). Not only is the latter transverse protention dependent on the former longitudinal protention, but only the former could provide for a sense of agency. In the case of what Gallagher calls passive thinking, we do not have a sense of agency, however. Here there may be a transverse protention, giving us a sense of where these thoughts are heading, or there may be a lack of transverse protention, meaning that there will be temporary uncertainty about the direction these thoughts are taking. In the latter case, there may be some *surprise* involved in their occurrence. However, longitudinal protention is working in both cases, in so far as, in these examples, I retain a projective sense of “what *I* am about to experience”. It may be the case that I am unsure about what the *content* will be - that is, transverse protention may be either fulfilled or unfulfilled - but I retain a protentional sense of what will be occurring in my stream of consciousness in the immediate future.

Let us be more exact. Rodemeyer (2003), working from Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts, writes:

Husserl says that, if what I am expecting does not occur, there remains an empty protention that is not fulfilled. In the cases of specific events, I will expect the ongoing event to continue. If it does not, then I am no longer dealing with fulfilled but empty protentions, which will then adjust themselves to the new situation. Thus the very first “moment” of a completely new situation will not be apprehended as fulfilled until it is part of my retention, when the interrelation of retention and protention will once again allow me to form protentions towards the continuance of this new situation. (p. 133)

In terms of the above, transverse protention, in its protending of the current object, event, or situation, will be unfulfilled; that is, there will be an empty

protention that will be recognised in retention, which will then immediately motivate realignment for the next protention. At no point, however, would longitudinal protention be similarly caught off guard. I retain my projective sense that these experiences will be experiences occurring *for me*. There is thus an ingredient missing in this analysis even after we introduce the distinction between longitudinal and transverse protention.

Gallagher suggests that, if the protentional function itself fails, "*thinking would continue to happen*, but there would be neither a sense of agency, nor a sense that these thoughts were being passively generated in my cognitive system, even though they were appearing in my stream of consciousness. I would be unready for such thoughts. They would appear as if from nowhere, and their occurrence would be sudden and unexpected" (2005, p. 194; italics added). The reference here needs to be to the longitudinal aspect of protention, as he suggests that there would not be even a sense that these thoughts were passively generated; as such, it must be the case that there is a momentary failure of longitudinal protention such that I do not have a (even indeterminate) projective sense. Gallagher continues: "... thought generation, like any experience, is normally protentional. *Without protention, thought continues*, but it appears already made, not generated by me" (2005, p. 195; italics added). However, as we have seen, transverse protention is grounded in and dependent on longitudinal protention, and if longitudinal protention failed, there would be no transverse protention. If this were the case, then thought *would not* continue in the absence of protention. In the case of intended thoughts, I require transverse protention, and, in the absence of longitudinal protention, this is impossible. In the case of passively generated thoughts, if longitudinal protention was working, then they would arrive as empty protentions; if longitudinal protention was not working, however, then they *could not arrive at all*. Let me explain this latter point further with reference to perception since, as Gallagher notes, all experience is protentional.

On the perceptual level, protention is necessary for "moving beyond" the "now", and allows for the possibility of our shifting focus and attention, directing our interest towards new things, and so forth. The "primal impression" is not the condition for the possibility of temporalising consciousness; rather, "presence" or the "zone of actualisation" is founded by the subtentional functioning of protention and retention. No protention, no perception: instead, only a transient momentary percept would be present. Without protention, perception would be restricted to the present moment, unable to "move into other

presentations because nothing would take me beyond this very moment ... [at best I] would not be able to connect each moment's presentation with the next" (Rodemeyer, 2003, p. 136). But, precisely at this point, it becomes clear that some psychotic phenomena do, in fact, show widespread disruptions to, or interruptions in, temporal synthesis, and particularly protention. As one patient describes: "Everything is in bits ... It's like a photograph that's torn in bits and put together again ... If you move it's frightening. The picture you had in your head is still there but it's broken up. If I move there's a new picture that I have to put together again" (as cited in Cutting, 1997, p. 176). And this is exactly the type of experience we would expect to occur if there were some kind of systematic interruption to protention. Following Gallagher's insight, the disruption of the protentional flow perfectly accounts for the patient's inability to synthesise the new aspects and objects brought into view through movement.

Moreover, protention is the condition for not only the possibility of fulfilment, but also appresentations and apperceptions. Rodemeyer (2003) observes that, "while we know that appresentations are now, not in the future ([as] they are embedded in a presentation), actualised consciousness alone does not allow for the possibility of being beyond this zone of actualisation" (p. 136). Thus, without protention, what we would expect to see is the world in something like two-dimensions, where objects could not be intended as wholes. There would be no horizontality. Chapman (1966) cites a self-report in the section on visual disturbances where the patient explains: "I see things flat. Whenever there is a sudden change I see it flat ... There's no depth, but if I take time to look at things I can pick out the pieces like a jigsaw puzzle ... Moving is like a motion picture. If you move, the picture in front of you changes" (p. 230). Despite such evidence in support of the notion of disruptions to temporal synthesis, however, it is clear that, even though protention is a necessary precondition for agency, protention cannot be the sole carrier of the sense of agency. Moreover, it remains unclear what could cause these kinds of interruptions in temporal experience. With regard to the former point, it is interesting to note that Gallagher (2005) himself states that protention is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the sense of agency. The solution is that active intentional directedness on the part of the subject is required for a sense of agency. Agency is built into active intentionality and not protention. Protention, and temporalising consciousness in general, are necessary preconditions for the formation of intentionality. However, protention simply cannot do as much work as Gallagher needs it to do; it cannot, on its own, carry the sense of agency. Only

intentional directedness on the part of the subject can fully provide for the sense of agency. If protention fails, it is true that there will be no sense of agency, but there can be no thought insertion either. Without protention there is no intention. Everything stops and only the momentary “now” is presented.

Conclusion

I have argued that protention cannot carry the sense of agency even though it is a necessary precondition for it, and that a failure in a protentional mechanism cannot account for the phenomenon of thought insertion. Intention and protention are clearly interrelated, and both extend ahead of their fulfilment, but they are not the same. Protention founds the intentional act, but intention remains indispensable to any full account of agency. I would suggest, contra Gallagher, Stephens and Graham, and Frith, that thought insertion is likely to be a passive type of thinking, for which there is never any sense of agency, as opposed to active thinking for which we happen to have no sense of agency due to some kind of neurocognitive malfunction. There will be no sense of agency, not as a result of a failure in protention, but because the thoughts were not intentionally brought about by the subject. The schizophrenic person may come to take them as inserted by another agency for a number of reasons - due to a general alienation from his or her own experiences, the loss of ontological security, the coherency and saliency of the uncontrollable passive thinking, and so forth - and focused phenomenological studies are necessary if we are to understand why some schizophrenics believe that their passive thoughts are inserted by others. Passive thoughts need not be, as Stephens and Graham have suggested, meaningless snippets of language. We often find complex and coherent trains of thought occurring to us passively; moreover, it is often the case that attempts to suppress passive and unwanted thoughts tend to exacerbate their arrival. The phenomenology of thinking in schizophrenia seems divided between, on the one hand, the felt need to *actively* think through things that would normally be matter of course and, on the other, being overwhelmed by an automatic *passive* type of

thinking that may be interpreted by the subject in a number of ways.

The relentlessly occurring passive thoughts may be felt to be inserted, heard, or otherwise forced upon the patient. In Chapman's (1966, pp. 225-251) classic study of the early symptoms of schizophrenia we find these descriptions:

“Nothing settles in my mind - not even for a second. It just comes in and then it's out. My mind goes away - too many things come into my head at once and I lose control.” (Case 29)

“I am afraid to move without giving all my attention to it, because if I am doing something else, I might carry out the wrong movement.” (Case 25)

“My thoughts run too fast and I can't stop the train at the right point to make them go the right way.” (Case 12)

“I can't control my thoughts. I can't keep thoughts out. It comes on automatically.” (Case 23)

More recent research by Honda et al. (2004) also suggests that autochthonous or uncontrollable passive thinking is a basic or early symptom of schizophrenia. In fact, the authors of this study conclude that “autochthonous thinking ... may be a fundamental symptom of schizophrenia” (Honda et al., 2004, p. 478). Although none of the reports cited by Chapman are reports of thought insertion, we see a number of instances in which the patients speak about not being able to control their thoughts. It is said that nothing settles in the mind, that too many things come in, that their thoughts run too fast, that they come into the head, that they can't be controlled, that they come on automatically - all of which experiences are indicative of a more or less chaotic and uncontrollable type of passive or autochthonous thinking.

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