

New Directions in Philosophy and Cognitive Science

Series Editors: **John Protevi**, Louisiana State University and **Michael Wheeler**, University of Stirling

This series brings together work that takes cognitive science in new directions. Hitherto, philosophical reflection on cognitive science – or perhaps better, philosophical contribution to the interdisciplinary field that is cognitive science – has for the most part come from philosophers with a commitment to a representationalist model of the mind.

However, as cognitive science continues to make advances, especially in its neuroscience and robotics aspects, there is growing discontent with the representationalism of traditional philosophical interpretations of cognition. Cognitive scientists and philosophers have turned to a variety of sources – phenomenology and dynamic systems theory foremost among them to date – to rethink cognition as the direction of the action of an embodied and affectively attuned organism embedded in its social world, a stance that sees representation as only one tool of cognition, and a derived one at that.

To foster this growing interest in rethinking traditional philosophical notions of cognition – using phenomenology, dynamic systems theory, and perhaps other approaches yet to be identified – we dedicate this series to ‘New Directions in Philosophy and Cognitive Science’.

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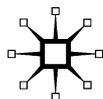
Rethinking Introspection

A Pluralist Approach to the First-Person Perspective

Jesse Butler

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Series Editors' Foreword

One of the oldest and yet most difficult of the ancient Greek philosophical imperatives is 'Know thyself'. A perhaps equally ancient association couples vision – theory – and truth. Combining the two leads us to introspection: the route to knowing yourself is to look within yourself.

As venerable as the introspective tradition is, it came under severe attack when philosophy and scientific psychology became allies. Cast aside for its impressionism and relativism, introspection spent the twentieth century banished from scientifically oriented philosophy, lost in the wilderness of poets, novelists, and phenomenologists.

If introspection is to be readmitted to polite company then, Jesse Butler argues, it will have to be rethought. And that rethinking shows it not to be a literal inward vision – despite a long series of philosophers who have used language suggesting that it is – but a metaphor grouping together multiple and heterogeneous processes.

The most basic of those processes, Butler shows, is revealed by the phenomenological method, which is not, *pace* its enemies, navel-gazing yielding subjective impressions, but rather the careful demonstration that our basic cognitive self-relation is non-reflective subjective awareness. As Butler puts it, 'We know ourselves by being ourselves, not as objects but rather through the qualitative character of our experiences as living subjects'. This is a unique sort of knowledge, Butler claims, irreducible to the types of knowledge currently discussed in analytic philosophy of mind. Butler calls it the 'existential constitution' model and discusses it in relation to the classical phenomenologists and to contemporary thinkers.

Butler does not stop there, however. He goes on to show how non-reflective self-awareness is only one of our 'introspective' capacities; we can and do objectify ourselves for genuine and valid cognitive purposes. Such higher-level, reflective introspection occurs through the use of normal outwardly directed cognitive processes such as representation, conceptualization, and attention that we turn back on ourselves. To complete the picture, Butler also discusses the self-application of Theory of Mind, inner speech, and sociality and self-knowledge.

All in all, then, Butler's *Rethinking Introspection* shows how the ancient theme of introspection, when brought back from exile and appropriately rethought, offers widespread and important current application.

John Protevi, Louisiana State University

Michael Wheeler, University of Stirling

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Although much has changed since, this book began as my Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Oklahoma, where I benefited from the fine guidance of Jim Hawthorne, Chris Swoyer, Ray Elugardo, Wayne Riggs, Lynn Devenport, and many others while carving out the basic framework that has become this book. Many more people have contributed to the discussion and refinement of the content since, especially my friends and colleagues at the University of Central Arkansas and all the folks who offered their thoughts on my work at conferences. I thank you all for your helpful feedback and kind support.

Some of the work presented in Chapter 4 appeared previously in my article 'Introspective Knowledge of Experience and Its Role in Consciousness Studies' in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, which I thank for permission to republish portions of that article here. The content of Chapter 8 (and aspects of Chapter 7) was initially mapped out in 2009 through a summer research stipend from the University Research Council at the University of Central Arkansas. I am grateful for the support.