

In favor of (plain) phenomenology

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Abstract Plain phenomenology explains theoretically salient mental or psychological distinctions with an appeal to their first-person applications. But it does not assume (as does heterophenomenology) that warrant for such first-person judgment is derived from an explanatory theory constructed from the third-person perspective. Discussions in historical phenomenology can be treated as plain phenomenology. This is illustrated by a critical consideration of Brentano’s account of consciousness, drawing on some ideas in early Husserl. Dennett’s advocacy of heterophenomenology on the grounds of its supposed “neutrality” does not show it is preferable to plain phenomenology. In fact the latter is more neutral in ways we ought to want, and permits a desirable (and desirably critical) use of first-person reflection that finds no place in the former.

Key words phenomenology · heterophenomenology · neutrality · Brentano · Husserl

Introduction

I am going to defend what I’ll call “plain phenomenology.” I call it “plain” partly by contrast with the “pure” phenomenology of Edmund Husserl – whose philosophy more than any other is identified with the “phenomenology” label. I also mean to contrast my approach with what Dennett (1991, 2005) calls his “hetero”-phenomenological method in writing about consciousness. I call *my* phenomenology “plain” also to indicate that it’s relatively modest and unassuming. If it strikes you as *too* plain to deserve such a tongue-twisting, history-laden name, this won’t worry me so long as its plainness promotes its clarity and acceptability.

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What is plain phenomenology? Suppose the following is true of you.

1. You explain mental or psychological distinctions.
2. You show how such explanation has significant theoretical consequences.
3. Your explanation relies on a source of warrant special to some *first-person* applications of the distinctions explained.
4. You do not assume such first-person warrant as you rely on is derived from observational, third-person evidence.

If you meet these four conditions, you're doing plain phenomenology.

I will comment on each of these four features in turn. Then I will illustrate my sense of 'phenomenology' with reference to writings at the headwaters of historical phenomenology – in particular I will refer to Franz Brentano's explanation of what he means by 'consciousness,' and to some criticisms of this suggested to me by views of his student Husserl. It will become clear that the issues that arise bear upon the relationship between an experience's being conscious, and its being the object of some kind of thought or perception – and so they bear upon contemporary work in "analytic" philosophy of mind about consciousness. My main points are three. First, that there is a sense we can give to 'phenomenology' detached from doubtful methodological claims associated with certain name-brand phenomenologists, a sense which, nonetheless, *applies* to some of their philosophizing. And second, *where* it applies, what we decide to say about the issues raised holds considerable relevance for the study of consciousness. Finally, the legitimacy of this philosophical practice can be defended by reference to the illustration of it I offer and by a contrast with Dennett's "*heterophenomenology*." One outcome of all this is a defense of the philosophical interest of writings by the founders of the phenomenological tradition. But my dominant aim is to improve the use of first-person reflection in thinking about the mind.

Four features of plain phenomenology

Consider the first of the four features – explaining mental or psychological distinctions. Let me say that I intend here no specially restrictive or theoretically loaded conception of the range of the *psychological*. Certainly included will be matters pertaining to perception, thought, meaning, and intentional action. And I want to maintain contact with the etymological root of 'phenomenology.' In some sense we are concerned here with how things *appear* to us, and general truths about manners of appearance. This notion of appearance is broad: as plain phenomenologists, we are interested in how things appear to us, not just in the sense of how they look, feel, taste, sound, or smell to us, but also in how we *think* of them. And, it would not lie out of bounds for us to focus on articulating *what* we think of them – the *contents* of our thoughts, as we might say – where this indicates an interest in articulating our *concepts*, and thus what we understand ourselves to mean by what we say. However, this conceptual investigation is rooted in attention to one's own mental life, insofar as the effort to explain distinctions ultimately comes back to the question, "What do *I mean* by this?"

To explain distinctions is to explain what you mean by the terms you use. You can do this via examples – that is, by speaking of what kinds of cases a given term does

or would apply to, and where it does not or would not apply. Such explanation *may* lead to a statement of either necessary, or necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of a given term – or maybe it will confine itself to typical or paradigmatic cases. It may take the form of saying what you take to be *entailed* by statements using terms by which the distinction in question is expressed. In the course of discussion, you will inevitably presume some common understanding of the terms you use. But when explaining what you mean by a term it is not necessarily your aim to offer an account of what is *already* generally meant by this term in a given language. Plain phenomenology is not in *that* sense primarily an analysis of our concepts. It will probably involve terminological and conceptual innovation, and drawing distinctions where none were recognized before.

This comment may arouse a worry that there is something arbitrary about this procedure. One might object – “look, you can stipulatively define your terms however you want. But then you have nothing but a mass of perhaps idiosyncratic terminology. As an expression of personal preference, it may be unassailable. But it is closed to the sort of critical dialogue needed to confirm its application and establish its relevance to substantive issues.” However, no such solipsistic indulgence or triviality is inevitable. For the explanations of what one means are anchored in examples, and in commitments open to debate, and these are spelled out in terms for which we presume (until we have reason to think otherwise) that there is some shared understanding.

One more comment on the use of examples: these illustrations of what one means can involve either real or imaginary (that is to say, hypothetical or merely conceivable) cases. But plain phenomenology, unlike, it seems, Husserl’s “pure phenomenology,” need not endorse the idea that one can suspend all commitment to the occurrence of actual instances that fit the distinctions one is explaining. The kind of purity or radical freedom from presuppositions that Husserl sought in *his* phenomenology by his procedure of “reduction” is no aim of mine. Nor is plain phenomenology committed to “purity” in the traditional Kantian sense, with which Husserl was much concerned – that is: it doesn’t purport to be pure of “empirical” basis, completely “a priori.” To be a plain phenomenologist you needn’t even take a stance on the traditional distinction between empirical and a priori justification. You need not explain and defend a contrast between what is knowable “independently of experience” and what is not. You *do* assume that, without gathering new evidence through observation, you already know what you mean well enough to engage in phenomenological explanation and the ensuing dialogue, and to learn something by thinking about what you already know. But no more imposing invocation of the “a priori” is assumed. It is enough that the distinctions you want to explain can be understood as explained, that you have a right to employ these distinctions as characterized, and that they bear on some significant issue.

This last comment brings us to item two on the list. What I mean by saying that this terminological discussion is intended to bear on theoretically significant issues will be clearer when I illustrate the practice of plain phenomenology. But I might first remark that *part* of the significance of plain phenomenology lies in whatever intellectual satisfaction is found in an orderly synoptic conception of some area of interest. Plain phenomenology can lead to contemplation of the field of mental phenomena in terms of Brentano’s ([1874] 1972) purportedly fundamental classifica-

tion of presentation, judgment and emotion, or in terms of Searle's (1983) distinctions among belief, perception, and intention. Achieving the sort of broad perspective one does from engaging with what Gilbert Ryle calls "logical geography" can bring with it its own reward of significance, even when one is critical of the cartography on offer. The case of Ryle reminds us that, however oddly fussy some of the details of the map-making might appear when viewed up close, the overall result can be a global re-conceiving of ourselves, the character of human mental life and intelligence – providing a dramatic challenge to other such large conceptions – as Ryle's (1949) vision in the *Concept of Mind* is supposed to contrast with and overturn the "Cartesian Myth" of the "ghost in the machine."

Ryle, however, cannot in the end be regarded as a friend to plain phenomenology.¹ For he could not consistently endorse the third feature on my list – reliance on a distinctive first-person warrant. Ryle claims, in fact, that there *is* no distinctive way in which one knows one's own mind. The unacceptability of his view I think can become evident if we reflect on cases in which we would take ourselves to know what we're thinking, how things look to us, what we're feeling, what we mean and so on – where the kinds of observation that others would need to make in order to know what we know are unavailable to us. The warrant you have for making some judgment about how things look to you is not just the same as the warrant I would have for making the same judgment about you. For in many instances you may not have done anything that would allow someone in my position, an observer, to have warrant for that judgment. Or if you did, it may not have been something *you* were in position to observe and rely on. To say only that we have such warrant for pronouncing, in the first-person, about matters of mind, and that this warrant is distinct in kind from that had for third or second person judgments about the same matters, we need not have already answered the question of what this difference consists in.

I should mention here that plain phenomenology, though it proceeds from reliance on first-person warrant, does not assume this affords our first-person judgments some kind of immunity to error, rational challenge or doubt. It does not assume that what's distinctive about the kind of warrant we have for talking about our own minds confers some variety of "epistemic invulnerability." One could be a plain phenomenologist and go either way on this epistemological issue.

However – and this brings us to our fourth feature – one *would* abandon plain phenomenology if one embraced an account of first-person warrant, according to which its possession depends on its being derivable from a theory based on what *others observe of us*. On that account, you have only such warrant for *self*-ascription of thought, feeling and experience as it would follow you have from others' efforts to explain your verbal and other behavior. This epistemological doctrine is, it seems to me, an implication of Dennett's "heterophenomenology." As *plain* phenomenologists, we do *not* assume that the legitimacy of reliance on first-person warrant depends on success in somehow *deriving* it from the third-person point of view. I

¹ Though it is interesting that Ryle was in fact conversant with and in some way influenced by the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger. See Thomasson (2002).

will return to this issue later. Now I want to illustrate plain phenomenology in some detail by reference to Brentano's discussion of consciousness.

Brentano's account of consciousness and a Husserlian objection

Consider Brentano's explanation of what he means by 'consciousness.' For Brentano, such sensory appearances of, e.g., color, shape, flavor, sound, etc., and occurrences of judgment, thought, and imagining as we are familiar with in our own experience, illustrate what counts as *conscious* in his sense. He contrasts these with hypothesized cases, which would – if they occurred – be *unconscious*, though still *mental*. So, for example, when a waiter sleeps through the clangorous noise around him, but awakes after 'waiter!' is said within earshot, someone might explain this by supposing that the waiter, while sleeping, *heard* the utterance. Also Brentano notes that some psychologists want to explain our not seeing a gap in that part of the visual field from which our retinas receive no light, by hypothesizing that one engages in some *reasoning* or *inference* that results in "filling-in" the blindspot. Brentano himself does not think that such *hearing*, and such *inferences* actually occur – but he says if they did, they would be cases of *unconscious* mental acts (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp. 101–103, 110–11, 114–115).

Brentano employs this distinction between conscious and unconscious on the assumption that one's conscious mental acts are those one is conscious *of*, and that if one is conscious *of* one's thinking or feeling, this thinking or feeling must count as *objects* of some kind of mental reference, the intentional objects of some mental act. The relevant sort of mental act he takes to be a form of *perception*. Brentano understands perception, in turn, via a distinction he draws between *presentation* and *judgment* (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp. 201–234). Presentations include sensory appearances (of color, sound, etc.) generally, but also imagining, and merely thinking of something. Even while these are always presentations *of*, and *refer to* objects – they have as we would say, because of Brentano, *intentionality* – they cannot properly be said to be true or false, and do not exhibit a contrast of the kind found, in the case of judgment, between *affirming* and *denying* something. Whereas in judgment we affirm or deny the existence of something, presentation is non-committal or neutral: it "merely presents" something for consideration (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp. 81, 198, 222–223).

So, Brentano thinks that, in addition to the perception we have of what is "external" through vision, touch, etc., we perceive our own perceivings – we have "inner perception." We perceive our own states of mind when we have a presentation of them and judge that they *are* as they are *presented* to us. Thus, roughly speaking: for a state of mind to be *conscious* is for it to be *perceived*, in this sense.

Part of my point in offering this sketch of Brentano's view of consciousness is to illustrate plain phenomenology. Brentano's discussion displays all four of the features that are together sufficient for this. As is evident, he explains psychological distinctions. And, if one consults his text, it will be clear that in doing so he appeals to first-person warrant. For he holds that our distinctive knowledge of our own minds comes from the very sort of *inner perception* in terms of which he accounts

for consciousness. And he purports to *rely* on such inner perception in considering the examples he uses and in characterizing them, expecting his readers to confirm the illustrations to which he appeals and the aptness of his description of them by relying on their *own* inner perception. Further, Brentano recognizes no need to legitimize inner perception by deriving the claim that we have it and that it is accurate or yields knowledge from a theory based on third-person observation.

Brentano's explanation of what he means by consciousness, if accepted, would have notable theoretical consequences, since first, he purports to tell us *what consciousness is*, in a sense broadly applicable to actual mental events: it is inner perception, as he conceives this. And second, he then relies on this account of consciousness to explain *how we know our own minds*. Your knowledge of your own mind is distinctive, on this view, because only *you* perceive your own mental states. And some first-person judgments enjoy a distinctive sort of authority or evidential standing in virtue of this inner perception. For, Brentano maintains, mental states always *are* just as they *presented* to be: "as they appear, so they are in reality," he says (Brentano, [1874] 1972, p. 20).

Thus so long as you judge your state of mind to be *only* what it is *presented* to be, your judgments are *guaranteed* to be true. Since at least some of one's first-person judgments are guided by inner presentation, and inner presentation is a guide that cannot mislead, one has a way of generating inherently *infallible* judgments about one's own states of mind (even though not *all* of one's judgments are in fact so generated) (Brentano, [1874] 1972) pp. 91, 139, 200).

So, whatever one thinks of Brentano's view here, one must admit that it has implications of some theoretical significance. In the course of explaining his distinctions, Brentano makes claims and commitments that are not merely terminological. He makes substantive, debatable assertions about mental reality, and about how we know our own minds.

But how should we debate such assertions? Here are three sources of criticism Brentano himself raises, and claims to rebut. First, he considers the suggestion that *observing* your own experience as it happens would require some kind of incoherent *separation* from your self. He attributes the source of this worry to the difficulty, or rather (he would say) the impossibility of *attending* to your own current experience. He answers this concern by drawing another distinction, between perception and observation: you can *perceive* (at least implicitly) your own experience as it occurs without then directing your *attention* upon it, and thus without *observing* yourself (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp. 29–30, 32–35, 43, 124–128)

Second, Brentano also famously addresses the concern that seeing consciousness as some kind of self-perception will either make consciousness depend on some *unconscious self-perception*, or lead to an *infinite regress* of self-perceptions. His solution here is to affirm that the perception of one's own perceiving is conscious, but propose that it is so, only by being *contained in* the very perception that it perceives: thus there is no need for another, regress-initiating perception (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp.105, 121–129, 275ff.). Third, he recognizes that someone may object that his account of consciousness entails that young children – because of their still limited intellectual development – would not have conscious feelings of pain, since they would not be cognitively sophisticated enough yet to make

judgments about their feelings. This worry he answers by appeal to a non-propositional theory of judgment, according to which judgment about one's own feelings – the mere *affirmation* of them – does not require any cognitive powers too great to ascribe to toddlers (Brentano, [1874] 1972, pp. 141–142).

This description of Brentano's views about these three problems obviously only opens the complex discussion needed for a full evaluation. But I mention them partly because I think they're philosophically interesting and relate closely to central points of controversy to which contemporary higher order representation accounts of consciousness have given rise – as seen, for example, in the discussions by Block (2002), Dretske (1995), Lycan (1996, 2001, 2004), Rosenthal (2002), and Tye (1995). We can, I think, hope to learn something about these debates by revisiting Brentano. However, what I want to emphasize here is the way in which plain phenomenology, as illustrated in Brentano's philosophy, shows itself to be *self-critical* – how it opens itself to confirmation or refutation in argument.

To further this point, I want now to raise one general concern about Brentano's view of consciousness that apparently he did *not* directly address: whether the sort of mental states we have that Brentano takes as paradigms of conscious states really are *objects of perception*, in his sense. Brentano's student Husserl worried that we lack adequate grounds for supposing that these paradigmatically conscious experiences are the objects of, as he puts it, “an unbroken activity of inner perception” (Husserl, [1900/01] 2001, V.5). I want to develop one form this objection might take, suggested to me by Husserl's discussion of consciousness. Getting clearer about this will help both explain what plain phenomenology is, and why it is legitimate.

Let's start by considering cases of so-called “outer perception.” I am entitled to claim that something *looks* red to me, where this does not mean either simply that there *is* something red, or that I *judge* there to be. But what entitles me to make this distinction and these claims? More generally, we might ask how we can distinguish sensory appearance, both from its objects, and from the judgments we make about its objects. In this connection, Husserl emphasizes the conceivability of illusion, or sensory error of some sort, and what we would call phenomena of object constancy (Husserl, [1900/01] 2001, V.2,14). I can distinguish an appearance of an object from the object apparent, and thus regard the appearance as indeed an appearance *of* an object, and not merely as a state of sensation lacking (as Brentano would say) *reference* to an object. But I can make this sort of distinction, because I can conceive of – and indeed recognize cases of – something's looking red to me (or looking a certain shape, or appearing to me in a certain position or place), even when, in fact there *is* nothing red there that appears to me, or nothing of that shape or in that position. Also, I can conceive of, and recognize instances of, something's appearing to me, something which is (and in some sense appears to me) *uniform or unchanging* in its color, or shape, or size or position – even though the *way* its color, or shape, or size, or position looks to me *varies or changes*. What I have in mind here are kinds of uniformity in the object recognizable through variations in its appearance that happen on account of differences in lighting and shifts in perspective and attention. Now, I would say, I can distinguish the *appearance of an object* from the *object that appears*, because I can conceive of and recognize sensory error, as well as object

constancy through variations in appearance. At the same time, these phenomena also enable me to make a distinction between something's *appearing* (e.g., looking) to me some way, and my *judging* it to be some way. For, in a case of visual illusion, say, though something may *look* to me a certain color, to have a certain position, shape, etc., I *judge* that it is not, or does not. And though something's color, position, shape, etc. may somehow vary in *appearance*, my *judgment* of its shape, color, and so on, does not vary.

If this is correct, then it raises the following question. If we can distinguish among the *appearance* of an object, the *object* that appears, and the *judgment* about the object, *neither* by reference to illusion and error, *nor* by reference to perceptual constancies, can we distinguish among them at all? If the answer is 'no,' then it emerges also that our right to the Brentanian distinction between presentation and judgment in cases of what he would call outer perception hinges on an appeal to sensory error or perceptual constancy.

What would all this tell us about Brentanian inner perception? Here I want to put the Husserl-inspired points just mentioned to a use Husserl himself does not. Let's now ask: what are the putative objects of "inner" perception? Here we are concerned not with say, *a red box that is seen*, but the *appearance to someone of a red box*, and not with a *noise that is heard*, but the *hearing of the noise or its sounding some way to someone*. But now, with regard to these objects – these sensory appearings – can we draw, as before, the distinction between a *presentation of the object*, and both: *the object that is presented*, and a *judgment about the object*? We should note that what is wanted here is not just a distinction between merely *thinking of* the sensory appearing and *judging that it occurs* – though this would, for Brentano, count as a distinction between a *presentation* and a *judgment*. For if only *this* way of drawing the presentation/judgment distinction is applicable to the case at hand, we will not have an inner presentation and judgment that together constitute a *perception* of their object. You do not perceive something by merely thinking of it, and then affirming it to be as you think of it. What we need then, to warrant Brentanian talk of inner perception, is to find in the "inner" case some form of presentation distinguishable from judgment, not just as mere "thinkings-of" are, but as visual or aural appearance is distinguishable from judgment about visible or audible things.

The problem is that no analogue of the way in which we draw such distinctions in the so-called "outer" case is available to us here in the "inner" case. For I cannot recognize, or really even conceive of, a situation in which, though it did not actually look red to me, and I did not falsely *judge* that it did, still, in some sense, something's looking red *appeared* or was *presented* to me. In other words, there is no analogue of visual illusion here. Also, I cannot here discern any analogue of perceptual constancy. I have trouble even making sense of the suggestion that while the visual appearance to me of some color remains constant, and I judge it to remain constant, nonetheless the way the visual appearance appears or is presented to me changes. But then I do not see how I have any right to speak here not just of *judgments about* my sensory appearances, and of *sensory appearances themselves*, but also of perceptual "presentations of" these appearances. For what is needed to draw and apply the relevant distinction in the case of vision and other so-called "outer" senses is missing in the putative "inner" perceptual case. So, unless someone

can explain why what is needed to make the distinction intelligible in the other “outer” case is not needed in the “inner” case, I will conclude that I have no warrant for believing in Brentanian inner perception, and thus cannot accept his account of consciousness or self-knowledge.

The difficulty here, I should note, at least appears to arise for Husserl as well as Brentano. For while Husserl is critical of Brentano’s views about inner perception, and he himself draws attention to something like the points I have been emphasizing, he does not clearly renounce the basic notion of inner presentation: the idea, namely, that we have a presentation of – or as Husserl would say, an *intuition* of – our own experiences, they are “given” to us. And while we may in judgment attribute to them more than what they are given to us as, so long as we restrict ourselves to judging them to be only *as* they are given to us, we cannot err (Husserl, [1900/01] 2001, V.5,6). If the difficulty I have raised here persists, Husserl would need to show how, if at all, his notion of the “self-giveness” of experience can still be upheld in the face of my objection to Brentano’s account.²

Now it may seem strange that I am emphasizing this potential criticism of Brentano and Husserl. After all, I supposedly want to defend the legitimacy and relevance of their – as well as others’ – philosophizing, by styling it plain phenomenology. And now here I am, apparently throwing rocks at their phenomenology. But my aim is not to show that what Brentano and Husserl had to say about consciousness and self-knowledge was substantially correct. The main point is rather to see them as engaged in a form of philosophical reflection that makes use of first-person warrant, and which is legitimate and relevant. Its legitimacy is manifest partly in the fact that it can be conducted in such a way as to generate productive self-criticism. We have seen how Brentano’s terminological discussion, far from being merely a collection of barren stipulations, leads – partly through his own efforts – to argument capable of either supporting or undermining substantive views about consciousness and self-knowledge. In seeing this, we have also seen the *relevance* of plain phenomenology to contemporary philosophy of mind, insofar as it has led to an argument against perceptual models of consciousness and self-knowledge. By a “perceptual model” I mean one holding that, as distinct from judgments we express in public language, by which we attribute various states of mind to ourselves, we also enjoy a sense-like form of intentionality or mental representation that takes these states as its objects. Now this argument so far yields only a negative result – but still, one worth considering as a contribution to on-going debate about the viability of higher order perception (as distinct from higher order thought) theories of consciousness.

And we also might build on this negative point to something more positive. It is, I think, a virtue of the form of criticism just suggested that it may still allow us to do

² Thomasson (2005) proposes an interpretation of Husserl’s views on self-knowledge that would distance him more from Brentano than I have here, and arguably free him from the objection I suggest. The picture is complicated further by Husserl’s scattered and elusive remarks, in work after the *Logical Investigations* on which I’ve been drawing, about the nature of the “givenness” of experience: we are, he thinks, in some sense always conscious *of* our experience in a manner that gives evidence to our (*not* always present) reflective judgments about our experience, though this non-reflective sort of consciousness does not “posit” what it is “of” as object. For a detailed discussion, see Zahavi (1999).

justice to what is *appealing* about the idea of inner perception, and so allow us to preserve something positive from that idea. The suggested worry about inner presentation incorporates a concern that *no analogue of sensory attention* is to be found underlying reflection on one's own experience. But it doesn't yet completely side with those who (like Brentano, and some latter-day proponents of the transparency of consciousness) would deny that we can attend to our own experience in any substantive sense.³ There may still be *something* to the notion of attending to one's own experience, something liable to be overlooked in talk of transparency, and in too sweeping a rejection of inner sense. Before I leave Brentano and Husserl, I want to explore this suggestion briefly.

Suppose you reject the notion of inner perception. Then you might be left with something like the following account of the relationship of reflection and experience. You have, on the one hand, sensory experience of objects – for example, things looking, sounding and feeling some way to you. And, on the other, you have spontaneous first-person judgments, not based on any inferences you can report, in which you attribute to yourself experiences of these types, perhaps regularly *caused* by your having the sort of experience that makes them true. You spontaneously are caused to think thoughts you might express in such manner as: 'It appears (e.g., looks, tastes, sounds) F to me'; or 'An A appears to me,' and so on. Let's call this the "spontaneous self-attribution model" of reflection. This, I would like to suggest, is an inadequate picture of reflection on experience, because it neglects part of the appeal of the perceptual model.

To give some sense of what I think is neglected, I want to refer briefly to Husserl's discussion of perception in *Logical Investigation VI*. In many cases of demonstrative reference (or, as he would say, in the use of "essentially occasional expressions"), when you say of something before you, for example, '*That* is F,' – his example is 'That is a blackbird' – your understanding what in the given case 'that' refers to depends on a sensory appearance of what you take the utterance to refer to, where *what* it appears to you *as* cannot be captured entirely in terms of general attributes. Sensory appearances allow us to identify objects in an essentially demonstrative way that does not just consist in classifying them in general terms. Further, such identification through sensory appearance also underlies our capacity

³ The assertion of the "transparency of consciousness" has tended, as in Dretske's (1995) and Tye's (1995, 2002) discussions, to go together with arguments *against* an inner sense account of how we know our own minds. And an affirmation of attention to one's own experience (as in Lycan's (1996, 2001, 2004) treatment of these matters) has been urged in *support* of an inner sense, higher order perception view. However, it is a striking feature of Brentano's discussion that he combines a denial of attention to one's own experience with advocacy of a robustly perceptual model of consciousness. How could Brentano have thought this?

My own conjecture is that he did not appreciate something that still has not, it seems to me, received due notice – the nature of the common root of doubt about inner perception and doubt about attention to one's own experience. What we need to describe clearly is how the character of the *appearance* of a red ball, for example – unlike that of the red ball itself – won't, so to speak, "hold still," won't remain discernibly invariant or unchanging, while one shifts one's attention around on it. This, I think, is an aspect of the unavailability of something like perceptual constancy at the "higher order level" – the level of reflection. Brentano perhaps did not appreciate the importance of such constancy phenomena, both in drawing the distinction between sensory appearance and judgment, and in the distinctive operations of sensory attention. And so perhaps he failed to connect worries about the feasibility of attending to your own experience with worries about inner presentation.

to perceptually *recognize* objects as belonging to some general kind. And this experiential recognition, Husserl thinks, is essential to our ability to predicate general terms of things we perceive, in judgment, and essential for us to have evidence for such judgment (Husserl, [1900/01] 2001, VI.4–7). This seems to me to hint at a way of taking us beyond the mere rejection of perceptual models, so as to do justice to some of what makes them appealing. For what Husserl brings to our attention is the way in which perception supplies a form of object identification and recognition that makes possible – but is not just the same as – classification in general terms. And it seems to me that we might acknowledge something *like* this going on, in the case of reflective thought about one’s own experience, even while keeping a critical distance from inner presentation.

To appreciate this, consider cases where you think about how to describe the way it appears to you on a given occasion. How should you characterize the way it looks/sounds/smells/tastes/feels to you in some instance? Here you think thoughts expressible by sentences such as, “What is this feeling?” “Just how does this look to me?” – and so on. Arguably the thoughts so expressed cannot be reformulated in a way that eliminates complex phrases containing demonstrative expressions and appearance words (such as ‘looks,’ ‘tastes,’ ‘smells,’ and so on), and replaces these with self-attribution of experience types identified in entirely general terms. Of course I may, without the use of appearance words, ask myself simply: “what is *this color, this sound?*” But on such occasions the *appearance* of the color or sound in question belongs to my *concept* of it in the following sense – I think of this color as: *the color that looks this way* (or as: the color that *this looks* to me); I think of this sound as: *the sound that sounds this way to me*. Here, I want to say, I employ a form of “demonstrative-phenomenal thought.”

This corresponds, I suggest, to demonstrative identification of objects of sensory appearance. In thinking *of* – and thereby attending *to* – my experience in this way I think of something I am able to identify as *already having been there*. And when I consider candidate ways of answering my self-posed questions, I am able to recognize some as apt or correct, others as less so, or not correct at all. However, one can acknowledge that one has these demonstratively expressible identifying and recognitional thoughts, which are distinguishable from thoughts expressed in self-attributions of the form “It appears F to me,” “An A appears to me” etc. – without reverting to the notion of an inner presentation. One does not commit to the idea that one’s experience is “given” or “presented” *as* something, in a sense that implies it could be given or presented in that way in the absence of reflective thought about it. One need endorse no intentional presentation of the experience that is detachable from the verbalized demonstrative-phenomenal reflection.

All this needs further discussion. But I hope I have gotten a hold of something that allows us to appreciate the attractions of inner sense, even while we resist its full embrace. And I hope it gives us some idea of where the spontaneous self-attribution model mentioned earlier is lacking. What I have just suggested allows us to honor something in the idea of inner sense because it allows us to recognize a form of reflective thought (demonstrative-phenomenal thought) that corresponds to the form of demonstrative thought found in the case of perceptual identification and recognition. This form of reflection, unacknowledged in the spontaneous self-attribution model, is distinguished by its role in the process of trying to think about

how to describe one's experience, and in the recognition of the aptness or inaptness of candidate descriptions.⁴

I have raised many more issues than I could pretend to treat adequately here. But I want at least to have illustrated the practice of plain phenomenology, in such a way as to clarify what it is, and bolster its claims to legitimacy and relevance. Now that you see what it is, you may be able to see that it is, by your lights, an acceptable form of rational discourse, leading to arguments worth taking seriously, which are pertinent to live philosophical concerns about consciousness, self-consciousness and perception.

First-person warrant and heterophenomenology

However, one may still balk. One may admit it is legitimate for us to draw and explain distinctions with use of such evidence as we already have, and reason on this basis. But plain phenomenology contains this further idea: that in doing this we can rely on *first-person warrant underived from the third-person evidence*. And that may seem objectionable, if one favors Dennett's "*heterophenomenology*" – since you will recall that it was in this respect I contrasted his view with my plain phenomenology. Before I explain why I prefer my view, let me first make it clear that our approaches are indeed opposed as I say. Consider the following passage, in which Dennett sums up his method.

People undoubtedly do believe they have mental images, pain, perceptual experiences and all the rest, and *these* facts – the facts about what people believe, and report when they express their beliefs – are phenomena any scientific theory of mind must account for. We organize our data regarding these phenomena into theorists' fictions, "intentional objects" in heterophenomenological worlds. Then the question of whether items thus portrayed exist as real objects, events, and states in the brain – or in the soul, for that matter – is an empirical matter to investigate (Dennett, 1991, 98).

When Dennett says that the truth of your beliefs about your experience – beliefs about "mental images, pain, perceptual experience and the rest" – is "an empirical matter to investigate" he evidently means that it is to be investigated from the point of view of someone observing you. For, as Dennett says:

The challenge is to construct a theory of mental events, using the data that scientific method permits. Such a theory will have to be constructed from the third-person point of view, since *all* science is constructed from that perspective (Dennett, 1991, p. 71).

⁴ Recently philosophers of mind have displayed interest in trying to characterize the distinctively "phenomenal" or "subjective" concepts we have of our experience, and it is said that there is something "demonstrative" or "recognitional" about these concepts. These ideas play a role in recent work by Loar (2002), Papineau (2002), Tye (2002), and others. I hope to be opening a slightly novel way into this territory, however, which might link up with Chalmers' (2003) discussion of phenomenal belief, and Levine's (2001) efforts to get at what is peculiarly "intimate" about the "acquaintance" we have with our own experience. Thus perhaps plain phenomenology will bear not only on our conception of psychological self-knowledge, but on the question of just how (or whether) we can reconcile the concepts we have of our own experience with a conviction in its underlying physical nature.

Let's be clear about the implications this has for the epistemic status of your first-person judgments about experience and their evaluation. Such judgments are to be regarded as data, something to be explained, but are initially accorded no epistemic weight at all – no degree of warrant or justification – as reports of something true about your mental life. In a heterophenomenological frame of mind, one counts none of what one judges as true and worthy of acceptance. It is all to be regarded as a “theorists fiction,” as comprising some sort of narrative that *may* be true, but is not to be taken as such. Whatever epistemic right you have to make these judgments has no source other than what may come from an observer's attempt to explain what remains while commitment to the truth of such judgments is held in suspense. To sum it up, in Dennett's heterophenomenology, you have no warrant for speaking of your own experience but what can be derived for it from third-person evidence. This epistemological assumption distinguishes his approach from my plain phenomenology, since it is an assumption I do not make.

That this forms part of heterophenomenology is, I think, made vivid in the analogy by which Dennett provides rhetorical support to his method. He invites us to regard claims people make about how things appear to them as similar to the pronouncements people in some alien culture might make about a deity – a “forest god” – they call “Feenoman.” The anthropologists encountering such a group should not, of course, “go native” and embrace the worship of Feenoman themselves. Instead they should try to explain the tribe's curious beliefs and rituals. Scientific vindication of the cult's beliefs is not ruled out a priori (though naturally we will not imagine that at all likely) (Dennett, 1991, pp. 82–83).

If you accept the idea that your epistemic situation vis-à-vis our own experience is like that of the imagined anthropological subjects vis-à-vis their god, then it seems you would agree that you are not to give any weight to what you believe about your own experience on the basis of first-person reflection, you are not to presume you have any warrant for these beliefs, unless and until these are vindicated by the best efforts to explain your having them, in the light of what may be observed about you by another. For we should not grant the convictions of the Feenoman worshipper any weight, or grant that they enjoy any warrant or authority, unless and until scientific observers – the anthropologists – find they need to endorse these to explain “Feenoman” beliefs and practices.

What Dennett's analogy seems to indicate is that he actually goes beyond the *epistemological* assumption I have been attributing to him to a *methodological* assumption. It's not just that you have, as it turns out, no warrant for believing what you do about your own experiences but what is bestowed ultimately by a theory about you constructed from the perspective of a third-person observer. More than that: you should, in thinking about theories of mind and consciousness, proceed by refusing to regard anything you are inclined to say or think about your own experience as more warranted than its contrary, until it has been confirmed, directly or indirectly, by an observationally based theory. So what is proposed is not just a claim about how things stand epistemologically, but how we ought to proceed in inquiry.

Clearly plain phenomenology contrasts with heterophenomenology, both in abstaining from its epistemological presuppositions, and in rejecting its methodological restriction. The question now is, given that there is this difference between

the two approaches, is there reason to prefer one over the other? Let's consider what argument Dennett offers on behalf of heterophenomenology. This, it seems to me, is to be found in the idea that heterophenomenology is *neutral* in certain respects in which it is desirable to be, whereas alternative approaches are not. In other words, heterophenomenology is preferable because it offers us a way of confirming or disconfirming claims to be considered in the course of investigation, without begging questions that ought not to be begged. The argument then, I take it, is that the heterophenomenological method (unlike the alternative) is – as it should be – *neutral with regard to the truth of first-person pronouncements about experience and its character*, since it does not assume they are *infallible*. Nor, on the other hand, does it *assume* they are false. Rather, it just asks us to submit them to the test of evidence (Dennett, 1991, pp. 83, 96–98).

In response to this, I will argue first, that plain phenomenology is *at least as desirably neutral* as heterophenomenology. It should be clear at this point that plain phenomenology *also* does not assume the “papal infallibility” of first-person proclamations about experience. Nothing about the stance of plain phenomenology entails that first-person judgments about experience are always beyond error, doubt or correction. Furthermore, as illustrated in my discussion of Brentano and Husserl, plain phenomenology allows for and invites considerations that would either confirm or disconfirm first-person judgments. And it can consistently allow third-person evidence to provide some rational basis to challenge (or support) first-person claims. But it does not follow from this that whatever first-person warrant we have can somehow be derived as a consequence of an observationally based theory of behavior. Thus there is room for the possibility of a view that suspends this commitment of heterophenomenology, while recognizing the fallibility and corrigibility of first-person claims. There is room for plain phenomenology.

Now it's true that plain phenomenology assumes that our sincere first-person judgments about experience enjoy a distinctive kind of warrant, whereby we are entitled to presume their correctness pending reason to challenge it. Because this view grants first-person judgments such presumptive weight, it is not *completely* neutral as to their value. But is that a kind of neutrality we should *want*?

One may think we *should* want it, if one thinks there could just be nothing to say about what entitles us to presume the correctness of first-person judgment in the absence of reason to doubt, if we do not try to justify this presumption by showing it figures in some theory based on third-person observation. But there is another approach. In advance of adopting an epistemology, you have convictions about when you count as knowing that something is so. These, I would say, constitute defeasible evidence about when you have warrant for what you are inclined to assert. Such convictions commit us to recognizing that we have a distinctively first-person warrant for many ordinary claims about how things appear to us, what we are thinking, and so on. Now I would argue we are entitled to stand by these convictions, since they are not shown false by appeal to evidentiary standards we have reason to accept. That this may be – and has been – argued (Siewert, 1998, chapters 1 and 2) shows that there is a way to defend a defeasible reliance on first-person warrant, as in my plain phenomenology, while avoiding the epistemological commitments of heterophenomenology. So, if being neutral with regard to the truth of first-person judgments about experience means granting them no presumptive

rights at all in our investigation, then plain phenomenology is not neutral. But if neutrality means that we do not assume such judgments are beyond error or correction, then plain phenomenology is neutral. Since I recognize only the second form of neutrality as desirable, I maintain that plain phenomenology is as desirably neutral as heterophenomenology with respect to the truth of introspective judgment.⁵

I would say in fact that plain phenomenology is *more* neutral, in a way we should want it to be. Again: heterophenomenology is committed to an epistemological thesis on which the plain sort can remain neutral, viz., the ultimate derivability of first-person warrant from observation-based theory. Now I think it is *desirable* to be neutral on this, for the simple reason that I can find no good positive argument for assuming it. It is a general philosophical thesis about the ultimate derivability of one putative source of knowledge (“introspection”) from another (“observation”). But what exactly is the argument for it? Is there some a priori case for it? This principle is neither established by empirical science, nor need be invoked in its conduct, as far as I can tell. Experimental psychologists can remain blithely neutral on this philosophers’ question, it seems to me.

I believe what I have said so far is enough to show that plain phenomenology is preferable. But I wish to add an important element to my case, which concerns what I have called heterophenomenology’s *methodological* assumption. The Feenoman worshippers’ pronouncements deserve no credence unless they earn it by explaining what anthropological observers can grant from their Feenoman–agnostic perspective. Just so, you should proceed by thinking of yourself and all your judgments about

⁵ I should note other, evidently distinct, questions on which Dennett alleges heterophenomenology is laudably neutral. Does plain phenomenology fare worse with these? One is the “zombie question”; the other has to do with whether consciousness can be “accounted for” or is “accessible” from an “objective” point of view.

The zombie question, as it appears in Dennett (1991, pp. 72–73), seems to be the question: Do we have conscious experience in some sense in which other beings, indiscernible from us in their patterns of bodily movement and verbal utterance, might not have it? We are told that heterophenomenology wisely assumes neither a ‘yes’ nor a ‘no’ to this question. (Thus Dennett sometimes seems to be using ‘zombies’ not in Chalmers’ (1996) sense (in which the imagined beings are particle for particle type identical to conscious beings), but in this less restrictive sense, which would allow for zombies to be internally physically quite different from us conscious beings.)

Now plain phenomenology does not *presuppose* an answer to this zombie question. So if it is desirable to be neutral on this question, plain phenomenology does not suffer on this account. However, one might, starting from a plain phenomenological perspective, *introduce* the notion of a zombie. First, one identifies through first-person reflection a range of mental phenomena – sensory appearances, imagery and episodic thought. Then one says something like: conscious experience is what *these* all are, *and* what may conceivably be entirely *lacking* in the case of some being who is, nonetheless, in shape and outward behavior no different from ourselves. Such an entity would be a zombie. One cannot, it seems, introduce the notion of a zombie in this way if one sticks to heterophenomenology. But then, I have to say, it’s hard for me to see how I could grasp the notion at all. And if one can’t even grasp the notion of a zombie from a heterophenomenological perspective, then heterophenomenology can hardly be said to be neutral about whether there might be zombies: it would *preclude* a positive answer.

The second question on which heterophenomenology is supposed to be happily neutral is a little obscure. I take it to be the question of whether in some way one has to *share* the type of experience that some subject has in order to *account for* that type of experience *or understand it* properly. This question needs to be made more precise, but again, it seems to me that if it’s desirable to start with neutrality on this question, then that would give heterophenomenology no advantage over plain phenomenology. I do agree that we should start off neutral to this extent at least: this question should be up for clarification and discussion.

how things are with you experience-wise from the perspective of a detached observer, and accept nothing that does not receive vindication from that point of view.

The first thing to say about this methodological thesis is that, without support from the epistemological doctrine, it's hard to see what will support it at all. Even if we had reason to think that somehow ultimately, all warrant for thought about one's own experience flows from theory constructed from the observer's point of view, more would be needed to show that one should refuse to rely on the truth of one's first-person judgments until their vindication in third-person theory is produced. But in the absence of good reason to buy the epistemological assumption, I don't think the case for adopting the methodological rule gets started.

Beyond this, I want to indicate two more reasons why I decline to go heterophenomenological. The first is this. Quite generally, one way of explaining distinctions, or one's use of certain terms (to oneself or someone else), and thereby manifesting one's understanding of them, is by appeal to examples. And in the case of psychological distinctions, this may well involve thinking of instances where such distinctions and terms apply to *oneself*, or asking one's interlocutor to think of instances where they apply to him or herself. But now suppose that, for some distinctions and in some cases, such paradigmatic self-application as one is disposed to make has to be true, if one is to *understand* the distinction in question. It is plausible that this is the case where phenomenal or experiential distinctions are involved. To take a simple example: I understand the distinction between the way an itch feels and the way a tickle feels only if, when I apply this distinction to myself, I can regularly do so correctly – where this means that, typically, in normal circumstances, I would judge that I feel an itch when I do, and judge that I feel a tickle when I do. However, in the course of heterophenomenological investigation, it seems I must officially abstain from regarding myself as ever making such first-person applications of experiential distinctions correctly; I must treat them as “fictions,” until they have been vindicated as explanatorily valuable posits from the observers' perspective. And yet, on the view I have mentioned, I should not regard myself as having even *understood the distinction* if I do not regard myself as able to apply it correctly in the first-person case. Now suppose that is right. Then, when I go heterophenomenological on myself, and I no longer assume the correctness of my first-person experiential judgments, I no longer assume I satisfy conditions I hold to be prerequisite to understanding the very distinction for which I am supposed to seek vindication. But I cannot rationally seek warrant for use of a distinction I do not assume I even understand. Furthermore, notice: I would express my first-person beliefs about experience in terms of the same experiential distinction. But if I can't assume I understand what I mean by the *expression* of my beliefs, I cannot assume I understand what I mean by my *reports* of my beliefs either. And in that case, I have no business using these beliefs as data. Thus the heterophenomenological project would become infeasible. For it is supposed to take as data facts about what I believe about my experience, and leave me in a position to seek warrant for these beliefs. But now, given the view that understanding experiential distinctions requires correct first-person applications, heterophenomenology becomes self-defeating: it removes its own would-be data, and stalls the search for vindication before it can get started.

Thus if I am going to be a heterophenomenologist, I had better not believe that my first-person applications of experiential distinctions need to be correct if I am to

understand such distinctions. But the problem is, I find that I *do* believe this, and with reason. The reason I believe it is that when I try to think about what I mean by certain ordinary experiential terms, I make some appeal to their applications in my own case. And, if I then am asked to consider the possibility that I am unable to judge *correctly* that these terms apply to me, I am unable to make sense of this being my situation, without imagining that it turns out that I simply don't understand the terms involved. If I can't even tell the difference in my own case between feeling an itch and feeling a tickle, then well, I just don't know at all what I mean by "feeling an itch" and "feeling a tickle." This isn't to rule out the possibility that I *don't* in fact know what I mean. Maybe I am somehow deeply confused in my use of these terms, and maybe I could find reason for coming to the conclusion that I am. Nor is this to say that I couldn't possibly misclassify something as an itchy feeling that wasn't. Nor that I couldn't possibly be subject to a bout of "hysterical itchiness" where I ran around falsely proclaiming how itchy I felt. The point is just that the intelligibility to me of these distinctions, and my having some ability to apply them correctly in my own case, stand or fall together. Thus I cannot rationally adopt the attitude towards myself that Dennett recommends, for I cannot rationally seek evidence for the application of distinctions I don't even take myself to understand.

Now I have made my point by appeal to the perhaps theoretically inconsequential contrast between feeling an itch and feeling a tickle. But the point, I think, also applies in the case of experiential distinctions that can figure pivotally in philosophical thought about consciousness and self-knowledge – as in my earlier example, a distinction between variations in how an object *looks*, and in how one *judges* it to be. Here too my understanding is anchored in my ability to identify instances in my own case, and thus in first-person judgment. And so, the kind of intellectual alienation from my own experience to which heterophenomenology would lead me ultimately alienates me also from philosophy.

This brings me to another reason for not being a heterophenomenologist. It seems that its practice would prevent me from engaging in a kind of critical reflection that I can and should engage in, if I am properly to assess first-person claims about experience. As I've noted, there is nothing about plain phenomenology that prohibits enlisting third-person evidence to help resolve conflicts in introspective judgments. But there is *more* that plain phenomenology can do – something which, as far as I can tell, finds no place in heterophenomenology. The latter seems to offer us a choice between either just blindly and naively adhering to whatever first-person pronouncements on our own experience spontaneously pop into your heads, or else seeking evidence for or against these by appeal to behavioral studies or brain science. But this is an impoverished conception of our options. For we have seen how critical examination of first-person claims can emerge *from within first-person reflection itself*.

If Brentano says we have presentations of our own presentations, and I say otherwise, we are not simply stuck with some brute clash of first-person convictions resolvable only by adopting a third-person perspective, or by concluding – absurdly, I think – that while *Brentano's* presentations present themselves to him, *mine* do not present themselves to me. No, we can, by appeal to other things of which we seem to have first-person knowledge, begin to try to articulate further the disanalogies of the sort I've hinted at – between the cognitive relation we have to our own experience,

and that we bear to what we see, hear, feel, etc. And, once these are recognized, we can reason from these and also try to locate what relevant points of analogy, if any, remain, and determine what may be inferred from that. In such ways the reliance on first-person warrant in plain phenomenology is guided and corrected by philosophical dialogue. The process of refining and criticizing our distinctions goes hand in hand with that of considering and reconsidering our claims about what we can know with first-person warrant.

Generally, I would say, we can and should engage in this philosophical reflection about what we mean, and about what to make of that in the light of what we can tell about our own experience, in order to interpret sufficiently the claims we need to consider. If we simply take first-person judgments (our own or some one else's) unrefined by any such critical process, we may be evaluating only careless, ambiguous or confused remarks. But first-person judgments don't *have to be* this ill-considered. And surely we should seek out the most carefully considered judgments for evaluation – here as everywhere else.

This becomes clear, for example, in the controversy that has emerged – partly through Dennett's pioneering efforts – over the so-called “grand illusion hypothesis,” the idea that studies of change and inattention blindness reveal that we are ordinarily under some massive illusion regarding the amount of detail we are seeing.⁶ Perhaps (as has been suggested) some people are inclined to say that when they see, they have a uniformly detailed internal picture of what lies before them.⁷ Suppose that I were thoughtlessly attracted to some such notion, and even claimed it was supported by introspection. It seems I might then ask myself: is such a conception *really* supported by first-person reflection, when I think about it? Then I realize, in reflection on my own experience: Well, there is more in my surroundings that visually appears – that *looks* somehow to me – than what I look *at* during that time. But what I am *not* looking at does not then appear *in nearly as much detail* as what I *do* look at. So, in this sense, I wouldn't judge, on a first-person basis, that everything *looks* uniformly detailed to me – or even close to it. Furthermore, I think what I *see* are *things before me* – not *pictures* of them, much less pictures inside my body. There may *be* pictures in my brain for all I know, and I might conjecture that there is something picture-like in my brain, to explain how I see things in front of me. But then that is no more than a vague speculation that I can easily abandon, while holding on to what first-person reflection tells me about what I see and how things look to me. I notice too that I have no way of articulating very definitely and specifically just *how much detail* I think I see. The result is, when I consider carefully what I seem to know – introspectively, if you like – about my own beliefs and experience, the kinds of claims supposed to express some illusory impression

⁶ The phrase “grand illusion” was introduced in this context by Noë, Pessoa, and Thompson (2000).

⁷ This illusory impression that people are said to have about vision has been expressed in various ways. Blackmore et al. put it by saying that “We believe that we see a complete dynamic picture of a stable, uniformly detailed, and colourful world” (Blackmore, Brelstaff, Nelson, & Troscianko, 1995, p. 1075). Rensink (2000) assumes that “we feel that somewhere in our brain is a complete coherent representation of the entire scene.” Dennett (1991, p. 68) suggests that when you introspect you may be inclined to think that your “subjective visual field is basically an inner picture composed of colored shapes.” He also says that people think that “their visual fields are approximately as detailed and fine-grained all the way out.” (Dennett, 2005, p. 45)

that I am seeing much more detail than I am actually seeing strike me as wrong or confused.⁸ But heterophenomenology seems to offer us no way to be thus critical in our first-person judgments, except to shift to the perspective of a theorizing third-person observer; it seems to offer us no way to *use* first-person reflection to reconsider and correct ostensible introspective observations, since first-person reflection will (according to this view) generate nothing but more groundless heterophenomenological fictions awaiting external vindication. However, the *critical* use of first-person reflection is a resource we should cultivate and not neglect – in thinking about theories of consciousness and in leading examined lives.⁹

I conclude that the use of first-person reflection that distinguishes plain phenomenology is legitimate and desirable. The alternative found in Dennett's heterophenomenology does not enjoy some advantage by reason of greater neutrality. My plain phenomenology is as neutral as it should be, and need not blindly endorse introspective pronouncements; it can make a critical use of first-person reflection

⁸ I make out this case in more detail in Siewert (2002). Noë (2002) offers a distinct, though similar critique of the “grand illusion hypothesis.”

⁹ I should make it clear that my criticism of Dennett is *not* that he requires us to give up all rational entitlement to affirm things about our experience. As I understand his view, he allows we do (or can) have *some* such entitlement – but he and I differ in what we think about the nature of such entitlement. Dennett, as I understand him, would say our assertions about our experience can sometimes be shown to be regularly correct in some respect – at least with a little re-interpretation – by third-person evidence. So, presumably, the observational evidence legitimizes one's first-person reports that one sees various colors and shapes. But this is so, only inasmuch as these reports are not taken to be about *experiential episodes* – visual appearances of shape and color (“real seemings”) as distinct from *judgments* that things are thus and so (which are basically no different – other than in their causes – from “presentiments” generally). So first-person beliefs about experience may enjoy a distinctive sort of warrant from this quarter, on Dennett's view. Moreover, he thinks we are rationally entitled to affirmations about our experience in this sense as well: we enjoy “total dictatorial authority” (Dennett, 1991, p. 96) in saying what we *believe* about our experience. That is, (as I interpret Dennett) your sincere assertion that you *believe* this or that regarding your experience is to be accepted as true without challenge. But then we should try to *explain why you believe* what you thus unquestionably believe; and in doing this, neither you nor anyone else is entitled to some presumption in favor of the truth of these beliefs.

My criticisms here challenge this picture. First, there's no good reason to claim that our first-person judgments about experience enjoy what warrant they do only by having it conferred on them as a consequence of some observation-based theory. And I don't think any good reason has been offered for regarding as mistaken a distinction between your *making judgments* about visible things and these things' *visually appearing or seeming* (i.e., looking) somehow to you. (One way the distinction can be made clear, would be to proceed as I've done here, by appeal to first-person reflection on facts of perceptual constancy. If heterophenomenology forbids this use of first-person reflection, so much the worse for heterophenomenology.) Finally, I think Dennett is mistaken to grant dictatorial authority to first-person reports of beliefs about experience. For I think we can mistakenly report what we believe about our experience, recognize and correct our mistakes through first-person reflection. For instance: one may rashly assent, when asked if one believes that ordinarily, in seeing, one is aware of a visual image or picture that is more or less equally detailed “all the way out” to the periphery of one's visual field. However, by posing further questions, and reflecting on examples of one's own experience, one can come to realize this is not *really* what one believes about one's experience. This kind of critical revision to one's expression of first-person beliefs about experience would appear not to make sense if one really enjoyed *dictatorial authority* regarding such belief reports: one's *first* word on the matter would then be the *final* word. Curiously, by granting such authority to one's (third-order) beliefs about one's beliefs regarding experience, Dennett actually weakens the authority of (second-order) first-person experiential beliefs, by rendering their errors irremediable by critical first-person reflection. Against all this, I aim to strengthen the epistemic status of first-person reflection, by recognizing its powers of self-correction. (Thanks to Alva Noë for pressing on me the need for this clarification.)

without abandoning it in favor of an exclusively third-person perspective. A methodological stricture against this reliance is unwarranted. And, if I refuse such reliance, I undermine my understanding of the very distinctions I want to consider, and deprive myself of legitimate resources for rational evaluation of first-person claims.

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