

## Killing the straw man: Dennett and phenomenology

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**Abstract** Can phenomenology contribute to the burgeoning science of consciousness? Dennett's reply would probably be that it very much depends upon the type of phenomenology in question. In my paper I discuss the relation between Dennett's heterophenomenology and the type of classical philosophical phenomenology that one can find in Husserl, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty. I will in particular be looking at Dennett's criticism of classical phenomenology. How vulnerable is it to Dennett's criticism, and how much of a challenge does his own alternative constitute? I will argue that there are some rather marked differences between these two approaches to consciousness, but as I also hope to make clear, Dennett's own account of where the differences are located is off target and ultimately based on a somewhat flawed conception of what classical phenomenology amounts to.

**Key words** phenomenology · introspection · first-person perspective · second-person perspective · intersubjectivity

Niemals dürfen innere Wahrnehmung und phänomenologische Wahrnehmung vermengt werden.

E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie*, 216

What is Dennett's view on phenomenology? Can phenomenology contribute to the burgeoning science of consciousness? Dennett's reply would probably be that it very much depends upon the type of phenomenology in question. In his own writings, Dennett distinguishes at least four different types. He uses the term as the generic name for the various items in conscious experience that have to be explained. He speaks of phenomenology in terms of a commonsensical

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or pre-scientific set of beliefs about the working of the mind. He uses the term, written with capital initial letter, to refer to the specific philosophical tradition that was initiated by Husserl. And last but not least, he refers to his own heterophenomenology (Dennett, 1991, 44–45, 66, 72).

In the following, my focus will be on the relation between Dennett's heterophenomenology and the type of classical philosophical phenomenology that one can find in Husserl, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty. I will in particular be looking at Dennett's criticism of classical phenomenology. How vulnerable is it to Dennett's criticism, and how much of a challenge does his own alternative constitute? As we will see, there are some rather marked differences between these two approaches to consciousness, but as I also hope to make clear, Dennett's own account of where the differences are located is off target and ultimately based on a somewhat flawed conception of what classical phenomenology amounts to.

## 1 Heterophenomenology

In *Consciousness Explained* Dennett makes it clear that his goal is to explain every mental phenomenon within the framework of contemporary physical science. More specifically, the challenge he has set himself is to construct a convincing and adequate theory of consciousness on the basis of data that are available from the third-person scientific perspective (Dennett, 1991, 40, 71). However, if this enterprise is to succeed, we first need a clear and neutral method that will allow us to collect and organize the data that subsequently are to be explained. Dennett's name for this method is *heterophenomenology*:

[Heterophenomenology] is the *neutral* path leading from objective physical science and its insistence on the third-person point of view, to a method of phenomenological description that can (in principle) do justice to the most private and ineffable subjective experiences, while never abandoning the methodological scruples of science (Dennett, 1991, 72).

Dennett is keen to emphasize that heterophenomenology rather than being his own invention, is simply the name for the existing practice in cognitive science.<sup>1</sup> His own contribution has merely consisted in articulating and codifying the principles that are already tacitly endorsed by most researchers in the field, be they psychophysicists, cognitive psychologists, clinical neuropsychologists etc. (Dennett, 1993a, 50). In fact, heterophenomenology is nothing but the standard third-person scientific method applied to consciousness. It is *the* scientific way to investigate consciousness, and thus “the way to *save* the rich phenomenology of consciousness for scientific study” (Dennett, 1993a, 50. Cf. Dennett, 2003, 19).

What does heterophenomenology amount to? Given that we have to adopt a strict third-person methodology, heterophenomenology's only access to the phenomenological realm will be via the observation and interpretation of publicly observable

<sup>1</sup> When I in the following talk about heterophenomenology, I will always be referring to Dennett's heterophenomenology unless otherwise noted.

data. Rather than engaging in introspection ourselves, we should consequently access consciousness from the outside. Our focus should be on the mental life of *others* as it is publicly expressed or manifested. In other words, we should interview subjects and record their utterances and other behavioral manifestations. We should then submit the findings to an intentional interpretation, that is, we should adopt the intentional stance and interpret the emitted noises as speech acts that express the subject's beliefs, desires and other mental states. If there are any ambiguities, we can always ask for further clarifications by the subject, and through this process, we will eventually be able to compose an entire catalogue consisting of the things the subject (apparently) wants to say about his or her own conscious experiences (Dennett, 1982, 161, 1991, 76–77). This text, which constitutes what Dennett calls the subject's heterophenomenological world, i.e., the world as it appears to the subject (Dennett, 1982, 166), is an intersubjectively confirmable theoretical posit, and can consequently be studied in a scientifically respectable manner.

Why does Dennett consider the heterophenomenological world a *theoretical posit*? Presumably because he advocates a version of the theory-theory of mind and considers experiencing a form of theorizing and experiential states such as emotions, perceptions, and intentions, theoretically postulated entities.

For Dennett, everything is knowledge and the same kind of knowledge, only to varying degrees of exactitude.

For the heterophenomenologist, the subjects' reports about their conscious experiences are the primary data in consciousness research: "the reports *are* the *data*, they are not reports *of* data" (Dennett, 1993a, 51). It is consequently no coincidence that Dennett characterizes heterophenomenology as a black box psychology (Dennett, 1982, 177). Strictly speaking, heterophenomenology doesn't study conscious phenomena, since it is neutral about whether they exist; rather it studies reports of conscious phenomena. Thus, Dennett urges us to adopt a neutral stance and to bracket the question concerning the validity of the subjects' expressed beliefs, and he argues that this maneuver amounts to a third-person version of Husserl's famous epoché (Dennett, 2003, 22).

Why is the neutrality required? Dennett provides different reasons. Occasionally, he compares the neutrality in question with the neutrality that is required in an anthropological investigation. Just as we shouldn't prejudge our anthropological fieldwork by declaring certain mythical gods real divinities (Dennett, 1993a, 51), we shouldn't prejudge the phenomenological investigation by declaring conscious phenomena real. Dennett also refers to the existence of false positives and false negatives. Our access to our own mind is neither infallible nor incorrigible. Some of the beliefs that we have about our own conscious states are provable false. And some of the psychological processes that happen in our minds take place without our knowledge. Given these possibilities of error, Dennett thinks it is best to adopt a policy of moderation and simply abstain from commitment (Dennett, 2001).

Is this *principle of neutrality* a defining feature of heterophenomenology? This seems to be Dennett's official view. However, on closer examination, heterophenomenology seems to be characterized by another principle as well, namely by what could be called the *principle of metaphysical minimalism*, and the question is whether these two principles are fully compatible.

Dennett repeatedly argues that we shouldn't multiply entities beyond necessity. People believe they have experiences, and these facts – the facts about what people

believe and express – are phenomena any scientific study of the mind must account for (Dennett, 1991, 98), but from the fact that people believe that they have experiences, it doesn't follow that they do in fact have experiences. From the fact that there seems to be phenomenology, it doesn't follow that there really is phenomenology (Dennett, 1991, 366). To put it differently, we shouldn't simply assume that every apparent feature or object of our conscious lives is really there, as a real element of experience. By adopting the heterophenomenological attitude of neutrality, we do not prejudge the issue about whether the apparent subject is a liar, a zombie, a computer, a dressed up parrot, or a real conscious being (Dennett, 1991, 81). Thus, heterophenomenology can remain neutral about whether the subject is conscious or a mere zombie (Dennett, 1982, 160), or to be more precise, since heterophenomenology is a way of interpreting behavior, and since zombies, per definition, behave like real conscious people, there is no relevant difference between zombies and real conscious people as far as heterophenomenology is concerned (Dennett, 1991, 95). But from this alleged stance of neutrality where we bracket the question of whether or not there is a difference between a zombie and a non-zombie, Dennett quickly moves a step further, and *denies* that there is any such difference. As he puts it, zombies are not just possible; they are real, since all of us are zombies. If we think we are more than zombies, this is simply due to the fact that we have been misled or bewitched by the defective set of metaphors that we use to think about the mind (Dennett, 1991, 406, 1993b, 143). It is important not to misunderstand Dennett at this point. He is not arguing that nobody is conscious. Rather he is claiming that consciousness does not have the first-person phenomenal properties it is commonly thought to have, which is why there is in fact no such thing as actual phenomenology (Dennett, 1991, 365). According to Dennett, our stream of consciousness consists of nothing but propositional episodes (Dennett, 1979, 94–95, 109). That something has subjective or experiential reality for the subject just means that the subject believes in it (Dennett, 1993b, 139). Pre-scientifically we assume that judgments are about certain phenomenal happenings, but in fact, there are no such happenings. There are the public reports we utter, there are the episodes of propositional thinking, and then there is, as far as introspection is concerned, darkness (Dennett, 1979, 95). To put it differently, there is no real seeming of yellow or inner presentation of pain over and above the thinking (judging, believing) *that* something seems yellow or feels painful. To postulate such experiential phenomena is to multiply entities beyond necessity (Dennett, 1991, 134, 364), and as Dennett then argues, heterophenomenology doesn't thereby leave anything important out, since all conscious experiences you know of, or believe you have, will per definition be included. And experiences you don't believe you have will be nothing to you anyway (Dennett, 2003, 20).

If you get rid of the first-personal dimension, what you will be left with is the kind of consciousness that zombies and normal persons share, namely a given set of functional properties that allows each of us to carry out the tasks we normally think of as conscious. But to repeat my question, to what extent is this denial of the first-personal dimension in accordance with the professed neutrality of heterophenomenology? There is obviously a difference between committing oneself to the existence of beliefs and maintaining neutrality concerning the existence of other kinds of

mental entities, and committing oneself to the existence of beliefs and denying the existence of other kinds of mental entities. Ultimately, the tension in question might reflect a certain wavering when it comes to the actual scope of heterophenomenology. In “Who’s on First,” for instance, Dennett argues that heterophenomenology is merely the beginning of a science of consciousness and not the end. It is the organization of data and not itself an explanation or a theory (Dennett, 2003, 27). In “The fantasy of first-person science” on the other hand, Dennett argues that heterophenomenology, after having characterized the subject’s beliefs in a neutral manner, seeks to investigate what could explain the existence of these beliefs (Dennett, 2001). But strictly speaking, doesn’t such an explanatory investigation go beyond what a merely descriptive enterprise is able to provide?

Whatever the answer might be, Dennett insists that after having constructed the heterophenomenological world we should ask what our subjects are really talking about. How do we go about answering this question, and how do we ultimately decide on the validity of people’s beliefs about their own subjective life? According to Dennett, we should investigate whether there really is something going-on in the subject that matches his or her professed beliefs. To be more specific, although our ascription of intentional beliefs to others is useful and might help us predict and explain their behavior, we shouldn’t forget that it is just a story. It is not a description of the real facts. If we want a true account of the facts, we should study what really goes on inside their brains. If it turns out that the neuronal processes match the items that are part of the heterophenomenological world, we should conclude that we have discovered what the subjects were really talking about. If it turns out that there is little resemblance between the heterophenomenological items and the neuronal processes we should conclude that people were simply mistaken in the beliefs they expressed (Dennett, 1982, 167, 1991, 85). To put it differently, Dennett is basically proposing that the veracity and validity of our personal beliefs are to be measured and tested by matching them with subpersonal processes. If it should turn out that there is a mismatch, which is what is to be expected – after all what could possible count as a match – we would have to conclude that our commonsense self-ascription of mental states is persistently and systematically mistaken.

## 2 Autophenomenology

It is difficult to appreciate the truly distinguishing features of Dennett’s heterophenomenology unless one compares it to the more traditional type of phenomenology. This is also freely admitted by Dennett, who in *The Intentional Stance* writes that his own proposal should be distinguished from a Husserlian type of phenomenology. Whereas the classical phenomenologists, according to Dennett, sought to gain access to their own notional world by some special “introspectionist bit of mental gymnastics,” Dennett is precisely seeking to determine the notional world of another from the outside, and as he writes, “although the results might bear a striking resemblance, the enabling assumptions are very different” (Dennett, 1987, 153). Nevertheless, Dennett also argues that his own method has some affinities with

classical phenomenology (Dennett, 1982, 159), and he obviously considers the former a replacement or substitute for the latter.

How does Dennett characterize classical phenomenology and what are its perceived failings? First and foremost, phenomenology is criticized for employing an unreliable introspectionist methodology. As Dennett puts it in an often quoted passage in *Consciousness Explained*, the aim of the philosophical tradition founded by Husserl was to

find a new foundation for all philosophy based on a special technique of introspection, in which the outer world and all its implications and presuppositions were supposed to be “bracketed” in a particular act of mind known as the *epoché*. The net result was an investigative state of mind in which the Phenomenologists was supposed to become acquainted with the pure objects of conscious experience, called *noemata*, untainted by the usual distortions and amendments of theory and practice. Like other attempts to strip away interpretation and reveal the basic facts of consciousness to rigorous observation, such as the Impressionist movement in the arts and the Introspectionist psychologies of Wundt, Titchener, and others, Phenomenology failed to find a single, settled method that everyone could agree upon (Dennett, 1991, 44).

What is wrong with the phenomenological methodology, why is it unreliable, and why did it fail to generate a consensus? One main reason is that introspection, according to Dennett, is less a matter of observation than of theorizing. In fact, it is precisely because there is so little to see, that there is so much room for fabrication and confabulation (Dennett, 1982, 173, 1991, 68, 94). Another reason is that a proper scientific investigation of consciousness must focus on the actual goings-on in the brain and such subpersonal mechanisms are not introspectively available, but are only accessible from the outside.

In addition, Dennett has repeatedly characterized classical phenomenology as an *autophenomenology* (Dennett, 1987, 153). For classical phenomenology, the subject and the object of the investigation coincide since the autophenomenologist, rather than investigating the mental life of others, has been concerned with his or her own mental life. In fact, classical phenomenology has been committed to a form of methodological solipsism (Dennett, 1987, 154). It has focused on the subject as a detached and self-sufficient existent and has thereby failed to recognize, for instance, to what extent consciousness is language-dependent. The phenomenologists have consistently emphasized the importance of the first-person perspective, they have tried to develop a first-person science, but in the end their introspectionist and solipsistic method simply doesn't qualify as a sound scientific method, since real science requires a third-person method (Dennett, 1987, 154–158, 1991, 70).

Dennett's treatment of the phenomenological tradition can hardly count as thorough and exhaustive. In fact, it doesn't really add up to more than a few scattered comments. This hasn't prevented him from dismissing it rather categorically, however. He has for instance written that Husserlians are deeply into obscurantism for its own sake and that reading their works is largely a waste of time (Dennett, 1994). But how familiar is Dennett with the topic of his criticism?

Somewhat surprisingly, Dennett has on more than one occasion called attention to what he sees as his own Husserlian heritage. As he has pointed out, he studied Husserl and other phenomenologists with Føllesdal as an undergraduate, and he also learned about phenomenology from his graduate advisor, Gilbert Ryle, whom Dennett considers a masterful scholar of phenomenology (Dennett, 1994). So in reply to those who have accused him of ignoring the resources of classical phenomenology, Dennett has replied that “it is precisely because my disregard has *not* been complete that it has been, and continues to be, so confident” (Dennett, 1994).

But Dennett has not only stressed his familiarity with the phenomenological tradition, he has also defended the accuracy of his own Husserl interpretation quite explicitly, and even argued that if his reading should turn out to be wrong, it would be so much the worse for Husserl (Dennett, 1994). This claim is rather puzzling. First of all, since Dennett consistently claims that Husserl has been employing a fatally flawed unscientific methodology, which is why autophenomenology needs to be replaced by heterophenomenology, it is difficult to see why Dennett’s interpretation should make Husserl particularly well off. Secondly, Dennett’s claim that all other interpretations of Husserl would make Husserl worse off is quite unfounded, since Dennett never provides us with any hint about what these other interpretations might amount to. But let us not remain in suspense; let us submit Dennett’s interpretation of classical phenomenology to a critical examination, and in turn discuss the validity of his two main objections.

### 3 Phenomenology and introspection

Let us start with the issue of introspection. Is phenomenology a kind of introspectionism? Dennett is not alone in making this claim. In his book *Being No One* Metzinger has recently argued in a similar fashion and has concluded that “phenomenology is impossible” (Metzinger, 2003, 83). What kind of argument does Metzinger provide? The basic argument seems to concern the epistemological difficulties connected to any first-person approach to data generation. If inconsistencies in two individual data sets should appear there is no way to settle the conflict. More specifically, Metzinger takes data to be things that are extracted from the physical world by technical measuring devices. This data-extraction involves a well-defined intersubjective procedure, it takes place within a scientific community, it is open to criticism, and it constantly seeks independent means of verification. The problem with phenomenology is that first-person access to the phenomenal content of one’s own mental state does not fulfill these defining criteria for the concept of data. In fact, the very notion of first-personal data is a contradiction in terms (Metzinger, 2003, 591).

But to repeat the question, is it really true that classical phenomenology is based on introspection? To answer this question, let us for once make use of the phenomenological dictum and return to the things themselves, which in this case are the actual writings of the phenomenologists. Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* is a recognized milestone in 20th century philosophy and indisputably a work in phenomenological philosophy. In fact, it constituted what Husserl himself took to be

his “breakthrough” to phenomenology. What kind of analyses does one find in this book? One finds Husserl’s famous attack on and rejection of psychologism; a defense of the irreducibility of logic and the ideality of meaning; an analysis of pictorial representations; a theory of the part-whole relation; a sophisticated account of intentionality; and an epistemological clarification of the relation between concepts and intuitions, to mention just a few of the many topics treated in the book. Is the method at work introspection, and is this a work in introspective psychology? I think it should be pretty obvious to anybody who has actually read the book that the answer is no. Should we then conclude that the book is after all not a work in phenomenology or should we rather reconsider our hasty identification of phenomenology and introspective psychology? Again, I think the answer should be obvious.

Although it would be an exaggeration to claim that Husserl’s analyses in *Logische Untersuchungen* found universal approval among the subsequent generations of phenomenologists, I don’t know of any instance at all where Husserl’s position was rejected on the basis of an appeal to “better” introspective evidence. On the contrary, Husserl’s analyses gave rise to an intense discussion among phenomenological philosophers, and many of the analyses were subsequently improved and refined by thinkers like Sartre, Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida (cf. Zahavi & Stjernfelt, 2002). Compare this to Metzinger’s claim that the phenomenological method cannot provide a method for generating any growth of knowledge since there is no way one can reach intersubjective consensus on claims like “this is the purest blue anyone can perceive” vs. “no it isn’t, it has a slight green hue” (Metzinger, 2003, 591). But these claims are simply not the type of claims that are to be found in works by phenomenological philosophers and to suggest so is to reveal one’s lack of familiarity with the tradition in question.

All the major figures in the phenomenological tradition have openly and unequivocally denied that they are engaged in some kind of introspective psychology and that the method they employ is a method of introspection (cf. Gurwitsch, 1966, 89–106, Heidegger, 1993, 11–17, Husserl, 1984b, 201–216, Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 70). To provide a fully exhaustive account of their reasons for this denial would necessitate a positive account of what classical phenomenology actually amounts to, and to do so *in extenso* falls outside the scope of this paper. However, let me try to briefly list some of the main reasons.<sup>2</sup>

To start with, it is important to realize that classical phenomenology is not just another name for a kind of psychological self-observation; rather it must be appreciated as a special form of transcendental philosophy that seeks to reflect on the conditions of possibility of experience and cognition.<sup>3</sup> Phenomenology is a philosophical enterprise; it is not an empirical discipline. This doesn’t rule out, of course, that its analyses might have ramifications for and be of pertinence to an empirical study of consciousness, but this is not its primary aim.

In a manuscript entitled *Phänomenologie und Psychologie* from 1917, Husserl raised the following question: Why introduce a new science entitled phenomenology when there is already a well established explanatory science dealing with the psychic

<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensive account, cf. Zahavi, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the unity of the phenomenological tradition, cf. Zahavi, 2007.



life of humans and animals, namely psychology. More specifically, psychology is a science of naturalized consciousness. And could it not be argued that a mere description of experience – which is supposedly all that phenomenology can offer – does not constitute a viable scientific alternative to psychology, but merely a – perhaps indispensable – descriptive preliminary to a truly scientific study of the mind (Husserl, 1987, 102). As Husserl remarks, this line of thought has been so convincing that the term “phenomenological” is being used in all kinds of philosophical and psychological writings to describe a direct description of consciousness based on introspection (Husserl, 1987, 103); a development that Husserl goes on to lament, since it entails a fundamental misunderstanding of the phenomenological enterprise. Thus, Husserl categorically rejects the attempt to equate the notion of phenomenological intuition with a type of inner experience or introspection (Husserl, 1987, 36), and he even argues that the very suggestion that phenomenology is attempting to reconstitute the method of introspection (*innerer Beobachtung*) is preposterous and perverse (Husserl, 1952, 38).

Husserl’s stance on this issue is fully shared by the other phenomenologists. Not only does Heidegger, to take one example, deny that his own analysis of the existential structures of Dasein is a psychological analysis (Heidegger, 1986, 45–50), he also writes that the attempt to interpret Husserl’s investigations as a kind of descriptive psychology completely fails to do justice to their transcendental character. In fact, as Heidegger adds, phenomenology will remain a book sealed with seven or more seals to any such psychological approach (Heidegger, 1993, 15–16).

What is behind this categorical dismissal? There are many different reasons. One is that phenomenology is concerned with disclosing what it takes to be a *non-psychological* dimension of consciousness. As Husserl writes in the early lecture course *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie* from 1906–1907: “If consciousness ceases to be a human or some other empirical consciousness, then the word loses all psychological meaning, and ultimately one is *led back to something absolute that is neither physical nor psychical being in a natural scientific sense*. However, in the phenomenological perspective this is the case throughout the field of givenness. It is precisely the apparently so obvious thought, that everything given is either physical or psychical that must be abandoned” (Husserl, 1984b, 242. Cf. Husserl, 1966, 338). Phenomenology is certainly interested in the phenomena and in their conditions of possibility, but phenomenologists would typically argue that it would be a metaphysical fallacy to locate the phenomenal realm within the mind, and to suggest that the way to access and describe it is by turning the gaze inwards (*introspecio*). As Husserl already pointed out in the *Logische Untersuchungen* the entire facile divide between inside and outside has its origin in a naïve commonsensical metaphysics and is phenomenologically suspect and inappropriate when it comes to understanding the nature of intentionality (Husserl, 1984a, 673, 708). But this divide is precisely something that the term “introspection” buys into and accepts. To speak of introspection is to (tacitly) endorse the idea that consciousness is inside the head and the world outside. The same criticism can also be found in Merleau-Ponty, who writes that “Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 467 [1962, 407]), and in Heidegger, who denies that the

relation between Dasein and world can be grasped with the help of the concepts “inner” and “outer.” As he writes in *Sein und Zeit*:

In directing itself toward...and in grasping something, Dasein does not first go outside of the inner sphere in which it is initially encapsulated, but, rather, in its primary kind of being, it is always already ‘outside’ together with some being encountered in the world already discovered. Nor is any inner sphere abandoned when Dasein dwells together with a being to be known and determines its character. Rather, even in this ‘being outside’ together with its object, Dasein is ‘inside’ correctly understood; that is, it itself exists as the being-in-the-world which knows (Heidegger, 1986, 62, cf. Heidegger, 1999, 75).

Let us briefly return to the issue of the phenomenological method. It has frequently been argued that the whole thrust of Husserlian phenomenology – the specific aim of the so-called epoché and reduction – is to exclude the world from consideration and bracket or suspend all questions concerning the being of reality in order to allow for a narrow focus on the internal life of the mind. This is also the way Dennett interprets Husserl, but this interpretation is mistaken. The purpose of the epoché and the reduction is not to doubt, neglect, abandon, or exclude reality from consideration, rather their aim, as Husserl repeatedly emphasizes, is to suspend or neutralize a certain dogmatic *attitude* towards reality, thereby allowing us to focus more narrowly and directly on reality just as it is given. In short, the epoché entails a change of attitude towards reality, and not an exclusion of reality. As Husserl makes clear, the only thing that is excluded as a result of the epoché is a certain naivety, the naivety of simply taken the world for granted, thereby ignoring the contribution of consciousness (Husserl, 1989, 173). To put it differently, the epoché and the reduction do not involve an exclusive turn inward. On the contrary, they permit us to investigate reality from a new reflective attitude, namely in its significance and manifestation for consciousness (Husserl, 1989, 178). Although this reflective investigation differs from a straightforward exploration of the world, it remains an investigation of reality; it is not an investigation of some otherworldly, mental, realm. Only a mistaken view of the nature of meaning and appearance would lead to such a misunderstanding. We should consequently not commit the mistake of interpreting the notion of givenness mentalistically, as if it were part of the mental inventory. “*Phenomenology ain’t in the head*” as Tye would say (Tye, 1995, 151).

How do we go about describing the experiential difference between tasting wine and tasting water, between hearing a foghorn and seeing the full moon, or between affirming and denying that the Eiffel Tower is taller than the Empire State Building? Do we do so by severing our intentional link with the world and by turning some spectral gaze inwards? No, of course not. We discover these differences, and we analyze them descriptively by paying attention to how worldly objects and state of affairs appear to us. The phenomenological descriptions take their point of departure in the world we live in.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, we should see the field of givenness, the phenomena, as something that questions the very subject-object split, as something that stresses the

<sup>4</sup> For a recent, quite similar claim, cf. Noë, 2005, 179.

co-emergence of self and world. This outlook is for instance clearly articulated in the writings of Merleau-Ponty. He insists that a phenomenological description, rather than disclosing subjectivities that are inaccessible and self-sufficient, reveals continuity between intersubjective life and the world. The subject realizes itself in its presence to the world and to others – not in spite of, but precisely *by way of* its corporeality and historicity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 515).

By adopting the phenomenological attitude we pay attention to the givenness of public objects (trees, planets, paintings, symphonies, numbers, states of affairs, social relations, etc.). But we do not simply focus on the objects precisely as they are given; we also focus on the subjective side of consciousness, thereby becoming aware of our subjective accomplishments and of the intentionality that is at play in order for the objects to appear as they do. When we investigate appearing objects, we also disclose ourselves as datives of manifestation, as those to whom objects appear. The topic of the phenomenological analyses is consequently not a worldless subject, and phenomenology does not ignore the world in favor of consciousness. On the contrary, phenomenology is interested in consciousness because it is world-disclosing. Phenomenology should therefore be understood as a philosophical analysis of the different types of givenness (perceptual, imaginative, recollective etc.), and in connection with this as a reflective investigation of those structures of experience and understanding that permit different types of beings to show themselves as what they are.<sup>5</sup>

Phenomenology is not concerned with establishing what a given individual might currently be experiencing. Phenomenology is not interested in qualia in the sense of purely individual data that are incorrigible, ineffable, and incomparable. Phenomenology is not interested in psychological processes (in contrast to behavioral processes or physical processes). Phenomenology is interested in the very dimension of givenness or appearance and seeks to explore its essential structures and conditions of possibility. Such an investigation of the field of presence is beyond any divide between psychical interiority and physical exteriority, since it is an investigation of the dimension in which any object – be it external or internal – manifests itself (cf. Heidegger, 1986, 419, Waldenfels, 2000, 217). Phenomenology aims to disclose structures that are intersubjectively accessible, and its analyses are consequently open for corrections and control by any (phenomenologically tuned) subject.

It should by now be clear that phenomenology has quite different aims and concerns than introspective psychology. Couldn't it be argued, however, that the difference in question, rather than being a difference in whether or not introspection is employed, is merely a difference in the use that the introspective results are being put to? To put it differently, couldn't it be argued that since introspection is a method used to investigate consciousness from the first-person perspective, and given phenomenology's renowned emphasis on such a first-person approach to

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<sup>5</sup> Husserl's technical name for this investigation is that it is an analysis of the noesis-noema correlation. His theory of intentionality is firmly located in the context of this correlation, and as Marbach has quite correctly pointed out, the noetic structures that Husserl manages to unearth in his sophisticated analysis are structures that are completely overlooked in Dennett's own account (cf. Marbach, 1994). For a more detailed account of Husserl's theory of intentionality, cf. Drummond, 1990; Marbach, 1993.

consciousness, it is simply ridiculous to deny that phenomenology makes use of introspection? But this argument simply begs the question by defining introspection in such general terms that it covers all investigations of consciousness that takes the first-person perspective seriously.

#### 4 Phenomenology and solipsism

Let me make the transition to the issue of solipsism by briefly commenting on a section from the chapter “The Phenomenal Field” in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Not only does Merleau-Ponty in this chapter confirm our preceding analysis, by adding a couple of additional reasons for not conflating phenomenological analyses with introspective observations but he also broaches an issue that is crucial to the next step of our argument, the issue concerning the relation between conscious experience and bodily behavior and its relevance for our understanding of the similarities and differences between self-experience and other-experience.

Merleau-Ponty starts out by saying that it for a long time has been customary to define the object of psychology by claiming that it is accessible to one person only, namely the bearer of the mental state in question, and that the only way to grasp this object is by means of a special kind of internal perception or introspection. However, this return to the “immediate data of consciousness” quickly turned out to face quite some challenges. Not only did it prove difficult to communicate any insights concerning this private realm to others, but the investigator himself could never be really sure about what exactly this immediate and pure experiential life amounted to, since it by definition eluded every attempt to express, grasp or describe it by means of public language and concepts (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 70).

Echoing (or rather foreshadowing) Dennett’s criticism, Merleau-Ponty then points out that phenomenology has demonstrated how hopelessly mistaken this view is. According to the findings of phenomenology, the world of experience, the phenomenal field, is not some “inner world,” nor is the phenomenon a “state of consciousness” or a “mental fact” the experience of which requires a special act of introspection. Rather, we should realize that consciousness is not something that is visible to one person only, and invisible to everybody else. Consciousness is not something exclusively inner, something cut off from the body and the surrounding world, as if the life of the mind could remain precisely the same even if it had no bodily and linguistic expressions. Gestures, expressions, and actions are more than brute external data whose psychological meaning is to be sought elsewhere, namely in some superimposed inner experience; rather the intentional behavior constitutes a whole charged with meaning. It is this meaning that is immediately given, and my own “psyche” is given to me in the same way as the “psyche” of others, namely in the form of an articulated and melodic unity of behavior (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 70–71).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This is only part of the story though, since Merleau-Ponty also emphasizes the first-personal givenness of consciousness and argues that I don’t live through, say, the anger and grief of another in the same way as that person him- or herself (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 409, 418).

Merleau-Ponty ends up declaring that phenomenology is distinguished in all its characteristics from introspective psychology and that the difference in question is a difference in principle. Whereas the introspective psychologist considers consciousness as a mere sector of being, and tries to investigate this sector in the same way the physicist tries to investigate his, the phenomenologist realizes that consciousness ultimately calls for a transcendental clarification that goes beyond common sense postulates and brings us face to face with the problem concerning the constitution of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 72).

In other writings, Merleau-Ponty has argued that unless self-experience is embodied and embedded, intersubjectivity will be neither possible nor comprehensible. Had subjectivity and selfhood been an exclusive first-person phenomenon, only present in the form of an immediate and unique inwardness, I would know of only one case - my own - and would never get to know any other. Not only would I lack the means of ever recognizing other bodies as embodied subjects, I would also lack the ability to recognize myself in the mirror, and more generally, I would be unable to grasp a certain intersubjectively describable body as myself. But according to Merleau-Ponty, subjectivity is not hermetically sealed up within itself, remote from the world and inaccessible to the other. It is, above all, a relation to the world, and Merleau-Ponty accordingly writes that access to others is secured the moment that I define both others and myself as co-existing relations to the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 114). It is because I am not a pure disembodied interiority, but an embodied being in the world, that I am capable of encountering and understanding others who exist in the same way (Merleau-Ponty, 1960, 215, 1964, 74). Thus, the standard question, "How do I find an access to the other" is mistaken. It signals that I am enclosed in my own interiority, and that I must then employ specific methods to reach the other who is outside. Such a way of framing the problem fails to recognize the nature of embodiment. To exist embodied is to exist in such a way that one exists under the gaze of the other, accessible to the other; my bodily behavior always has a public side to it. This is not to say that a focus on embodiment will eradicate the difference between self-ascription and other-ascription, between a first-person perspective and a second-person perspective. We should respect this difference, but we should also conceive of it in a manner that avoids giving rise to the mistaken view that only my own experiences are given to me and that the behavior of the other shields his experiences from me and makes their very existence hypothetical (cf. Avramides, 2001, 187).

One can find a comparable view in Scheler, who has argued that we should not ignore what can be directly perceived about others and fail to acknowledge the embodied and embedded nature of self-experience. Thus, Scheler denies that our initial self-acquaintance is of a purely mental nature and that it takes place in isolation from others. But he also denies that our basic acquaintance with others is inferential in nature. In his view, there is something highly problematic about claiming that intersubjective understanding is a two-stage process of which the first stage is the perception of meaningless behavior and the second an intellectually based attribution of psychological meaning. On the contrary, in the face-to-face encounter, we are neither confronted with a mere body, nor with a hidden psyche, but with a unified whole. It is in this context that Scheler speaks of an "expressive

unity” (*Ausdruckseinheit*). It is only subsequently, through a process of abstraction, that this unity can be divided and our interest then proceed “inwards” or “outwards” (Scheler, 1973, 255).

Both Scheler and Merleau-Ponty would reject the view that our encounter with others is, first and foremost, an encounter with bodily and behavioral exteriorities devoid of any psychological properties. According to such a view, defended by behaviorists and Cartesians alike, behavior, considered in itself, is neither expressive nor meaningful. All that is *given* are physical qualities and their changes. Seeing a radiant expression means seeing certain characteristic distortions of the facial muscles. According to both phenomenologists, such a view fails not only to recognize the true nature of behavior, but it also presents us with a misleading perspective on the mind, suggesting, as it does, that the mind is a purely internal happening located and hidden in the head. For both Scheler and Merleau-Ponty, affective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience, rather, they are given *in* expressive phenomena, i.e., they are expressed in bodily gestures and actions and they, thereby, become visible to others. As Scheler writes,

For we certainly believe ourselves to be directly acquainted with another person’s joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection, with his rage in the gnashing of his teeth, with his threats in the clenching of his fist, and with the tenor of his thoughts in the sound of his words. If anyone tells me that this is not ‘perception,’ for it cannot be so, in view of the fact that a perception is simply a ‘complex of physical sensations,’ and that there is certainly no sensation of another person’s mind nor any stimulus from such a source, I would beg him to turn aside from such questionable theories and address himself to the phenomenological facts (Scheler, 1973, 254 [1954, 260]. Cf. Gurwitsch, 1979, 56).

In short, we should realize that the bodies of others differ radically from inanimate objects, and that our perception of these minded bodies is unlike our ordinary perception of objects. As Sartre has pointed out, it would be a decisive mistake to think that my ordinary encounter with the body of another is an encounter with the kind of body described by physiology. The body of another is always given to me in a situation or meaningful context that is supported by that very body (Sartre, 1943, 395). The relation between self and other is not established by way of a theoretical inference; on the contrary, we should recognize the existence of a distinctive mode of consciousness, frequently called *empathy*, that allows us to experience behavior as expressive of mind, that is, which allows us to access the feelings, desires, and beliefs of others in their expressive behavior.

Most phenomenologists have argued that it makes no sense to speak of an other unless the other is in some way given and accessible. That I have an actual experience of the other and do not have to do with a mere inference does not imply, however, that I can experience the other in the same way as she herself does, nor that the other’s consciousness is accessible to me in the same way as my own is. The second- (and third-) person access to psychological states differ from the first-person access, but this difference is not an imperfection or a shortcoming; rather, it is

constitutional. It makes the experience in question an experience of an other, rather than a self-experience. As Husserl wrote: Had I had the same access to the consciousness of the other as I have to my own, the other would cease being an other and instead become a part of myself (Husserl, 1950, 139). To put it differently, the first-personal givenness of the mind of the other is inaccessible to me, but it is exactly this inaccessibility, this limit, which I can experience, and which makes the experience in question, an experience of an other (Husserl, 1950, 144). We experience the behavior of others as expressive of the mental states that transcend the behavior that expresses them.

Our experience and understanding of others are fallible. This should not cause us to conclude that we cannot understand others and that empathy is to be distrusted. Other people can certainly fake or conceal their experiences. There is, however, a decisive difference between our everyday uncertainty about exactly what others might be thinking about and the nightmare vision of the solipsist. Although we may be uncertain about the specific beliefs or intentions of others, this uncertainty does not make us question their very existence. In fact, as Merleau-Ponty pointed out, our relation to others is deeper than any specific uncertainty we might have regarding them (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 415).

Are the issue of phenomenological methodology and the issue of intersubjectivity related in any way? They certainly are, as Husserl was quick to point out. Thus, Husserl has consistently argued that my perceptual experience is an experience of intersubjectively accessible being which does not exist for me alone, but for everybody. I *experience* objects, events and actions as public, not as private. It is against this background that Husserl introduced his concept of *transcendental intersubjectivity* (Husserl, 1973, 110, 378). His idea was that objectivity is intersubjectively constituted and that a clarification of its constitution, accordingly, calls for an examination of my experience of other subjects. When it comes to the constitution of objectivity, we are faced with an issue that transcends the horizon of the individual and calls for the contribution of other subjects. Objectivity is constitutively related to a plurality of subjects and according to Husserl, the constitution of this objectivity takes place within the framework of a certain normality. For this reason, the phenomenological discussion of subjectivity, which is a discussion of the transcendental, i.e., meaning-bestowing and world-disclosing subject, turns out to be a discussion not simply of the I, but of the *we*. This is why, Husserl ultimately argued that the transcendental subject is only what it is within intersubjectivity and that intersubjectivity must be taken into consideration if we wish to understand what it means to be a transcendental subject (Husserl, 1950, 69, 1954, 275, 472, 1959, 129, 1962, 245–46, 1973, 74–5). Thus, it is no coincidence that Husserl at times describes his own project as a *sociological* transcendental philosophy (Husserl, 1962, 539) and even writes that the development of phenomenology necessarily implies the step from an “‘egological’ ... phenomenology into a transcendental sociological phenomenology having reference to a manifest multiplicity of conscious subjects communicating with one another” (Husserl, 1981, 68). Husserl would consequently have had no problem accepting the following statement by Davidson: “A community of minds is the basis of knowledge; it provides the measure of all things. It makes no sense to question

the adequacy of this measure, or to seek a more ultimate standard” (Davidson, 2001, 218).

There is much more to be said both about the issue of phenomenological methodology, but also about the phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity, but I hope it should by now be clear that the phenomenological take on both issues differs considerably from Dennett’s reading.

## 5 Heterophenomenology revisited

Dennett has famously written that a “first-person science of consciousness is a discipline with no methods, no data, no results, no future, no promise. It will remain a fantasy” (Dennett, 2001). I would concede that there is a certain way of understanding the notion of a first-person science given which Dennett’s verdict is true. To argue for first-person infallibility and to deny the need for intersubjective confirmation is not the right way forward. However, the crucial question is whether the only alternative to such a misbegotten solipsistic enterprise is Dennett’s own third-person absolutism (to use Siewert’s expression). Is there no middle ground? Dennett, of course, will say no. He has argued that all attempts to sketch out a middle ground will inevitably collapse into a version of heterophenomenology. To put it differently, one of Dennett’s main arguments for his own position is that he considers it the only scientifically respectable alternative to the alleged failings of autophenomenology. It is, as we have already seen, questionable whether classical phenomenology is really vulnerable to Dennett’s criticism. But what about his claim that your position will willy-nilly collapse into heterophenomenology if only you eschew incorrigibility claims and acknowledge that third-person science can answer questions that cannot be answered from the first-person point of view (Dennett, 2001, 2003, 26)? Much depends upon the inclusiveness of heterophenomenology. As we have repeatedly seen, Dennett is keen to emphasize that heterophenomenology can do justice to even the most subjective of experiences, and that it leaves nothing of importance out. But is this really true?

Let us quickly recapitulate Dennett’s moves. Dennett first argues that the only ontological commitment made by the heterophenomenologist is to the existence of beliefs. For a while it seems as if heterophenomenology is to remain neutral on the question of whether there are any phenomenal experiences, but eventually it turns out that Dennett wants to dispense with phenomenal consciousness altogether, since he argues that the stream of consciousness contains nothing but propositional episodes. Needless to say this view has dramatic implications for the ascription of conscious experiences such as hunger, fear, pain and pleasure to animals and infants, but Dennett is fully prepared to draw the consequences. He argues that we might be suffering from a great delusion when we think that animals are conscious, and that it is the merest presumption to claim that infants are experiencing anything (Dennett, 1993b, 147–148). In a subsequent step, Dennett then compares the task facing the heterophenomenologist who wishes to interpret the subject’s behavior with the task facing the reader who wants to interpret a work of fiction (Dennett, 1991, 79), and argues that beliefs should be treated as theorists’ fictions (Dennett, 2003, 20). They



might have a heuristic value, but metaphysically speaking they have the same status as literary figures like Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Pickwick, and Little Red Riding Hood. They are fictional objects and if asked what they are made of, the answer is “Nothing” (Dennett, 1982, 175, 1991, 95). In the end, the whole edifice of folk psychology turns out to be shaky indeed. It is all one big illusion, and after Dennett’s deconstruction nothing is left standing.

It is hard to understand why a mere denial of first-person incorrigibility and an acceptance of the explanatory power of third-person science should force one to accept such an uncompromising stance. It is in any case, a mistake to equate the issue of first-person access to consciousness with epistemic claims concerning first-person infallibility or incorrigibility and to deny the former because one rejects the latter. It is also hard to reconcile Dennett’s conclusion with his initial promise that heterophenomenology is the way to save the rich phenomenology of consciousness for scientific study, but then again, Dennett only claimed that the method would take the first-person perspective as seriously as it could be taken, and he never concealed that his version of functionalism might end up being strongly at odds with common wisdom (Dennett, 1991, 31, 37). As he writes in *Consciousness Explained*, “When we understand consciousness – when there is no more mystery – consciousness will be different, but there will still be beauty, and more room than ever for awe” (Dennett, 1991, 25). But again, is this really convincing? As Strawson has recently stated, no account of reality (or consciousness) can be correct if it denies the existence of experience, if it for instance denies that the experience of pain is real. Whatever else pain might be, its reality includes its experiential character, and as regards its experiential character, how it seems is how it is. To suggest that although it seems as if there is experience, there really isn’t any, is a no starter, since the seeming is itself an experience (Strawson, 1994, 52).

As we have seen, one of Dennett’s reasons for rejecting classical phenomenology has been its inability to settle on a method that everybody could agree upon. However, it should be pretty obvious that this demand is set unrealistically high (cf. Cerbone, 2003, Varela, 1996), and that very few theories would be able to meet it. Among those who would fall short is Dennett’s own position. Not only has his heterophenomenology failed to generate universal consensus, but there also seems to be quite some disagreement about what the method actually amounts to, which is why Dennett has repeatedly had to ward off what he considers to be various misinterpretations.

Dennett has complained that people’s reluctance to accept his heterophenomenology is ideology-driven rather than data-driven (Dennett, 2003, 29). I would be inclined to take the opposite view. As far as I can see, Dennett’s commitment to a form of metaphysical minimalism – and let us just call it by its proper name, eliminativism – precedes the discussion of the alleged impossibility of providing intersubjectively validatable descriptions of phenomenal consciousness. Only such a prior commitment can explain why Dennett finds it appropriate to compare the belief in the existence of experiences such as pains with the belief in the existence of mythical gods such as Quetzalcoatl or Feenoman. Only such a prior commitment can explain why Dennett finds it reasonable to claim that we should remain neutral about the existence of experiences simply because of the existence of false positives and

false negatives, i.e., simply because of the possibility of error. Compare this attitude with the one found in empirical science. What physician would ever argue that we should adopt a stance of neutrality vis-à-vis the existence of breast cancer because mammography is not a foolproof screening method? The really central question for Dennett seems to be whether phenomenal consciousness can without further ado be made compatible with a form of functionalism, and if this turns out not to be the case, phenomenal consciousness must go regardless of how open it is for intersubjective validation. Thus, I ultimately find the whole issue of whether or not it is possible to establish a reliable first-person science something of a red herring.<sup>7</sup> I think that Varela was quite right when he insisted that we should distinguish the subjective and the private, and when he claimed that the subjective remains open to intersubjective validation if only we avail ourselves of the proper method and procedure for doing so (Varela & Shear, 1999, 2). Contrary to what Dennett is suggesting, a science of consciousness should draw on both the first-, second- and the third-person point of view, just like all of us do when we engage in the everyday practice of understanding ourselves and others.

If the only data the heterophenomenologists are allowed to rely on are the data that are available from the outside, they will not be permitted to draw implicitly on their own first-person understanding of consciousness when they are to interpret and understand the interviewed subject's verbal reports. In fact, and needless to point out, the heterophenomenologists have no direct first-personal access to their own consciousness, according to Dennett. They only have a theoretically mediated access. If they want to know what they are experiencing, they must acquire the knowledge by observing their own behavior. Or to be more correct, they don't even have a theoretically mediated access to the experiential dimension, since there is no such dimension. All that exist are judgments about experiences; judgments that are systematically false and which themselves (qua conscious beliefs) turn out to be metaphysical fictions. But given this setup, given that the heterophenomenologists are prevented from relying on their own first-personal acquaintance with consciousness, it is hard to see how they should ever be able or even inclined to ascribe mental states to others (cf. Gallagher, 1997, Marbach, 1994, Zahavi, 2005).

In *The Intentional Stance*, Dennett concedes that there is no way to avoid having philosophical preconceptions (Dennett, 1987, 2). He also points out that what might appear as incontestable true to one person, might strike another as a mere "relic of an outmoded world view" (Dennett, 1987, 4). Since there is always more than one avenue that cries out for philosophical exploration and development, one might be forced to make a tactical choice. The choice made by Dennett is to bet his money on the objective, materialistic, third-person world of the physical sciences, and to take that as his starting point (Dennett, 1987, 5). Just as Dennett has with good reason insisted that we shouldn't simply take folk psychology for granted, but that we need to question and clarify its status and scope, classical phenomenology has insisted that we shouldn't simply take the scientific third-person perspective for granted, but

<sup>7</sup> I also find the discussion of whether or not heterophenomenology actually matches the established practice in cognitive science spurious (Dennett, 1993a, 50). The pertinent question is not this question, but the question of whether or not the practice in question is able to do justice to consciousness.

that its status and scope is in need of clarification. One of philosophy's tasks is to critically examine our naively held beliefs and convictions. But there is naivety at play not only in folk psychology, but also in the scientism that Dennett favors. From the viewpoint of classical phenomenology, Dennett's heterophenomenology must be criticized not only for simply presupposing the availability of the third-person perspective without reflecting on and articulating its conditions of possibility, but also for failing to realize to what extent its own endeavor tacitly presupposes an intact first-person perspective.

Science is a specific theoretical stance towards the world. This stance is not a view from nowhere, it did not fall down from the sky, nor did it emerge fully formed and ready made like Athena from Zeus' forehead. Science is performed by embodied and embedded subjects, and if we wish to comprehend the performance and limits of science, we have to investigate the forms of intentionality that are employed by the cognizing subjects. As Merleau-Ponty points out in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the one-sided focus of science on what is available from a third-person perspective is both naïve and dishonest, since the scientific practice constantly presupposes the scientist's first-personal and pre-scientific experience of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, iii). The standardizations of procedures and the development of instruments that provide precise measurements have facilitated the generation and accumulation of data and the establishment of intersubjective consensus. But without conscious subjects to interpret and discuss them, meter settings, computer printouts, x-ray pictures, and the like remain meaningless (Velmans, 2000, 179). Objectivity is certainly something to strive for, but scientific knowledge depends on the observations and experiences of individuals; it is knowledge that is shared by a community of experiencing subjects. This is why the usual opposition of first-person vs. third-person accounts is misleading. It makes us forget that so-called third-person objective accounts are accomplished and generated by a community of conscious subjects. There is no pure third-person perspective, just as there is no view from nowhere. To believe in the existence of such a pure third-person perspective is to succumb to an objectivist illusion. This is, of course, not to say that there is no third-person perspective, but merely that such a perspective is, precisely, a perspective from somewhere. It is a view that *we* can adopt on the world. It is a perspective that involves a first-person perspective, or to be more precise it is a perspective that involves several first-person perspectives, it emerges in an intersubjective context.

I realize that much more could and should be said if this criticism of Dennett's heterophenomenology is to accomplish more than simply to preach to the converted, but I hope that my brief remarks in this section can at least serve to pinpoint some of the issues in Dennett's position that classical phenomenology would find contentious.

## 6 Conclusion

Dennett is quite right to stress the difference between classical phenomenology and his own heterophenomenology. As I have tried to argue, however, classical phenomenology shouldn't feel overly threatened neither by Dennett's criticism,

since he has by and large got the tradition wrong, nor for that matter by his own suggested alternative. To put it differently, and this is something that also Marbach has pointed out, Dennett has severely underestimated the resources found in classical phenomenology (Marbach, 1994). This is so, not only because of his misreading of Husserl, but also because of his tendency to disregard the contributions by, e.g., Scheler, Heidegger, Gurwitsch, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

Let me anticipate a critical objection. Even if it is conceded that classical phenomenology doesn't employ an introspective methodology, this in itself will hardly redeem phenomenology, since the butt of the criticism is that this philosophical tradition is incapable of contributing significantly to the current science of consciousness, and in order to refute that criticism much more needs to be said. To some extent I agree. The proof of the pudding is indeed in the eating, and the only way to prove the contemporary relevance of the highly differentiated analyses of conscious experience found in phenomenology is by showing so *in concreto*. I have tried to do so elsewhere, however, and so have numerous other people.<sup>8</sup> Let me here merely point to a debate that in recent years has raged in a number of journals concerning how best to integrate phenomenology and empirical science – whether it be in the form of a neurophenomenology, a front-loaded phenomenology, or an indirect phenomenology (cf. Gallagher, 2003). I find this ongoing debate encouraging. It is a clear sign that the phenomenological approach is currently being pursued in both theoretical discussions and experimental research by a growing number of younger philosophers and scientists who are thereby continuing the work of the classical phenomenologists.

Classical phenomenology is not only an investigation of the first-person givenness of conscious experience; in its wide-ranging analyses of intersubjectivity it has also investigated the second-person givenness of consciousness in detail. Thus, contrary to Dennett's claim, classical phenomenology already combines the resources of auto- and heterophenomenology. To put it differently, not only do the classical phenomenologists stress the interdependency of auto- and heterophenomenology, contrary to what Dennett himself is doing; in their numerous analyses of how foreign subjectivity manifests itself in gestures, expressions and bodily behavior, they have also provided us with a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of how to *heterophenomenologize* than Dennett has done.

Given that Dennett is committed to the view that there are neither other subjects (since there are no real subjects in the first place) nor any real phenomenology, one might ultimately ask whether his position really deserves the name heterophenomenology. Let me conclude by suggesting that a more fitting label might be *nemophenomenology*, or if we want to keep it Greek, *outisphenomenology*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Gallagher, 1997, 2003; Marbach, 1993, 1994; Parnas, 2003; Petitot, Varela, Pachoud, & Roy, 1999; Sass & Parnas, 2007; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Varela, 1996; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Zahavi, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2005.

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