

## 5

## First-Person Knowledge in Phenomenology

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**Abstract:** An account of the source of first-person knowledge is essential not just for phenomenology, but for anyone who takes seriously the apparent evidence that we each have a distinctive access to knowing what we experience. One standard way to account for the source of first-person knowledge is by appeal to a kind of inner observation of the passing contents of one's own mind, and phenomenology is often thought to rely on introspection. I argue, however, that Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction was designed precisely to find a route to knowledge of the structures of consciousness that was *independent* of any appeal to observation of one's own mental states. The goals of this essay are to explicate Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction in contemporary terms that (1) show its distance from all inner-observation accounts, (2) exhibit its kinship to and historical influence on outer-observation accounts of self-knowledge popularized by Sellars, and (3) demonstrate that a contemporary 'cognitive transformation' view based on Husserl's method may provide a viable contribution to contemporary debates about the source of self-knowledge.

There must be some means of first-person access to experience if phenomenology, or any study like it, is to be possible at all.<sup>1</sup> For phenomenology is supposed to provide the basis for a first-person study of the mind, and thus requires some first-person way of acquiring knowledge about mental state types, their contents, and so on. If there is not, then the only possible means of acquiring knowledge of the mind will involve third-person access via external behavioral or physiological studies. Anyone who thinks that phenomenological descriptions have some role to play in philosophy of mind thus owes an account of how such distinctive first-person knowledge can be acquired.

But an account of the source and possibility of a kind of first-person knowledge about our own experiences is not just a theoretic need for those engaged in phenomenology or

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<sup>1</sup> It does not necessarily, however, require that this first-person access yield *infallible* beliefs about our own experience. This is a separate issue, and clearly phenomenology, like so many other studies, could provide knowledge even if it is not an infallible source of knowledge. Nor does it require that we have first-person knowledge of *all* of our own mental states. There may be limits to the scope of such knowledge without it failing to provide useful information in those cases in which it is present.

other first-person approaches the mind. For there is a great deal of apparent evidence that we have a distinctive first-person knowledge of our own conscious mental states, which any theory of mind must either be able to account for or explain away. It certainly seems that, if I am lying quietly in bed, I can know that I'm thinking about last night's movie even if no external observer would have grounds for knowing this (cf. Siewert 1998: 33–6). Similarly, it seems that we can each have knowledge about our own mental states even when others have reason to believe the *contrary*—we can knowingly lie about and mislead others about our own thoughts, feelings, or experiences (Siewert 1998: 31–2). But it has remained an enduring philosophical puzzle, subject to much recent discussion in analytic philosophy of mind, how this apparent first-person knowledge of our conscious states is possible, and what its source might be.

One standard way to account for this apparent first-person knowledge (which I will call 'introspectionist', following the literal meaning of 'introspection' as a quasi-perceptual way of being spectators on our inner states of mind) has been to posit a special faculty enabling us to observe our inner states, much as perception consists in observation of external states of the world. But such quasi-perceptual methods of introspection have been considered discredited. I will argue that at least to some extent these criticisms are apt, and that such views cannot in any case provide an adequate understanding of self-knowledge.

It is often thought that phenomenological knowledge must be based on an internal inspection of our mental states, and so phenomenology must fall with introspectionism, so conceived (Dennett 1987: 154, 157–8). But does phenomenology really rely on 'using some sort of introspection' (Dennett 1987: 154)? And is there no other way of explaining the source of our apparent first-person knowledge?

I will argue that the answer to both questions is 'no'. Far from relying on inner observation of our mental states, Husserl explicitly rejected introspectionist views of self-knowledge, and developed the method of phenomenological reduction as the route to a very different understanding of the possibility and source of knowledge of our own conscious states. Indeed Husserl's account of phenomenological method bears much more resemblance to accounts of self-knowledge developed by Wilfrid Sellars, Fred Dretske and Sydney Shoemaker—based in the idea that knowledge of one's own experiences is in some sense based on *outer* observation of the world, rather than a direct *inner* observation of one's own experiences—than to inner observation accounts.<sup>2</sup>

The goals of this essay are both historical and thematic. First, I hope to explicate at least the early stages of Husserl's phenomenological method in a way that makes it clear how different his account is from inner-observation models of self-knowledge, thus showing that it would be completely misguided to dismiss phenomenology with introspectionism. Secondly, I will elucidate the thematic and historical connections between the method of acquiring first-person knowledge Husserl championed in the

<sup>2</sup> Certainly these are not the only approaches to self-knowledge. Charles Siewert (2001) develops a different sort of approach to self-knowledge based in the idea that first-person judgments about appearances aren't subject to the same kinds of error as world-oriented judgments are, since correctly classifying one's experience is a precondition for even understanding our expression of judgments about appearances.

phenomenological reduction, and the ‘outer observation’ accounts popularized by Wilfrid Sellars (among others) in analytic philosophy of mind—thereby setting the historical record straight, showing the relevance phenomenology not only can have but has had to analytic philosophy of mind, and (I hope) providing some insight into both views. Finally, in §4, I will develop what I call the ‘Cognitive Transformation’ view of self-knowledge, based on Husserl’s suggestions about how the phenomenological reduction can work, enabling us to proceed from first-order, world-oriented experience to knowledge about our own intentional conscious states and their ways of presenting the world. Insofar as it is successful, this development may show that not only is Husserl’s view not open to easy dismissal; it may provide the basis for a viable contribution to the contemporary debate about the source of first-person knowledge.<sup>3</sup> In closing I will address some challenges that remain for stories like Husserl’s about how we could acquire knowledge of our own conscious states.

### 1. INNER OBSERVATION

One traditional method of accounting for our first-person knowledge of our own mental states is to postulate a faculty that enables us to be ‘spectators’ of our own inner states, in much the way that perception enables us to be spectators of an external world (Rosenthal 1997: 752 n. 59). As David Armstrong puts it, ‘Introspective consciousness . . . is a perception-like awareness of current states and activities in our own mind’ (1997: 724). Such inwardly directed observations are higher-order states, since they take our first-order mental states (perceptions, thoughts, desires, etc.) as their objects. The idea that our knowledge of our own mental states is based in inwardly directed observation can then explain the distinctive first-person character of knowledge of our mental states, since in each case this form of observation is possible only for one’s own mental states.

Such introspectionist views of the source of self-knowledge thus go quite naturally with higher-order views of consciousness, that take consciousness to consist in those states of which we have a perception-like awareness (Armstrong 1997, Lycan 1997). If a state’s being conscious entails that it is the object of a higher-order act of perception-like awareness, and that awareness is capable of providing knowledge of the state, then that would explain how all conscious states may be accessible to a distinctively first-person form of knowledge.

But such higher-order views of consciousness have recently come under attack for a variety of reasons (Thomasson 2000: 198–9), among others that if a state is conscious only if there is a higher-order state that takes it as an object, then we are left with either an infinite regress of higher-order mental states or with the odd situation in which we must postulate a huge number of unconscious mental states for which existence we have no other evidence (Chalmers 1996: 230–1) and which (although they are themselves unconscious) can make other states conscious (Smith 1986: 150). Thus others

<sup>3</sup> However, the epistemic project of determining whether or not the apparent self-knowledge so derived has the status of genuine knowledge, incorrigibility, etc., must be left for another occasion.

have attempted to formulate a one-level understanding of consciousness (Siewert 1998, Thomas 1997, Thomasson 2000). But the challenge remains for such one-level views of consciousness to account for how knowledge of our own conscious mental states is derived, if they aren't typically accompanied by higher-order experiences of them (Thomasson 2002a).

One could of course reject the idea that being the object of an introspective state was definitive of consciousness, while retaining the idea that such higher-order observations are nonetheless *frequently* present and provide the basis for our first-person knowledge of those mental states they accompany. But on closer examination, the very idea that we have a distinct higher-order perception-like awareness of (many of) our mental states is hard to make sense of. It seems simply implausible to claim that there is such a higher-order perception-like awareness since such purported pseudo-perceptual states would lack any distinctive qualia of their own (Dretske 1997: 784–5). Indeed such purported states of perception-like awareness seem to lack *any* characteristics that could distinguish them from our mere (conceptual) judgments about our first-order experiences. As Charles Siewert puts it 'The problem I have with this suggestion is that, as far as I can tell, there is no sense in which my experience "appears" some way to me, in which its appearing this way to me is a self-reflexive intentional feature distinct from my thinking or judging it to be some way' (1998: 187–216).

Even if we can make sense of this idea of a pseudo-perceptual observation of our mental states, it is far from clear that it can provide the basis for an acceptable account of self-knowledge. Sydney Shoemaker (1996: 25–49, 201–42) argues that this is an unacceptable view of self-knowledge because (among other reasons) on such a pseudo-perceptual view the link between our higher-order observations and the first-order mental states to which they are directed should be contingent. Just as it is possible that a rational individual with developed visual concepts be blind to all visible objects before her, so (on this view) it should be possible that a rational person with developed concepts of mental states fail to introspectively perceive her own mental states. Yet Shoemaker argues (1996: 30–49) that this is not possible, casting doubt on the whole picture of self-knowledge being based in higher-order perception-like observations of one's own mental states.

These problems with higher-order perception views might be thought to cause problems for phenomenology for two reasons. First, such a view has long been associated with the phenomenological tradition from Brentano onwards (Güzeldere 1997: 789), so problems with it might be thought to be problems with phenomenology. Secondly, the practice of phenomenology obviously requires some means of first-person knowledge; without a higher-order introspective perception of them, it is hard to see how any access to our mental states is possible beyond that reachable through third-person behavioral or neurophysiological means.

But despite the common association of phenomenological views with this kind of view, the founders of the phenomenological tradition did not actually endorse the idea that all conscious thoughts are accompanied by a higher-order observation of them. I have argued elsewhere (2000) that, far from providing the beginning of contemporary higher-order views, Brentano actually argued against higher-order conceptions of consciousness and sought to develop a one-level view of consciousness according to

which consciousness is intrinsic to those states that possess it, not imposed on them through being objects of other mental states. Brentano does, however, admittedly locate the source of our knowledge of our mental states in a kind of 'inner perception', which he distinguishes from what he calls 'inner observation', based in the fact that the former includes (as he puts it) a 'secondary' presentation built in to the original mental act itself, not a separate 'inner observation' of one act by a separate, higher-order act (1995: 29 and 128–9). Such a view would clearly be superior to higher-order views, if it could be made to work, but unfortunately it is not obvious whether (a) we have reason to think that all conscious states include such secondary presentations of themselves or (b) it is even possible for one and the same state to have both a 'primary object' and a 'secondary object'—and if not, the Brentanian view risks collapsing into a higher-order view after all (Thomasson 2000).<sup>4</sup>

Husserl goes further than Brentano, putting aside the theory that all consciousness is accompanied by an inner perception that takes first-order conscious states as objects, whether this inner perception is considered a separate act of observation or (as Brentano would have it) a secondary awareness built into the first-order act itself. He denies that such inner perception can be a source of infallible knowledge of our own mental states, since as long as our mental acts are taken as real psychological events that become the *objects* of consciousness (whether primary or secondary, higher-order or built-in), the object perceived will be *transcendent* in relation to the perception, with real features that forever outrun any of our experiences of it, and there will be room for inadequacy and error in that perception just as in the perception of 'external' objects. 'Exactly regarded, all psychic phenomena seen in natural or empirical-scientific attitudes are perceived transcendentally' (Husserl 1913/2000, 860). Husserl not only rejects inner perception as the basis for infallible knowledge of our mental states, he even doubts that there are such inner perceptions accompanying all our conscious states. He calls Brentano's inner perception view 'a conception fraught with too many grave difficulties' (1913/2000, 543), and emphasizes that such a view remains extrinsic to phenomenology, as long as 'the need to assume the unbroken activity of inner perception cannot be phenomenologically demonstrated' (1913/2000, 543).

Nonetheless, the basic problem remains for anyone who takes seriously our apparent knowledge of our own experiences (even in situations where no outsider would have warrant for beliefs about them), and who hopes to save the possibility of a study of the mental from the first-person perspective: If not by means of a kind of inner perception, how is our apparent first-person knowledge possible at all?

## 2. OUTER OBSERVATION

An entirely different approach to self-knowledge has occasionally been proposed: that our apparent knowledge of our own mental states is based not in a special observation of our mental states, but in awareness at least apparently directed *outwards*, towards

<sup>4</sup> See Smith (1986, and 1989: ch. 2) for a neo-Brentanian account of 'inner awareness' that is explicitly distanced from all higher-order accounts.

the world (not towards our own minds).<sup>5</sup> Such is the basic insight of what I will call 'outer-awareness' views, views developed in some form by Wilfrid Sellars, Fred Dretske<sup>6</sup> and Sydney Shoemaker. I will suggest below that this insight also lies at the basis of Husserl's phenomenological method.

In the contemporary tradition, the idea was popularized by Sellars' (1956/2000) attempt to turn on its head the traditional empiricist idea that knowledge of the world is based on knowledge of our sense data, by urging that instead all sense-data talk, and indeed all talk about *appearances* is parasitic on world-talk: 'the concept of *looking green*, the ability to recognize that something *looks green* presupposes the concept of *being green*' (1956/2000: 43). On this view, we learn to employ 'looks' talk when we notice the fallibility of our 'is' talk, particularly in certain circumstances, e.g. as Sellars' mythical tie salesman John learns to shift from 'that tie is green' to 'that tie looks green' when he discovers the fallibility of his color judgments in odd interior lighting. So employing 'looks' talk is a way of withholding the commitment about the world that comes with 'is' talk, while retaining the same propositional content (1956/2000: 50).

But even if we begin from the observation that 'looks' talk arises from 'is' talk about the world, when once we decide to withhold our commitment about how the world *really* is, a critical question remains. Once we have arrived at 'looks' talk by means of this route, should our talk about how things look or appear to us be understood as:

1. Still talking about the world, but doing so non-committally, without making any claims, or:
2. Shifting to make (committing) claims about our experiences rather than the world?

Robert Brandom reads Sellars as holding the former view, that appearance sentences should not be understood as *reporting* any facts or making any claims at all (2000: 139–43). The whole point of appearance talk, on this view, is to *withhold* one's endorsement of claims about the external world, and so when John says 'that tie appears green to me', he should not be understood as making any kind of report, but rather 'evincing a disposition' to say that it *is* green (not even reporting that he has such a disposition) (2000: 139) 'in saying that something *looks green*, one is not endorsing a claim, but *withholding* endorsement from one' (2000: 142).

This sort of view is in fact not a view about the source of our apparent self-knowledge at all, since it denies that apparent claims about how things appear to one are reports that make genuine *claims* at all that could be candidates for knowledge. It is rather an explanation of the source of the *language* of looks-talk and of some of the distinctive features of that language that can be made without appeal to any sensory impressions or other 'inner episodes'. First, it explains the apparent incorrigibility of appearance

<sup>5</sup> I'll speak of this as externally directed world-talk, since this is the paradigm case and makes it easy to speak of the difference (and relation) between experience of the world and knowledge about our experience. Everything that I say below, however, regarding the acquisition of experience-knowledge from world-oriented experience also goes for knowledge about our experiences that may be directed towards our own mental states or those of others.

<sup>6</sup> For critical discussion of Dretske's 'displaced perception' view of introspection, see Aydede (2002) and Bach (1997).

reports (and of first-person knowledge generally), since one cannot be wrong if one is not making a claim at all (though of course one cannot be *right* either, and so the claim that such appearance statements represent infallible knowledge *of* something would have to be dropped, if they are considered not to be reports at all). Second, it would also explain the impropriety of iterating looks-talk: It makes little sense to move from 'x looks red' to 'x looks like it looks red', since the commitment is already withheld in the initial move from 'x is red' to 'x looks red', as Brandom puts it "There is no further withholding work for the second "looks" to do. There is nothing left to take back" (2000: 142).

But although I think there's something right about the idea that looks-talk derives from is-talk, and despite the above virtues of the view as Brandom describes it, several problems arise for the view that appearance talk does not make any claims, not even about one's own experience (or dispositions), but merely withholds endorsements from claims about the world. One problem Brandom mentions himself (attributing it to Joe Camp) is that certain uses of 'looks' talk, as in 'that looks blurry to me', involve terms such as 'blurry' that apply only to representations, not the world, and so can't plausibly be held to be merely describing the world non-committally (rather than describing appearances committally) (2000: 143–4 n. 11). Some other story will have to be told about how 'looks' talk functions in these cases.

A more general problem is that we can make statements about how things appear to *other* people (that chair looks green to John), and here we clearly are not merely evincing some disposition of *ours*.<sup>7</sup> Such statements are pretty clearly descriptions, which may be right or wrong. We may be reporting on a disposition of his, but then we end up with a strangely disjunctive analysis of appearance statements: those in the first person are not making any reports at all, those in the third person are making reports about someone else's disposition. And if we have such a disjunctive analysis, then it seems (implausibly) that, while I can make claims about how things appear to John, John cannot correct me, for his apparent counter-statement 'no, it doesn't look green to me, it looks blue to me' is making no claim at all.

Perhaps the most telling problem for the no-commitment interpretation of all appearance talk is that we can *lie* about how things appear to us. Not wanting glasses, a child can lie and say the letters appear sharp to her when they appear blurry; an *unscrupulous* tie salesman can lie and say a certain tie looks blue to him (and thus should match perfectly) when it looks green to him; a person going deaf but desiring to keep that secret can say the television sounds loud and clear to him when he can barely make it out. Of course Brandom's Sellars could say that such individuals are being insincere by 'faking' their evincing of a disposition (as one might by saying 'ouch' when nothing hurt), but mere insincerity is not enough to capture the normal idea that these are *lies*, since a lie must be an insincere *and false* claim made with the intention to deceive others. If any appearance statement could, in principle, be a lie, such statements must be making *claims* about *something*, although it is clear that such statements are not making, but rather avoiding making, claims about the world.

<sup>7</sup> This point was suggested to me by Charles Siewert.



While the ‘no commitment’ view of looks talk endorsed by Brandom’s Sellars may have resources to respond to each of these problems individually, the very fact that it needs to offer a disjunctive analysis of talk about things looking blurry versus looking green, and of talk about appearances from the first- and third-person perspectives, combined with the need to refigure apparent data about the possibility of lying, suggest that taking looks talk as non-committal has serious costs—costs that, perhaps, only seem worth paying to those with other motivations for avoiding all talk of appearances or experiences. We may be able to offer a more uniform theory that better fits the pre-theoretic data by simply allowing that appearance statements involve a shift from talking about the world (especially or originally when our confidence about the world is undermined or put aside) to make (committing) claims about something else—our own experiences.

In fact, contrary to Brandom’s interpretation, it does not seem that Sellars himself would deny that looks reports do involve commitment to certain claims, though the relevant claims, naturally, would be claims about one’s own *experience*, not the world. He glosses his own view as follows: ‘“x looks red to S” has the sense of “S has an experience which involves in a unique way the idea *that x is red* and involves it in such a way that if this idea were true, the experience would correctly be characterized as seeing that x is red.”’ (1956/2000: 49). Similarly, while he argues vehemently against the idea of, e.g. red, triangular sense-data as the objects of ‘immediate awareness’ that provide the basis for knowledge of red, triangular things in the world, Sellars does not deny the existence of the relevant experiences or sensations, otherwise conceived, nor does he deny that there are legitimate forms of language that do involve making claims about them. As he says, this:

does not imply that private sensations or impressions may not be essential to the formation of these associative connections [between the word ‘red’ and red physical objects]. For one can certainly admit that the tie between ‘red’ and red physical objects—which tie makes it possible for ‘red’ to mean the quality red—is *causally* mediated by sensations of red without being committed to the mistaken idea that it is ‘really’ sensations of red, rather than red physical objects, which are the primary denotation of the word ‘red’. (1956/2000: 64)

In the end, Sellars introduces the myth of Jones (1956/2000: 102–17) as a way of showing how talk of visual sense impressions (e.g.) may be introduced as a kind of *theoretic* talk of ‘unobserved’ episodes. According to the ‘theory’ championed by Jones, these impressions are supposed to be the (normal) effect of physical objects and processes impinging on our eyes, and are supposed to explain our overt verbal behavior, as well to explain why it sometimes looks to me as if there is a red object over there. But although it is introduced as theoretic talk, it is nonetheless ontologically committal talk about states of individual perceivers; like electrons, sense impressions are unobserved, but postulated on the basis of observations that they are used to explain (1956/2000: 104).

So while Sellars holds that statements about how things appear are ultimately derived not from a kind of pseudo-perceptual inspection of our own mental states or sense-data, but rather from withholding commitment about how the world is, ultimately he seems to acknowledge that appearance statements can be committal statements providing knowledge about something else: our own mental states.



### 3. PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

The fundamental and revolutionary Sellarsian idea that knowledge of one's own mental states is based in outer-awareness of the world—while withholding commitment regarding its real existence and nature—is the centerpiece of Edmund Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction, developed more than forty years earlier. Indeed Husserl regarded the phenomenological reduction as his greatest discovery (Moran 2000: 12), for it was the method that was supposed to provide the route to acquiring knowledge in his new field of phenomenology.

The resemblance between Sellars' account of self-knowledge and Husserl's phenomenological method is not likely to be pure coincidence. As Sellars writes in his 'Autobiographical Reflections', as a young teaching assistant in Buffalo he was introduced to Husserl's work by Husserl's own student, Marvin Farber. He writes of Farber, 'His combination of utter respect for the structure of Husserl's thought with the equally firm conviction that this structure could be given a naturalistic interpretation was undoubtedly a key influence on my own subsequent philosophical strategy' (1975: 283). Unlike many in the analytic tradition,<sup>8</sup> Sellars did not see the work of phenomenology as separate from the conceptual analysis characterizing analytic philosophy, writing 'for longer than I care to remember I have conceived of philosophical analysis (and synthesis) as akin to phenomenology' (1978: 170). Moreover, Sellars elsewhere (1978, 170 and 1963/1991, 5; cf. Huemer forthcoming) makes repeated references to the Husserlian idea of 'bracketing', or withholding the natural commitments that our experiences are veridical (see below), which is the core of Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction. For example, in *Science, Perception and Reality*, Sellars writes that in speaking of the manifest and scientific images 'I do not mean to deny to either or both of them the status of "reality". I am, to use Husserl's term, "bracketing" them, transforming them from ways of experiencing the world into objects of philosophical reflection and evaluation' (1963/1991: 5).

There are of course substantial differences in the goals and contexts in which Husserl develops the phenomenological reduction, and those in which Sellars discusses appearance talk. Husserl is primarily concerned with developing a method practitioners can follow to enable them to acquire knowledge in phenomenology—not even with offering a theoretic account of how such knowledge is possible, though obviously the acceptability of the method presupposes that some account is available of how the method proposed could provide phenomenological knowledge. Sellars, on the other hand, is concerned to offer a philosophical account of the role of appearance talk in (especially world-oriented) empirical knowledge (and whether appearances can provide a 'given' that can form the basis for empirical knowledge). So in fact neither is primarily focused on providing a philosophical account of the basis for possible first-person knowledge. Nonetheless, strikingly similar accounts can nonetheless be drawn out of their work.

<sup>8</sup> With the important discussion of Ryle, who arguably arrived at the idea that conceptual analysis is or should be the core project of philosophy based at least in part on his study of the work of Brentano and Husserl. See my (2002b).

Much as it was his loss of confidence in his own color judgments that brought Sellars' John to shift from talk about ties to talk about how things *look* or *appear* to him, so it is adopted as a general method by Husserl that to enable us to shift to consider *phenomena*, our ways of consciously and intentionally representing the world, rather than simply considering the world, we must bracket the assumption that our judgments are true, our experiences veridical:

When objects are intuited, thought of, theoretically pondered on, and thereby given to us as actualities in certain ontic modalities, we must direct our theoretical interest away from such objects, not posit them as realities as they appear or hold in the intentions of our acts . . . We must keep out the falsifying intrusion of all assertions based on the naïve acceptance and assessment of objects, whose existence has been posited in the acts now receiving phenomenological treatment. (1913/2000: 255–6)

There are also, however, some important differences between Sellars' observation that 'looks' talk arises from 'is' talk (allowing that we may ultimately gain knowledge about how things seem to us by observing the world and withholding commitment) and Husserl's recommendation of the phenomenological method as a way of acquiring phenomenological knowledge. First, Sellars' John makes the move to looks talk when he has some positive reason for doubting his world-oriented judgments (such as odd lighting). But for Husserl, employing the phenomenological reduction (as he repeatedly emphasizes) does not presuppose or entail any reason for *doubting* one's world-oriented experience, and in fact subjecting experiences to the reduction should not be considered a form of *doubting* them at all. If it were a matter of something like Cartesian doubt, then the phenomenological reduction would inevitably *change* the character (or force) of the original act to be studied, e.g. by altering the experienced *conviction that P*, to an experience of *doubting that P*, and thus alter the very phenomenon we sought to describe. While we might still be able to examine the content (that P), this would make it impossible in principle for such a method to provide insight into the force (or what Husserl calls 'thetic character') of mental states, since that would be transformed by the study itself.

Instead, phenomenological reduction is based in the method of 'bracketing' (*Einklammerung*), which:

is not a transformation of the thesis into its antithesis, of positive into negative; it is also not a transformation into presumption, suggestion, indecision, doubt (in one or another sense of the word); such shifting indeed is not at our free pleasure. *Rather it is something quite unique. We do not abandon the thesis we have adopted, we make no change in our conviction*, which remains in itself what it is so long as we do not introduce new motives of judgment, which we precisely refrain from doing. And yet the thesis undergoes a modification—whilst remaining in itself what it is, *we set it as it were 'out of action,' we 'disconnect it,' 'bracket it.'* It still remains there like the bracketed in the bracket, like the disconnected outside the connexional system . . . (1913/1962: 97–8)

The use of the typographical term 'bracketing' is far from accidental, for it is rather like putting a linguistic assertion, command, question, etc. in quotation marks, to be studied as a piece of language rather than believed, followed, answered—but which leaves its force as well as its content intact to be studied, once it is placed in quotation

marks. In fact, Husserl elsewhere explicitly draws out the parallels between the bracketing involved in phenomenological reduction, and the use of quotation marks in language, writing:

It is clear that all *these* descriptive statements [about the contents of perceptual acts], though very similar in sound to statements concerning reality, have undergone a *radical* modification of meaning. . . 'In' the reduced perception . . . we find, as belonging to its essence indissolubly, the perceived as such, and under such titles as 'material thing,' 'plant,' 'tree,' 'blossoming,' and so forth. The *inverted commas* are clearly significant; they express that change of signature, the corresponding radical modification of the meaning of the words. (1913/1962: 240)<sup>9</sup>

By placing a sentence in quotation marks, its force is not transformed from an assertion to a question, but rather it (force and content) is placed before us as an object of linguistic study, rather than remaining part of our living interaction with the world used to make utterances, issue commands, or pose questions. So similarly, the idea of bracketing in phenomenology is to preserve both force and content of the original experience (whether it is one involving conviction, doubt, etc.), but use the brackets to disconnect it from our ordinary world-directed concern so that it can be studied as a *phenomenon*, a way of experiencing the world, rather than being put to use in our engagement with the world: 'The thesis is experience as lived (*Erlebnis*), but we make "no use" of it' (1913/1962: 98).

A second difference between Sellars' and Husserl's accounts is that, for Sellars' John, looks talk arises in quite limited spheres—on those occasions where there is some room for doubting one's original experience. But Husserl employs the phenomenological bracketing or 'epoché' with a much broader scope—we are to bracket not just this or that individual thesis about the world represented in experience, but rather to bracket all at once the whole 'natural' view that there is a mind-external natural world of spatio-temporal, physical, biological, and cultural entities experienced by me:

We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually 'there for us,' 'present to our hand,' and will ever remain there, is a 'fact-world' of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets. If I do this . . . I do not then deny this 'world', as though I were a sophist, I do not doubt that it is there as though I were a sceptic; but I use the 'phenomenological' epoché, which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence. (1913/1962: 99–100)

The fact that this bracketing is wholesale in scope is crucial, since it can thereby aim to enable us to grasp the full character of our phenomena: not just 'individual' mental states (which in fact are never entirely separate from each other), but such broader features as the field of consciousness as a whole, the unity of consciousness, the implicit background in conscious experiences, time-consciousness, etc.

The most crucial difference between Husserl and the Sellars *of Brandom's interpretation* (seemingly different from the historical Sellars), however, is that for

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of the idea of 'quotation' of the content (noema) of an experience, see Smith (1971).

Husserl the withholding of world-regarding commitment is not the end of the story, but rather is supposed to provide the means for acquiring a whole new branch of knowledge: knowledge about experience and its ways of representing (or intending) the world.<sup>10</sup> The goal of the phenomenological reduction is ‘*the winning of a new region of Being... the Being to be thus shown up is neither more nor less than that which we refer to on essential grounds as “pure experiences” “pure consciousness”*’ (1913/1962: 101). It is consciousness, or conscious experience, that remains ‘left-over’ after the bracketing of phenomenological reduction, and so it is that reduction that enables us to turn from our customary interest in the world represented to gain knowledge about consciousness itself and the ways in which it represents an external world to us: ‘*Consciousness itself has a being of its own which in its absolute uniqueness of nature remains unaffected by the phenomenological disconnection*. It therefore remains over as a “*phenomenological residuum*,” as a region of Being which is in principle unique, and can become in fact the field of a new science—the science of Phenomenology’ (1913/1962: 102).

It is important to note that it is knowledge of consciousness in this full-blooded sense as *intentional* that is the target of Husserl’s phenomenological method—he seeks knowledge of how we *represent* or *constitute* the world and its features in our experience, not knowledge of mere sensory qualia (1913/1962: 226–30). In fact according to Husserl, experiences to be considered by phenomenology have both a ‘material’ or sensuous/qualitative component, and a ‘formal’ or ‘noetic’ component, which ‘animates’ and ‘bestows meaning on’ the sensory stratum, making the experience intentional (1913/1962: 226–7). Of these, ‘the incomparably more important and fruitful analyses belong to the noetical [intentional] side’ (1913/1962: 230). I will return in Section 4 below to discuss the problem of knowledge of mere sensory qualia.

Ultimately, it is not knowledge of my or anyone’s *individual* conscious experiences that Husserl hopes to acquire through phenomenology, but rather of the *essences* of types of conscious experience and their interrelations. Thus Husserl follows the first stage of world bracketing with a second stage of phenomenological reduction: Bracketing also the question of the real existence of my (or anyone’s) individual experiences *qua* individual occurrences to focus instead on the relevant *essences* involved.<sup>11</sup> In the remainder of this essay, however, I will focus just on the first stage of reduction, as this is most immediately relevant to answering our central question of what the source could be for our apparent first-person knowledge of our own experiences.

According to Husserl, the method of bracketing is supposed to reduce our mental acts to their *intentional content* and intentional mode or force—that is the sense in which the method involves a ‘reduction’. Thus phenomenological method is based on a *shift of attitude* within our experiences: regarding them merely as *appearances*,

<sup>10</sup> As I have argued above, it seems that the historical Sellars actually allows that we may talk committally about, and acquire knowledge of, mental states themselves (thus agreeing with Husserl). Nonetheless, Sellars’ idea that talk of these states is introduced as a kind of *theoretic* talk analogous to the talk of the theoretical posits of the natural sciences is apparently un-Husserlian.

<sup>11</sup> The account of phenomenological method given here follows that in the second edition of the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas*. Husserl’s exposition of the method varies, and other stages of the reduction are described in later Husserlian texts.

as *representing contents*, rather than simply *using* them to acquire information about the world. This method may potentially be applied to any first order conscious state (though in fact we often do not apply them), and so potentially can provide self-knowledge of any such state by ‘modifying’ it in reflection (1913/1962: 106–7), to enact ‘a shifting of the glance from something we are conscious of objectively to the subjective consciousness of it’ (1913/1962: 201):

*every variety of ‘reflexion’ has the character of a modification of consciousness, and indeed of such a modification as every consciousness can, in principle, experience.*

We speak of modifications here just in so far as every reflexion has its essential origin in changes of standpoint, whereby a given experience or unreflective experience-datum undergoes a certain transformation—into the mode, that is, of reflective consciousness . . . *Every experience can now be translated in accordance with essential laws into reflective modifications . . .* (1913/1962: 200–1)

But what are these modifications in standpoint, these transformations, effected by bracketing, that can bring me from experience of the world to apparent knowledge of something else entirely—the intentional structures of my own conscious states? The first thing to emphasize is that they are *not* a matter of acquiring additional empirical information via further experiences; instead, they are based in *a priori* ‘essential laws’ regarding the *essences* of the kinds of experience involved:

We must, however, be quite clear on this point that *there is no question here of a relation between a psychological event—called experience (Erlebnis)—and some other real existent (Dasein)—called Object—or of a psychological connexion obtaining between the one and the other in objective reality.* On the contrary, we are concerned with experiences in their essential purity, with *pure essences*, and with that which is *involved in the essence ‘a priori’ in unconditioned necessity . . .* In the very essence of an experience lies determined not only *that*, but also *whereof* it is a consciousness, and in what determinate or indeterminate sense it is this. (1913/1962: 108)

So we are looking for general *a priori* laws governing these ‘essences’ of experiences, which enable us to shift from world-oriented experience to a reflective knowledge of our own mental states.

These laws seem, quite generally, to be what Husserl would call ‘logical’ laws describing the essential connections among the concepts involved—and revealing them is closely allied to what would later be called ‘conceptual analysis’. (Husserl understands logic not merely in terms of a system of formal syntactic operations, but also as encompassing relations among concepts or meaning types.) Indeed as I have argued elsewhere (2002b), the form of conceptual analysis of mental state types that Ryle popularized and practiced is a direct development of the work on the ‘essences’ of types of conscious state developed by Husserl and earlier by Brentano.

Husserl says less than one might hope about exactly what these laws are and how the relevant transformations work, but his remarks and practice will provide the basis for an answer. Consider the following passage:

It is an *essential insight . . .* that, from the objectively given, as such, a reflective glance can be transferred to the object-giving consciousness and its subject; from the perceived, the corporeally ‘there’ to the perceiving act; from the remembered, as it ‘hovers’ before us as such, as ‘having been,’ to the

remembering; from the statement as it comes from the given content to the stating activity, and so forth . . . It is evident that essentially . . . it is only through reflexions of this kind that such a thing as consciousness or conscious content . . . can become known. (1913/1962: 209–10)

These remarks suggest that it is part of the very idea of experiences of these sorts that a certain cognitive transition is permitted from represented to representation; and that the shift from consideration of objects known to the representing consciousness parallels a shift one can make from the ‘content’ of a statement to the ‘stating activity’. Indeed ‘*Every* experience can now be translated in accordance with essential laws into reflective modifications’ (1913/1962: 201).

The ‘essential laws’ enabling us to transform first-order, world-oriented experiences, to knowledge of our own mental states, involve licenses to move from intending (or ‘meaning’) a certain object or state of affairs (e.g. the blooming pear tree) to intending (or ‘meaning’) the experience that enabled us to intend it (1913/1962: 240–1). In the section that follows I will attempt to draw out a story in contemporary terms to elucidate how such transformations might work. While the terms of discussion are not Husserl’s own, the exposition is intended as a way of showing (perhaps more clearly than Husserl’s own words can in the contemporary context) how such a method of phenomenology may provide a source for at least a great deal of apparent first-person knowledge without adverting to any pseudo-perceptual observations of experience.<sup>12</sup> The logical transitions will be easiest to see if we separate them out into two steps (not explicitly distinguished by Husserl), and if we begin not directly with the transition from (e.g.) the perceived to the perceiving act, but rather from the case Husserl himself acknowledges as parallel: the transition from a statement to stating activity.

#### 4. THE COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATION VIEW

Suppose someone states ‘Bonnie is on the train’. Normally, in our ‘lived’ experience, such a claim directs our attention to the state of affairs represented, involving Bonnie and the train, and we are unconcerned with the meaning or force of the claim itself. It can, however, happen, e.g. in cases where some doubt arises about the trustworthiness of the reporter, that we shift our attention, and retreat to note only that Bob stated that Bonnie is on the train. Much the same retreat to explicitly noting the representational content and force of the original claim occurs in cases where the truth of the claim is not actually relevant or in question—e.g. when it appears in a work of literary fiction, a critic may be concerned not with Bonnie and the train (both of which are acknowledgedly fictional), but rather with the fact that *according to the story* Bonnie is on the train. Similarly, in cases of testimony in court, the retreat must be made—whether or not there is any positive reason for doubting the witness—to suspend judgment on the truth of the claim, and consider only the fact that, according to the witness, Bonnie was on the train.

<sup>12</sup> Despite its fundamental similarity to the Sellarsian account, I do not intend to imply that the Cognitive Transformation view below is an exposition of Sellars or a view he would have endorsed.

Cognitive transformations that take us from the original *use* of a *basic* sentence ('Bonnie is on the train') to a *transformed* sentence expressly *about* what is asserted, questioned, commanded, etc. ('It was stated that Bonnie is on the train'), I will call 'reductive' transformations, since they involve reducing the claims made in the original use of the sentence to claims merely about its representational content and mode. This kind of transformation is widely used in discussions of works of fiction, of the content of failed theories, of testimony, etc. in which transformations are made from the relevant pretense of asserting things about people (in the fiction case), or attempts to assert truths about the world (in the case of theory or testimony), to discuss what is true *according to* the story, theory, or witness. We can then talk about what was stated *according to* the witness while being entirely non-committal on whether the witness was speaking the truth. In all of these cases, the retreat from the use of the statement to the description of the stating activity preserves us from certain sorts of error: 'It was asserted that (or according to the story, or witness) Bonnie was on the train' does not rely for its truth on any claims about Bonnie or the train (nor even about there being such individuals). So we move to what is at least a more secure epistemological ground, protected from certain kinds of error to which the original claim was subject.

There is an intimate logical<sup>13</sup> relationship between the basic and transformed sentence—namely that the appropriate *use* of the original world-oriented sentence is logically sufficient to guarantee the *truth* of the latter sentence. According to the rules of use of the concept *stated*, Bob's assertion 'Bonnie is on the train' provides logically sufficient conditions for it to be true that 'It was stated that Bonnie is on the train' (though not for 'Bonnie is on the train' to be true). Such transformations have two aspects: The content (Bonnie is on the train) is transformed into a proposition (that Bonnie is on the train), and the force (stated) is extracted from the *way* in which the proposition is presented in the basic sentence (in this case assertion). A different, say, questioning expression of the same propositional content in the basic sentence 'Bonnie is on the train?' would license transformation (ultimately) to 'it was asked whether Bonnie is on the train'.

Reductive transformations may be subjected in turn to hypostatizing transformations, so that we can move in the first instance from 'Bonnie is on the train' to 'it was stated that Bonnie is on the train' to nominalize 'stated' and get 'the statement that Bonnie is on the train was made'.<sup>14</sup> While the basic sentence mentioned only Bonnie and a train, at this stage we clearly have introduced a singular term for a kind of thing not mentioned in the original sentence (a statement), where that singular term is

<sup>13</sup> Again, in something like Husserl's broad use of 'logic'.

<sup>14</sup> The discussion here parallels in certain respects Stephen Schiffer's (1990, 1994, 1996) work on pleonastic transformations yielding terms for events, states, fictional characters, etc. But it is important to note that, although the singular term 'the statement' was derived through these hypostatizing transformations, this should not give us the slightest inclination to think that statements don't really exist, aren't to be taken ontologically seriously, or aren't *really* anything different than people and trains. In Thomasson (2001) I argue that the general move from noting that a certain term is pleonastically derivable to treating its referent as being language-created or having an ontologically reduced status is not successful.



apparently guaranteed to refer, given the original use of the basic sentence.<sup>15</sup> These transformations, similarly, seem to be licensed by the logical relations among the concepts involved: Part of possessing the concept of 'statement' is being able to make the hypostatizing move from 'x stated that P' to 'the statement that P was made', and to recognize that move as irrefragable when made by others.

As Husserl remarked, the shift one can make from the 'content' of a statement to the 'stating activity' parallels the cognitive shift from consideration of objects known to the representing consciousness.<sup>16</sup> In fact, I think that these cognitive transformations we have seen in the case of language (from statement to stating activity), also apply to experiences, and can provide a way to understand and explain the relevant cognitive transitions Husserl spoke of as forming the basis for phenomenological method, and for understanding how certain forms of self-knowledge may come about without requiring an introspective observation of our experiences.

Knowledge of our own experiences, their contents, and representational modes, it seems, is achieved by transforming our original world-oriented experience by means of both a reductive and a hypostatizing cognitive transformation. We begin with the performance or 'use' of experiences, in which they are normally simply employed in our activities of understanding and interacting with the world. The first transformative stage involves a reductive transformation from these experiences that present the world as being a certain way, to judgments about how things seem to me, i.e. from being visually presented with a red apple, to making the judgment 'it appears as if there is a red apple'. As in the linguistic case, these transformations are licensed by the logical connections between the use or performance of the original conscious act and the conditions of satisfaction for applying a term such as 'appears', which are guaranteed to be fulfilled given the original apple-oriented experience. Understanding such relations, and being able to make the move from visual presentation of a state of affairs that P to claiming 'it appears that P' is at least in part constitutive of competent possession of the concept *appears*.

But *pace* Brandom's Sellars, the derivation of 'appears' talk from 'is' talk (or *appearance* judgments from *is* judgments) does not mean that we should take such statements as merely revoking commitments about the world without making any new claims. There are implicit claims already in the reductively transformed sentences about the way things appear to us—commitments that may be made explicit by engaging in a separate hypostatizing transformation from talk (or judgment) about

<sup>15</sup> While the examples I have treated so far are linguistic, they appear to be instances of a quite general license to make a cognitive shift from a represented entity to talk about the *representation* as such. Similar transformations are also licensed, e.g., from a pictured woman in a hat in a photograph, to the judgment that there is a photographic representation as of a woman in a hat (again, one that can be made without prejudging the facts in a courtroom, and shifts the subject of discussion from the be-hatted woman to the photographic image), or from (apparent) observation of people in movies to discussion of the visual presentation in the movie, and what is the case according to it.

<sup>16</sup> Sellars also notes a parallel between the ability to talk about what statements of various sorts *mean* and the acquisition of mental concepts: 'For characteristic of thoughts is their *intentionality, reference, or aboutness*, and it is clear that semantical talk about the meaning or reference of verbal expressions has the same structure as mentalistic discourse concerning what thoughts are about' (1956/2000: 93).

how things appear to be, to talk (or judgment) explicitly about appearances.<sup>17</sup> As in the linguistic case, the reductive transformation can be subjected in turn to a hypostatizing transformation, so from 'it appears as if there is a red apple' we can get 'there is an appearance as-if of a red apple' or 'there is a red-apple-appearance'. By this route, we acquire a singular term for a new kind of entity—in this case an appearance—not mentioned in the original experience (which was only about an apple). And again in this case, the singular term so derived is guaranteed to refer to the newly named kind of entity (an appearance), whether or not the original experience was veridical. Part of possessing the concept of *appearance* is knowing that one may legitimately make the hypostatizing inference from 'it appears that P' to 'there is an appearance as-if P'. These later hypostatizing transformations are what enable us to speak (or think) of appearances, experiences, etc. as the subjects of our sentences, and thus to acquire knowledge about our own experiences and their content based on what were originally thoughts, experiences, etc. directed outwards towards the world.<sup>18</sup> Together, these reductive and hypostatizing cognitive transformations can help explain how it was that Husserl thought the phenomenological method of bracketing could enable us to acquire knowledge of a 'new region of Being'—that of consciousness and its ways of representing the world (including appearances, thoughts, etc.)—based in first-order world-oriented experience, the practice of bracketing, and competent deployment of the relevant experience concepts.<sup>19</sup>

A difficulty commonly raised for outer-observation accounts of self-knowledge is that, even if they can provide a story about how we can know the *content* of our experiences, they inevitably leave out the mode or force of those experiences, so we cannot know whether we are believing, doubting, or entertaining the proposition that P, or seeing, hearing, or smelling P. This is why understanding the bracketing properly is important—as not involving a change in the original mode or force of the experience (e.g. from one of belief to doubt), but rather simply placing the force 'out of action' by setting it in typographical marks for examination *as* a way of presenting (e.g. affirming) the proposition that P rather than doubting what is presented. Just as the linguistic case involved transforming both the content of the original speech-act and its mode (whether as asserting, questioning, doubting, etc. that Bonnie is on the train),

<sup>17</sup> And just as the derivation of the term 'statement' gave us no reason to think that there aren't *really* (in an ontologically robust sense) statements, so similarly, the fact that we can arrive at experience terms through these kinds of cognitive transformation gives us no reason to think that there *really* aren't experiences, or that these are somehow ontologically 'deflated' or reducible to the entities represented.

<sup>18</sup> This is an idea Sellars seems to just notice, but not develop, as he writes in describing how Jones could train people to reliable non-inferentially report on their own sense impressions: 'Notice that the evidence for theoretical statements in the language of impressions will include such introspectible inner episodes *its looking to one as though there were a red and triangular physical object over there*, as well as overt behavior' (1956/2000: 115).

<sup>19</sup> This account bears some resemblance to Shoemaker's account of self-knowledge as supervening on first-order beliefs and desires, plus rationality and possession of the relevant concepts (1996: 34). They differ somewhat, however, e.g. in the elucidation of the cognitive transformations involved, and in the fact that the Husserlian account does not entail that there is any (even tacit) self-knowledge in cases in which the relevant transformations are not *explicitly* undertaken by people competently possessing the relevant concepts, and so does not include a self-intimation thesis for any mental states.

so transformations from experience involve transforming both the *content* of the original experience into the *represented as such*, and the *way* in which the original experience did the representing (e.g. whether as visual, auditory or tactile experience).

Thus far I have dealt directly only with the case of how we can each know how things *appear* to us, but perceptual appearances are of course only one variety of experience, and ultimately we would like a unified account of how one can also acquire first-person knowledge of one's own beliefs, intentions, desires, etc. Although space constraints prevent a complete discussion here, it is clear how at least some of these can be handled in ways parallel to our handling of appearances above. Thus, e.g. the thought 'today is Wednesday' (apparently speaking about the day) may be transformed reductively to 'I believe today is Wednesday', from which a hypostatizing transformation can yield apparent knowledge that 'I have the belief that today is Wednesday'. The self-command 'pick up the car at four' (with content concerning the car) may be transformed reductively (in this case, bracketing whether or not the car really will be picked up at four) to 'I intend to pick up the car at four' and hypostatized to provide apparent knowledge that 'I have the intention of picking up the car at four'. Learning to make such transformations competently is arguably part of acquiring the relevant concepts of appearance, belief, intention, etc., just as learning to make the parallel linguistic transitions is part of acquiring the concepts of statement, question, command, etc.

As I have presented it, first-person knowledge is based not in a separate (pseudo)-perception of one's mental states, but rather in cognitive transitions based on 'essential laws' governing the concepts involved. In the case of reductive transformations, it is laws connecting the *performance* of a certain conscious act (or *use* of a certain expression) with the concepts of experiences or speech acts of different types. In the case of hypostatizing transformations, it is laws connecting the concepts associated with verbs like 'appears', 'states', and 'thinks', with their nominalized forms referring to appearances, statements, and thoughts. These transitions together, I have argued, are what enable us to move wholesale from world-oriented experience to discussion of the 'new region' of entities (experiences) that are the subject of phenomenology.

These are not, however, the sole source of phenomenological knowledge, for once we are working with experience-concepts, other essential relations among these may become evident. Thus, e.g. as Husserl notes, there are such 'essential connexions' between the propositions 'I remember [seeing] A' and 'I have perceived A' (1913/1962: 201)—as we might say, the first logically entails the second, since the very concept of (visual) remembering requires, as part of its conditions of satisfaction, that the state of affairs remembered by someone have been perceived by her. Similarly, as Husserl often points out, the very idea of *experiencing something as* a physical object involves experiencing it *as* in principle outrunning any experience of it.<sup>20</sup> The fact that these logical interrelations among mental concepts play a crucial role throughout

<sup>20</sup> Strictly speaking, Husserl tends to put the point more in terms of connections among the *essences of experiences* of certain types (corresponding to the connections among concepts of experiences of those types) than in terms of connections among *concepts* or *ideas*. I do not think, however, that such distinctions play a crucial role here.

Husserl's phenomenology lends additional credence to the idea that it is similar logical relations that are used to get us up to discussion of the phenomenological level in the first place (though the first stage must involve relations between lived experiences and concepts, not just among concepts).

Another question that might be raised for the above model is how we can acquire knowledge, not just that P is being believed, but rather that *I* believe that P: How does the *self* get into self-knowledge on this account? This, again, I think is based in unraveling the logical presuppositions behind the original world-oriented experiences.<sup>21</sup> The 'I', as it can be known phenomenologically, is logically presupposed by the experiences so known: 'The "being directed towards," "the being busied with," "adopting an attitude," "undergoing or suffering from," has this *of necessity* wrapped in its very essence, that it is just something "from the Ego," or in the reverse direction "to the Ego"; and this Ego is the *pure ego*' (Husserl 1913/1962: 214).

But so known, the 'I' logically presupposed by experiences is simply the 'pure' Ego, myself *qua* bearer of these experiences, not myself *qua* actual human being in the world. Whether or not one agrees that such an 'I' is logically presupposed (an issue that cannot be treated here), it is at least clear that here, as elsewhere, the 'I' is introduced not through a direct self-acquaintance nor any empirical observations, but rather through what Husserl considers 'logical' (conceptual) entailments between the very idea of experiences, and the very idea of an experiencing pure Ego.

## 5. ADVANTAGES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

This account of the source of our apparent first-person knowledge can explain several apparent features of that knowledge without averting to any sort of introspective pseudo-perceptual observation of one's own experiences. It can, for example, explain our apparent first-person privilege with respect to knowledge of our own experiences, and how we can lie to others about these. While speech acts such as statements are *public* representations, so that anyone is licensed to make the relevant shift from *x*'s stating, 'Bonnie is on the train' to speak of '*x*'s statement that Bonnie is on the train', the original world-oriented experiences from which self-knowledge claims are transformed are not public in this way, and so it is only the individual having the experience who is in a position to make the transformation from the original world-oriented thought or perception to draw direct conceptual conclusions about the nature of her experience.

Others can only acquire more or less probable inferential knowledge based on observations of behavior and environment, and in cases where this is insufficient to draw conclusions they may remain completely in ignorance about the mental states that the subject can know by means of these simple conceptual transformations.

<sup>21</sup> This seems to be the sense in which phenomenological knowledge of ourselves and our experiences is *transcendental* rather than empirical knowledge, on Husserl's account, as he particularly emphasizes in his later work, e.g. the *Crisis*. For a compelling contemporary account of knowledge of ourselves and the nature of our experiences as transcendental, see Mark Rowlands (2003).

This explains how lies about one's own experience are possible, and why we have the potential for fooling outside observers. For since one must begin these transformations from one's own experience, a lie is simply a case in which one willingly casts aside the normal transformation rules and makes claims about one's own experience (that the television sounds loud and clear to me) not based on transformations from the way the world is presented (the television being presented as noisy) but based, say, on a desire to hide one's hearing impairment. Others lacking the original experience cannot detect the lie by noting the falsified transformation; they can at best infer a falsehood by noting inconsistencies between the subject's verbal reports and behavior.

The apparent infallibility of statements about one's own experiences, thoughts, etc. can be explained by the fact that transformed sentences about experiences, such as 'I have an appearance as-of a red apple'—as long as they are appropriately derived from the original experiences—may be true whether or not the original world-oriented perception (presenting a red apple) was veridical, and so are protected from certain kinds of error to which the original experiences were subject.<sup>22</sup> A full epistemic examination of the level of certainty and means of justification of such judgments must be carried out separately, but the protection from these sorts of error can help explain at least some of the *apparent* incorrigibility that (since Descartes) has contributed to the philosophical interest of first-person experience reports. Note that this does not, however, involve claiming that all judgments about one's own experience are infallible or that all statements about appearances are guaranteed to be true. Judgments about one's own experience not derived via such transformations but by means of other routes, such as speculation, the desire to preserve good feelings about oneself, or inferences made externally by observing one's own behavior (as a blindsighter might observe that she reaches to the right and thereby judge that it must 'appear' to her that the ball is on the right) of course are not covered by this account. Nor does it entail that all mental states are known to their possessors. For the transformations we have been discussing are only available from an original *conscious* presentation of the world as being a certain way; if a blindsighter lacks conscious experience of an object in front of her, she has nothing which she can conceptually transform into the relevant description of appearances.

This model of self-knowledge can also explain the fact noted by Shoemaker that certain kinds of mistake about one's own beliefs are not possible. If self-knowledge were conceived of on the model of a pseudo-perception of one's own mental states, we would expect it to be possible to mistake one belief for another, as it is perceptually possible to mistake one person for another. But if we acquire our knowledge of our mental states by simple conceptual transformations from the world-oriented experience, the possibility of mistaking one belief for another simply doesn't arise.

But despite its virtues and despite the fact that it clearly avoids the problems supposed to plague inner observation accounts, certain objections may arise to this account, and certain challenges certainly remain for any view of self-knowledge based

<sup>22</sup> This seems to be behind Descartes' observations (1641/1993: 23) that, in trying to acquire knowledge of an external object such as a piece of wax, I in fact acquire much more secure knowledge about my own mind.

in externally oriented experiences combined with cognitive transformations. While space constraints prevent a full discussion of any of them here, I will at least suggest what difficulties remain and some routes that might be taken to overcome them.

One worry that might arise is that treating knowledge of our experiences as derived by transformations in this way makes such knowledge as we can acquire about our own experiences trivial or obvious.<sup>23</sup> Indeed some sorts of knowledge *are* fairly trivial—such as knowledge of how things appear to one or what one believes—and are plausibly considered available to all competent speakers of English who grasp the relevant concepts of belief and appearance. But not all relevant phenomenological concepts are as obvious or widely shared as those of appearance and belief, just as not all linguistic concepts are as obvious or widely shared as those of statement and question. Properly understood, the cognitive transformation account does not trivialize phenomenological knowledge as a whole any more than the fact that all one needs to acquire knowledge of grammar is the basic ability to speak about the world, plus the ability to engage in the relevant cognitive shifts to speak about the ways of representing the world and the concepts and analytical tools of linguistics, suggests that grammatical knowledge is trivial or obvious. As Husserl notes, in contrast to the introspectionists, the ability to acquire knowledge of our own mental states phenomenologically is by no means guaranteed by our simple ability to experience the world (as higher-order theories would have it), but requires extensive specialized training in undertaking the cognitive shifts demanded by phenomenological reduction and acquiring and learning to apply an array of specialized concepts. This training, of course, is what Husserl sought repeatedly to supply in his various texts subtitled as ‘introductions’ to phenomenology. Moreover, such knowledge as can be acquired by these kinds of transformations should not be thought to exhaust phenomenological knowledge, as (once we have acquired the ability to describe the realm of experience) all manner of further essential connections may be revealed among experience types, the transcendental necessary preconditions for experiences of various sorts may be uncovered, and so on.

Finally, two sorts of powerful objection are often raised to accounts that would base self-knowledge in cognitive transformations from world-oriented thoughts and experiences. One is this: Clearly the same sort of cognitive transformation from (apparently) seeing a red apple, to ‘it appears that there is a red apple’, to ‘there is an appearance as-if of a red apple’ may be trivially made whether or not there is any sensuous appearance at all. Thus, the same sorts of cognitive transformations can move us from the judgment ‘the stock market will rise’ to ‘it appears that the stock market will rise’ to ‘there is an appearance of the stock market rising’, although intuitively there is nothing like a full-blooded (sensuous) *appearance* of anything here. But if the transformations to appearance-talk can be made where there seems to be no robust appearance whatsoever, this might seem to threaten the idea that, in other cases, such cognitive transformations are not merely trivial but in fact lead us to knowledge of a realm of appearances (etc.).

It is important to note, however, that for Husserl, phenomenology is not concerned with knowledge of *mere* sensuous appearances or qualia, but rather with acquiring

<sup>23</sup> Thanks to Charles Siewert for raising this issue.

knowledge of our various ways of representing (meaning, intending) the world—which need not be sensory or quasi-sensory. In that sense, there is a way in which (and mode and force with which) the stock market is presented to me as prone to rise, and that and other ‘empty apprehensions or comprehensions’ may be known by means of ‘reflective modifications’ just as the apple-appearance may be (Husserl 1913/1962: 203). In neither case should the cognitive transformations be considered trivial; in both they should be considered to provide us with knowledge of genuine representing structures of consciousness. The question remains whether the account of self-knowledge on offer can *distinguish* properly *sensuous* appearances (as Husserl would put it, those with a hyletic element) from sensuously ‘empty’ appearances, or enable us to acquire knowledge of the specifically *sensory* character of experience. This question would have to be solved by other routes that cannot be pursued here.<sup>24</sup>

The second part of the challenge for Cognitive Transformation views is that at least certain sorts of concepts applied to experience seem not to be derived—or in some cases not derivable—by transformations from world-regarding experiences. Thus, e.g. as we saw, one problem Brandom’s Sellars faces is how to account for apparent descriptions of (e.g.) visual experiences as blurry, since this is not a term we ever apply to the world. Similarly, simple proprioceptive qualia such as pains, itches, and tickles, seem not to be known by means of transformations from world-oriented representations (e.g. of bodily damage); if anything, we infer that there is such bodily damage on the basis of our pains (Aydede 2002: 10–11).

Husserl says less about such cases as pains and itches than one might expect, since (again) his primary interest is not in qualia but rather in ways in which consciousness constitutes a world for us—thus focusing on full-blown intentional experiences. He treats ‘sensile impressions of pleasure, pain, tickling, etc.’ as ‘components in concrete experiences of a more comprehensive kind which as wholes are intentional . . . so that over those sensile phases lies as it were an ‘animating,’ *meaning-bestowing* stratum . . . a stratum through whose agency, out of the *sensile element which contains in itself nothing intentional*, the concrete intentional experience takes form and shape’ (1913/1962: 226–7). Even so, if these experiences are intentional (and so directed), an objector might urge that they are not *world-directed*, and so the reductive and hypostatizing transformations discussed above will not be the appropriate means of acquiring knowledge of such experiences.

Perhaps one should acknowledge that, in cases such as these, our attention is *already* turned from the world to our experience, without the need for bracketing to so turn our attention and application of concepts. In these cases, perhaps, all one needs is the direct application of the phenomenal concept to the experience, without the need for reductive and hypostatizing transformations. Certainly such an account is open to Husserl in these

<sup>24</sup> The relevant difference for Husserl is whether or not the experience involves hyletic data (cf. 1913/1962: 226), but it’s not clear how knowledge of *whether* or *what* hyletic data an experience involves is to be acquired. An account of phenomenal concepts such as that developed by Chalmers (2002) might be of assistance. It might be that only sensory or quasi-sensory first-order experiences permit transformations to higher-order introspective beliefs involving direct phenomenal concepts, though all conscious experiences permit transformations to yield some apparent self-knowledge and may be described as ‘appearances’ in an explicitly broader sense.



special cases (since, unlike Brandom's Sellars, he readily acknowledges the existence of experiences and the possibility of reporting on them), and so he may acknowledge different routes for reaching these experience reports that do not require use of his phenomenological method—though such routes still require further specification.

Whatever the ultimate fate of the Cognitive Transformation view of first-person knowledge, I hope that I have at least made progress in forestalling some common misunderstandings of the methods of phenomenology, distancing it appropriately from views that consider the source of introspective knowledge to lie in a kind of pseudo-perceptual observation of one's own mental states, and suggesting how a different account of first-person knowledge may be able to be developed in a way that is harmonious with the practice of phenomenology and with a one-level theory of consciousness. Though much work remains to be done, it seems that Husserl's phenomenological reduction may not only be of historical interest, but also provide the roots for a promising way of accounting for at least much of first-person knowledge. Re-examining the classical Husserlian method of bracketing may thus not only help set the historical record straight about phenomenology and its relationship to the history of analytic philosophy of mind, but also help provide a way forward through one of the most interesting problems in contemporary philosophy of mind.<sup>25</sup>

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