

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “PHENOMENOLOGY”?

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON APPEARANCE-REALITY DISCRIMINABILITY IN CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE

Sofia Miguens

We find ourselves in a strange situation when it comes to our conscious experience and what we can know and say about it. What we have is something like this: conscious awareness itself (for me, now, for instance) could not be an illusion for me as a conscious subject; this is something like a Cartesian fact – it is not conceivable that I am mistaken or deluded, it is not conceivable that it is an illusion that I think that I am thinking. Yet things become much less clear if I ask whether I can be deluded in the way things seem to me: for instance I look before me and I see a small blue bird flying very low and very close to the ground. Only, I look again and it was not a bird but a blue toy helicopter. Yet it seemed to me, then, as if as was seeing a small blue bird. It is perfectly possible thus, and in fact it often happens, that although I could not possibly be deluded about being consciously aware, the way things seem may not be the way things are, and so I may be deluded about the way things are. Then another question arises: is there also place for me to be wrong about how things seem to me? This is what I will call the problem of discriminability (or indiscriminability) of appearance and reality in conscious experience. Addressing it forces us to deal with the difference between the first case (the fact that it is not conceivable that I am deluded about being consciously aware) and the second (the fact that it is possible that I am deluded about how things are, because they seem otherwise). We should be particularly careful with formulations here and it may be preferable to break the problem in questions such as: is it possible that things appearing to us be an illusion? Is it possible to be deluded about the way things appear to us? Can we trust ourselves when it comes to the way things appear to us? Can it not be the case that we are wrong about the way things appear to be? When one considers conscious awareness the difference between the cartesian fact and positions regarding the more subtle questions, which involve a mixture of ‘being appeared to’ and belief or opinion, as Aristotle already put it in *De Anima* (De Anima III, 3, 428 b4), is often at stake. Now, issues concerning appearance and reality have kept philosophers busy since they started thinking about thinking and being, and how they relate. Philosophers such as Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle already dealt with them and they are still challenging today, particularly when we think

about the way mental life appears to each one of us, with all its specific contents and in its richness of detail about the ways the world is. What I want to do in his article is to deal with the question of appearance and reality in conscious experience focusing on phenomenology, or rather on what different people mean by “phenomenology”. So I will compare three specific conceptions of phenomenology in analytical and non-analytical contemporary philosophy. I will consider i) the husserlian conception, according to which phenomenology is a method for philosophy, whose central ideas are those of givenness and description ii) heterophenomenology, a method conceived by philosopher of mind Daniel Dennett to introduce first person data in cognitive science, and finally, 3) disjunctivism in (analytic) philosophy of perception, formulated as a rejection of illusion and hallucination arguments. My interest is to bring out different metaphysical commitments, very often not explicit, involved in these different conceptions. From the point of view of the history of contemporary philosophy, I am also particularly interested in pointing out the roots of what one might see as an unexpected idealist drive in 20th century post-quinean analytical philosophy of mind, in spite of its proclaimed naturalism. That lies behind my interest in Dennett’s view of phenomenology.

No one denies that the term “phenomenology” comes up in philosophical investigations of very different kinds. It is often used to refer to the philosophical tradition initiated by E. Husserl – in continental philosophy that is possibly the sense of “phenomenology” that first comes to mind. Yet it is also used in a much more general sense, purporting to refer to conscious awareness, the mental life of an agent, the contents of consciousness, especially in analytic philosophy. That is the sense most analytic philosophers of mind are considering when they attempt to comply with the quinean imperative of naturalization and thus attempt to naturalize the mind, and thus ‘naturalize phenomenology’. The fact that quite different philosophical commitments go with an apparently neutral use of a term is easily proven by the fact that the very idea of ‘naturalizing phenomenology’ would sound particularly strange to those familiar with the beginnings of husserlian phenomenology: opposing naturalism was one of Husserl’s explicit objectives as a philosopher, yet naturalism has become for many people today, namely in analytic philosophy, an utterly unproblematic idea.

I.

I shall start by looking at a limit-case among the attempts to naturalize phenomenology: D. Dennett’s views on heterophenomenology. Here is why I think this is a limit-case. Thomas Nagel claimed in his celebrated article *What is it like to be a bat?* that it is beyond dispute, when doing theory of mind, that there are phenomenological facts, which are, as he puts it, ‘perfectly objective’¹. For Nagel this simply expresses the fact that the world, our world, is such that it comprises subjective conscious experience, the same way it is spatial-temporal. There being experience is a brute fact in the world, and a fact in the cognitive system or thinker for the cognitive system, from the viewpoint of the system. This is also the way people such as J. Searle, D. Chalmers and others talk about consciousness: there is subjective appearing, that is a brute fact, and one that should have consequences for a metaphysical picture of how the world is. Yet not all analytical philosophers of mind regard subjectivity as being in such way fundamental, and Dennett is the most radical case of deflation of its status. Interestingly enough, his deflationary position about subjectivity is never more clear than when proposing a phenomenological method for the theory of mind which he calls ‘(hetero)phenomenology’.

This method is supposed to be part of a theory of mind that is a quinean-inspired materialist monism and it is in fact a practical urge that prompts Dennett’s approach²: his views on heterophenomenology explicitly aim at offering the guidelines of a method for dealing with the contents of consciousness in cognitive science, so as to make the use of first person data by cognitive scientists rest on safe ground. The need for phenomenology is actually felt by many theorists of mind: psychiatrists, anthropologists, etc, cannot escape reflecting on how descriptions of mental lives by subjects should be taken in their scientific practices. Someone describing their mental life describes the world as they found it – I open my eyes and I see: “vejo os campos, Neera, / campos campos e soffro /...”³. How should that appearing of the world to somebody (the way things seem to me) be taken in theory? Should we think of what is thus described as being appearances, such as expressed by the english word ‘seemings’, meaning they things seem to be like that, but that is possibly illusory? Or is it the case that the difference between what is real and what is illusory should not be brought into the picture too soon, justice having to be made to the appearing of things, thus, as it is described? That would be the

1 Nagel 1974 : 172.

2 Cf. Dennett 2005, *Sweet Dreams*, especially Chapter 2, *A Third Person Approach to Consciousness*.

3 Fernando Pessoa (Ricardo Reis).

being of appearing, that we may take to be expressed by the greek word *Phainomenon* or the german word *Erscheinung* – in portuguese we could say ‘Fenómeno’ meaning the givenness of things to thought, without any connotation yet of illusory appearance. *Erscheinung* is thus a sense of ‘appearing’ different from ‘seeming’. Anyway, how to deal with description of mental lives clearly is a methodological question for many people outside philosophy. Maybe that makes it more pressing, yet this is obviously a question which leads us to the core of metaphysical issues concerning thought-world relations.

Let us then consider Dennett’s views on phenomenology (and auto-phenomenology and heterophenomenology). First of all, according to Dennett, what one wants when one is dealing with consciousness is a science – obviously any non-naturalist position, such as husserlian phenomenology, fails this purpose. That about which a science is to be elaborated Dennett also calls “phenomenology”. We should notice one very important thing here: unlike what is the case with other philosophers of mind (such as Nagel) the way Dennett uses the term “phenomenology” does not refer to the brute fact of there being conscious experience. Rather his use of the term is modelled on the natural science use of the term “phenomenology”, for signs, symptoms (for instance of a patient), thus meaning ‘that which is observed’. The idea is then applied to consciousness – there are mental contents of an individual’s mental life, subjective contents, accessed in the first person (I am listening to a Brahms sonata, I see the the Marylins of the wallpaper thoroughly covering the walls of the room⁴). They are third-person inaccessible. Description of these contents by the subject is auto-phenomenology, i.e. first-person introspective knowledge of contents of consciousness, taken (by the subject) to be infallible. According to Dennett this is not yet ready for use in cognitive science. One should pay close attention to one thing here: all the time Dennett is speaking of phenomenology he is speaking about appearances as seemings to the subject. ‘Conscious experiences are seemings’, he says; it is over these appearances that the subject is to be taken as being totally authoritative. Heterophenomenology such as it will be proposed by Dennett should then be a bridge between these appearances, these seemings to the subject, and natural science – the idea is that an external observer (the heterophenomenologist) takes the subject’s auto-phenomenology for its face value, and moves on to contrast what is said to be with what is going on at a subpersonal level in that subject. The heterophenomenologist may be a psychiatrist, a psychologist in his lab, an anthropologist, etc – the job for the philosopher of mind here is to justify a method for relating first-person descriptions with natural science, third-person, data.

Let us be clear about one thing: these uses of “phenomenology” by Dennett (speaking of “auto-phenomenology”, “heterophenomenology”) have barely anything in common with the way Husserl conceived of phenomenology. As G. Soldati points out⁵, Dennett makes no distinction (although he claims he does) between a naïve sense of phenomenology (the introspective description of mental life which he calls auto-phenomenological conception of one’s own mind) and husserlian phenomenology. In fact, he skims over the details of the history of the phenomenological movement, and its internal discussions (which he regards as scholastic), with the justification that what matters is to give cognitive scientists a philosophically-safe method for the use of first-person data in natural science. That was certainly not Husserl’s aim: Husserl was interested in developing phenomenology as a method for philosophical investigations in general, in a broad range of fields, from philosophy of mathematics to ethics, not as a method for cognitive science (or in his days, psychology) and he certainly did not use “phenomenology” as just another term for introspection such as practiced by any human subject. The question for him was: What are we doing when we do philosophy? How should we go about doing it?, not How should one take in the theory of mind the way the world appears to a particular subject and relate it to subpersonal data? In other words, for Husserl, phenomenology had a general epistemological (and, one might add, ontological and semantic) purpose: what is at stake is understanding the way subjectivity and objectivity relate, what science, logic, knowledge, meaning, evidence, truth are (these are the topics of *The Logical Investigations* (1900-1901, 1st edition)). Somewhat later, in *The Idea of Phenomenology* (a set of conferences from 1907) Husserl describes will be describing phenomenology as a method by saying that cognitive experiences aim at objecthood and the method should render these in terms of a (celebrated and much criticized) ‘analysis of essences’. The more important thing to have in mind here is that what the method focuses on are not individual subjects and their cognitive goings-on, what comes and goes in the flow of consciousness: what phenomenology is basically interested in is meaning. That’s how the proposal of a reduction, the suspending of the natural attitude (*die natürlische Einstellung*), of the taking of the world as actually existing, and transcendent to consciousness, should be taken. This is no solipsism or subjective idealism, at least according to Husserl, but rather a restriction to the ‘sphere of pure givenness’ in order to carry on an analysis of meaning. More importantly, the givenness (*Gegebenheit*) husserlian phenomenology is after is givenness of things, not of consciousness – that is what the well known motto of phenomenology “*Wir wollen auf die ‘Sachen selbst’ zuruckgehen*” means.

5 Soldati 2007.

At the heart of phenomenology lies thus this attention to ‘givenness’. Things show themselves in consciousness – that is what phenomenology purports to describe in terms of an analysis of meaning, suspending the explanatory stance of natural science. Things show themselves, or the way things are shows itself: this, what we may call *Erscheinung*, is something phenomenologist philosophers have to keep in mind. Only there being givenness could make room for seemings of one kind or another, illusory maybe, for minds. This is a question that comes only later, when considering the epistemic position of the subject in respect to contents.

The difference in scope and ambition between these two conceptions of phenomenology is clear: Husserl’s conception of phenomenology is a proposal about what constitutes philosophical investigations, a proposal that, from the viewpoint of history of philosophy, is closer in scope and ambition to Frege’s proposals about meaning and reference than to the specific interests of most contemporary philosophers of mind (the proximity between Frege and Husserl has long been pointed out by people such as M. Dummett⁶, and it has to do with the fact that both are looking for basic conceptual instruments to deal with the ways thought and world relate). Dennett’s interest, on the other hand, like that of most philosophers of mind, is to understand the place of mind in a physical world – the world is thus taken not only as being there and unproblematically receptive to thought but also as being physical. Those are not taken to be problems, at least not the ones directly dealt with. What we do when doing philosophy is also taken as unproblematic (it is worth remembering that Dennett is guided by Quine’s conceptions of epistemology and ontology, and Quine’s views on these issues are very different from those of Husserl).

Apart from this difference in scope, there’s two important ways in which Dennett misunderstands husserlian phenomenology when he speaks about it. The first concerns the subject’s stance towards the contents of consciousness: Husserl did not think introspection was infallible, and his concept of *Evidenz* is way too sophisticated to be identified with psychological incorrigibility or with immediacy. The second concerns naturalism, which Dennett simply takes it for granted; for a follower of Quine, this is not even in question. Husserl, on the other hand, developed phenomenology against naturalist tendencies around him. He saw naturalism as a *Widersinn*, a nonsense, an identification of nature with what natural sciences say that there is, without any prior look at the nature of meaningful claims about what there is and thus at the very possibility of natural science. This prior look, according to phenomenology, should centre on understanding *Sinngebung* (bestowing of sense), and so, to

6 Dummett 1993.

put it briefly, on questions concerning thought and meaning. From there one would get that basically naturalism denies consciousness at the same time that it presupposes its existence, for without it there would be no conception of what there is, natural science obviously being one such conception.

So we have two very different understandings of “phenomenology”, and in fact people talking past each other when speaking about phenomenology: on the one hand from the viewpoint of an analytic philosopher of mind we see husserlian phenomenology accused of being an untenably anti-naturalistic and solipsistic view of minds, which misses the point of Husserl’s conception of phenomenology as a proposal of a general approach to philosophy, an approach with a focus on givenness and analysis of meaning. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of husserlian phenomenology, attempts such as Dennett’s are necessarily seen as a self-refuting naturalism, a *Widersinn*.

It is anyway to husserlian phenomenology, which he simply identifies with auto-phenomenology as characterized above that Dennett opposes his own proposal: heterophenomenology. Heterophenomenology is supposed to be a third-person approach to consciousness which gives all its due to the first person. Now, the first essential assumption of heterophenomenology is that first-person experiences (*seemings*) are beliefs. This has to be understood in the general context of Dennett’s theory of mind, and, in particular, of his views of what goes on at the sub-personal level in a conscious agent. According to Dennett’s conception of consciousness of an agent (the one the Multiple Drafts Model of *Consciousness Explained* explores) there is no awareness line, no Control-Component, in such an agent, only multiple and parallel content-fixations at the sub-personal level. Given these multiple and parallel content-fixations at the sub-personal level in an agent, and their a-centerdness, it is the Public Relations (as Dennett calls it) role of language which will account for the public availability of contents which should be called consciousness of the agent. In other words, before one can as much as consider agent’s consciousness, much has to be taking place at the sub-personal level, namely content-fixations, sub-personal accesses of several kinds linking those, and, among them, the role of language (the ‘pubic relations’ component as Dennett called it in the *Brainstorms*⁷ model). This role is essential to make for a self, a center for the presentation of the cognitive agent to itself, something which is, for Dennett, involved in consciousness proper. This is what lies behind heterophenomenology as a view of content at the personal level. If the agents’s cognitive architecture is such as described above at the subpersonal level⁸, how does the subject, the global

7 Dennett 1978.

8 Dennett’s descriptions are obviously very detailed and reach to a great deal of research in cognitive science.

agent, stand towards her own mental life? Dennett's basic principle for content at the personal level is that there is no phenomenon as really seeming over and above the phenomenon of judging in one way or another that something is the case⁹. So judgment is the important thing here: "phenomenology is 'made of judgment, there is nothing more to phenomenology than that'"¹⁰. This means first of all that it is impossible for the subject to decide, where it concerns her own awareness of something, between appearance and reality: all she can do is say how things seems to her - there is no space for her to be wrong about how things seems to her. Dennett calls this first person verificationism¹¹. J. Dokic and E. Pacherie call it a doxological commitment¹² of Dennett's theory of mind, which they criticize for not allowing to account for particular pathologies of perceptual consciousness, like blindsight, for instance, whose nature, according to them, should be described as involving a distinction, in consciousness, between what is and what seems to be for the subject. Anyway, Dennett's first person verificationism is the ground for his denial of so called 'phenomenal consciousness'. Phenomenal consciousness would be consciousness that is not *reflexive*. Calling such awareness 'consciousness' amounts, for Dennett, to an untenable cartesianism, i.e. to centralism. This means something very specific here: the illegitimate assumption of a self (a center) at the subpersonal level, and thus something other than the multiple content-fixations and the subpersonal workings, including those that are supposed to make for a self, at the personal level¹³. According to Dennett, nothing justifies the positing of such a subpersonal centre. On the other hand, admittedly, a self is needed for consciousness proper and it is there only if conditions described, and which involve language, obtain. But the point is, such a self will be there at the personal level, not at the subpersonal level.

This is what lies behind the idea that a set of beliefs (over which I am authoritative) is what it is for me to be me, which may strike one as a surprisingly self-blind idealistic position, and a psychologized, view of subjectivity (very different, anyway, from the view of subjectivity involved in Husserl's conception of phenomenology). Husserlian phenomenology, as an investigation of the relations between subjective and objective, is not supposed to be about individual subjects considered from a cognitive point of view; this is true of the first, realist, Husserl, and after Husserl's idealist turn. Anyway it is the

9 Dennett 1991: 364.

10 Dennett 1991 : 366.

11 We could read this as opposition to non-conceptual content, and that way of putting things which would bring Denett close to people like J. McDowell.

12 Dokic & Pacherie 2007.

13 Opposing such cartesian centralism is in fact what lies at the heart of Dennett's 'quining qualia' moves.

identification of subjectivity with a set of beliefs about the ways things seem to me that allows Dennett to take the next step, one that particularly interests me: he thinks it is possible, and even unavoidable, and this is a very important motivation for heterophenomenology, that something like a refutation of phenomenology should occur. How could this be? Simply, beliefs about the way things seem to me may be proven to be false, in the sense that things in the world may be proved to be differently, and thus, phenomenology will be refuted (for example when it seems to me that the Marylins on the wall paper cover the whole wall whereas according to vision science and given facts about peripheral vision this cannot be so, I could not possibly be seeing them, I only think I am¹⁴). The most interesting thing here is that Dennett defends this possibility of refutation of phenomenology together with the absence of room, for the subject, of an appearance-reality distinction for consciousness (what Dokic and Pacherie call his doxological commitment).

Identification of subjectivity with a set of beliefs about the way things are is in fact an important part of Dennett’s view on qualia. I have defended elsewhere¹⁵ that Dennett should not be regarded as a consciousness eliminativist, in the sense that he does give a theory of what it is like for a human conscious agent to be that agent, in terms of cognitive architecture, centeredness of mental life, relations between supersonal and personal level, and of the difference natural language makes in a mind. What is happening is something more interesting and something which does not regard philosophy of mind only: what is happening is that Dennett’s basic quineanism leads him to something like an erasure of subjectivity from his conception of the world.

Let us now see how the positions described above about how subpersonal and personal levels relate applies to qualia. One of the cases of Quining Qualia¹⁶, Chase and Sanborn, the wine-tasters, which appears along with the more classic intrasubjective and intersubjective inversions of spectrum¹⁷ goes like this. Chase and Sanborn are coffee tasters whose job is to make sure that the taste of the coffee they are tasting stays the same. They are still effective in performing that task, although they both have lost the pleasure that they used to feel when they tasted this coffee, which used to be their favorite, above all coffees. One of them thinks that has happened because he became a more sophisticated coffee drinker, although the taste of *that* coffee remains identical to the favorite coffee in the past. The other one thinks his tasters have changed, although the taste of *that* coffee remains identical to the favorite coffee in the past. What is really the

14 Dennett 1992.

15 Miguens 2002.

16 Dennett 1988.

17 Dennett 1998.

ase with each one of them? Do we want to say that there is such a thing as ‘real seem’ independent of both first-person access and of (third-person) observable behavior? Do we really want to say subjects can be phenomenally aware in the absence of ‘access consciousness’? Dennett thinks the answer is no. According to Dennett, neither Chase nor Sanborn can intrasubjectively establish what is the case, and if there is no answer for that question from their point of view, then there is no answer to the question and we should not think there is.

A second example is that of *innattention blindness*, a phenomenon currently arising much interest in psychology and philosophy (in fact Dennett claims, in *Sweet Dreams*¹⁸, he was the first to suggest that this kind of experiments be tried). In one of the most discussed experimental paradigms, subjects watch a video of people playing basketball. Subjects were given instructions to count passes between the white and the black players, and they concentrate on that. A gorilla (a person in a gorilla suit) passes by, among them. When they are asked, at the end of the task, whether they have perceived anything out of the ordinary, 50% of the subjects say no¹⁹. What is really the case with these subjects? Did they or did they not see the gorilla? The same moral applies: since they cannot intrasubjectively establish what is the case, there is no answer for that question.

Dennett’s position on such cases and others follows from his basic principle: “There is no phenomenon as really seeming over and above the phenomenon of judging in one way or another that something is the case”²⁰. It is impossible for the subject to decide, where it concerns his own awareness, between appearance and reality. This first person verificationism in fact goes back to Dennett’s reading of Wittgenstein. In an earlier article *Are Dreams Experiences*²¹, he had formulated it in, starting from Norman Malcolm’s proposals about dreams in his 1957 book *Dreaming* (Malcolm denied, quite radically, that research on REM sleep could concern dreaming). Malcolm’s proposal had arisen from a remark of Wittgenstein’s in the *Philosophical Investigations* (Part II, 11, 213): “The question whether memory is fooling a person who has had a dream when she, upon waking, reports the dream, cannot arise unless a criterium is introduced which distinguishes between truth and sincerity”. This is how one stands towards contents of one’s mental life – according to Denentt, we do not want to say that there is such a thing as phenomenal consciousness without

18 Dennett 2005.

19 Cf. Simons & Chabris. There are videos available online at the Visual Cognition Lab, University of Illinois (http://viscog.beckman.uiuc.edu/djs_lab/demos.html)

20 Dennet 1991: 364.

21 Dennett 1978.

reflexive consciousness (or access consciousness, to use N. Block's terminology); saying that there is depends on an untenable and unjustifiable cartesian centralism.

Dennett's theory of consciousness has been criticized by N. Block for being about many things (cognitive accesses, self, language) but not about real consciousness, that is, for Block, phenomenal consciousness. Block is certainly on to something: for Dennett it is essential that a theory of consciousness proper be a theory of the self, and a theory of specifically human self is language-involving. This is of course what for Dennett does away with the right to speak of consciousness proper in the cases of phenomenal consciousness Block has in mind.

Earlier in this article I considered two senses of 'appearing': *Erscheinung* and *seeming*. Husserlian phenomenology leads us to think that there can only be such a thing as *seemings* if there is *Erscheinung*. Now, what I have just described is not just wittgensteinianism about inner space: it is also that Dennett is being, in what he is claiming, *Erscheinung*-blind: for him consciousness is all about appearances as seemings, appearances. It is these seemings, once identified with beliefs and taken as constitutive of subjectivity, that end up eliminated. Seemings are seemings that: things seem to me such and such, and they may be illusory, and this may be proven by an external observer. Not by the subject himself, though, since there is no conceptual room for that (this is the wittgensteinian point).

How could Dennett ever come to find himself in such a peculiar position? This is a question I think is worth approaching from the viewpoint of history of philosophy, and the above mentioned influence of Wittgenstein is not the only thing involved. I think the origin of the problem is Quine, not the 'naturalization' imperative but his view of ontology. The 'naturalization' imperative opens the way for the idea that the heterophenomenologist, with his natural science methods, could correct autophenomenology. That is strange enough but there's more. A theory of consciousness is a particularly risky terrain for a quinean, since according to Quine, ontology is about what there is, and what there is is what theories (scientific theories) say there is (Quine's own subtlety here lies in his conceptions of immanent truth and robust realism as they relate to naturalized epistemology). This means that there is no place in ontology according to Quine, with its existential commitment criterion, for questions about appearing and reality and so no room for the reality of appearing (of things, to thought), only for theories and existential commitments therein. This means that a quinean approach to ontology looks the other way when it comes to what for some other people is the question of

philosophy²², lying at the heart of ontology and metaphysics and of realist/anti-realist disputes: the question of appearance and reality. Now, one reason why it is particularly difficult to be a quinean philosopher of mind is that a theory of mind cannot indefinitely postpone the question of appearance and reality – somewhere along the line we will have to face it that if we are going to think about mind we will have to say that minds are somehow the reality of appearing (being appeared to). Is this supposed to be reduced to what theories say there is? In *Consciousness Explained* Dennett insists that when it comes to consciousness one cannot explain away effects by considering them to be effects on the consciousness of the observer, since what is at stake is the observer himself. Yet in his recent writings on heterophenomenology he seems to take that last step – eliminating the observer, eliminating subjectivity. To sum up, I think that what is objectionable above all in Dennett's views on heterophenomenology is not so much what people like Dokic and Pacherie criticize, and they call the doxological commitment (the idea that there is no room for the appearance-reality distinction in consciousness)²³ but his blindness to the reality of appearing. Also, and this is interesting from a historical point of view, Dennett's positions (a philosopher of mind who professes to be a monist materialist and at the same time defends idealist positions) reveal tensions already present in Quine. Dennett chooses to think of subjectivity²⁴ as mere appearance to a subject, and that allows for what we have seen: once subjectivity is identified with mere appearance to a subject (seem-that, beliefs), since beliefs can be proved wrong, the possibility of getting subjectivity out of the picture by proving these beliefs to be wrong is open. What remains is the view from nowhere of natural science (precisely what husserlian phenomenology was meant to criticize). Quinean conceptions of epistemology (naturalized epistemology) and ontology (existential commitments in scientific theories, with no reference to questions of appearance-reality) are very much widespread and often seen as neutral – yet the theory of mind of a quinean such as Dennett shows how they can make for a blind spot when thinking about mind and world.

22 Cf. for instance J. Bouveresse on J. Vuillemin's conception of philosophy (Collège de France, Cours 2007/2008, Qu'est-ce qu'un système philosophique?), online at http://www.college-de-france.fr/default/EN/all/phi_lan/cours_et_seminaires_anterieurs.htm

23 Dokic & Pacherie 2007.

24 At least in his theory of consciousness – things are more complicated in his theory of content.

II.

But is the quinean blindspot the only problem with this particular view of appearance-reality indiscriminability within a conception of phenomenology? I will next look at current analytic philosophy of perception, in order to point out another problem. I will take M Martin’s characterization of disjunctivism, in *On Being Alienated*²⁵, as a third conception of ‘appearing’ and an alternative way of considering phenomenology within analytic philosophy itself. As Martin puts it, disjunctivism is a defense of the naïve realist conception of veridical perception in face of traditional illusion and hallucination arguments. Although the commitment of most philosophers of perception is experiential naturalism, which we may see as akin to Dennett’s naturalism, there is, from the start, in this very formulation, talk of world and talk of veridicality. In other words, what we are talking about is not the interior of the mind (seemings-that to a mind) but rather the world, the way things appear, in some cases veridically, and that is quite different territory. It is important to understand what the disjunctivist think is wrong with traditional conceptions of illusion and hallucination. I start with the argument of illusion (taking now Tim Crane as guide)²⁶:

“When one is subject to an illusion one is aware of something as having a certain quality F which the real ordinary object supposedly being perceived does not actually have/ When one is aware of something’s having the quality F then there is something of which one is aware which has this quality/ Since the real object in question is by hypothesis, non-F, then it follows that in cases of illusion either one is not aware of the real object after all or if one is, one is aware of it only indirectly, and not in the direct non mediated way in which we normally take ourselves to be aware of objects/ There is no non arbitrary way of distinguishing, from the point of view of the subject of an experience, between the phenomenology of perception and illusion/ There is thus no reason to suppose that even in the case of genuine perception one is directly or immediately aware of ordinary objects. / So our common conception of perception, sometimes called naïve realism or direct realism is false. Perception is not what we usually think it is”.

As for the hallucination argument, it could be formulated like this: “It seems possible for someone to have an experience – a hallucination – which is subjectively indistinguishable from a genuine perception, but in which there are no mind independent objects being perceived / The perception and the

25 Martin 2006, in Sazbo-Gendler & Hawthorn 2006, *Perceptual Experience*, Oxford, OUP.

26 Cf Crane 2005.

subjectively indistinguishable hallucination are experiences of the same kind. Therefore it cannot be that the essence of perception depends on the objects being experienced, since essentially the same kind of experience may occur in the absence of objects. So the common conception of perceptual experience – which treats experience as dependent on the mind independent objects around us – cannot be right²⁷

The mark of disjunctivism in the philosophy of perception is the intent to think about perception without succumbing to the representationalism being pressed in these arguments. What needs defending then is that when a genuine perceptual experience occurs, what is perceived is indeed mind-independent, unlike what is the case with illusion and hallucination. Thus, the touchstone for thinking about the nature of perceptual experience is genuine veridical experience: in the jargon, disjunctivists reject the *common kind assumption*. According to the common kind assumption, whichever mental state occurs when we are having a genuine perceptive experience that state could be occurring even if we were not genuinely perceiving something. Disjunctivists do not accept this because they want to capture the fact that genuine perception is presentation, not representation (being appeared to and not seeming-that to me, represented by me). Now rejecting this assumption involves a conception of appearance-reality indiscriminability in conscious experience, different from that of someone who accepts the illusion and hallucination arguments, and thus a revision of some common ways of thinking about awareness of the contents of one's consciousness. In *On Being Alienated* M. Martin makes this clear in his articulation of the three claims essential for disjunctivism:

Claim1

Let us consider a situation in which I perceive a yellow lemon²⁸ – no instance of the specific kind of experience I am now having could, when seeing the lemon for what it is, occur were I not perceiving such a mind independent object as this.

This basically amounts to defending the naïve realist view of the nature of perception and rejecting the '*highest common factor*' view, the idea that genuine perceptive experience as well as illusions and hallucinations are somehow experiences of the same kind. Experiential naturalism may still be claimed, but what is important is that some experiences, veridical perceptions, are special.

²⁷ Crane 2005.

²⁸ I have changed the example: the original is a 'white picket fence'.

Claim 2

The notion of a visual experience of a yellow lemon is that of a situation as being indiscriminable through reflection (by the subject) from a veridical visual experience of a yellow lemon as what it is. This is mostly about how we want to talk about the epistemic situation the subject of experience is in – the gist is that perception, illusions, hallucinations can indeed be subjectively indiscriminable without our having to admit the highest common factor for the nature of experiences.

Claim 3

For certain visual experiences as of a yellow lemon, namely *causally matching hallucinations* there is nothing more to the phenomenal character of such experiences than that of being indiscriminable from corresponding visual perceptions of a yellow lemon as what it is.

Basically, and where it concerns appearance-reality indiscriminability in conscious experience what matters is that two experiences may be indiscriminable from within and yet different; also, their being indiscriminable is all there is to their ‘phenomenal character’. The point is that it is not up to ‘natural science’ to ‘say’ anything about their being similar or not, but up to the world. All these points are explored in the literature on disjunctivism, all I want to do here is to point out the most obvious differences between the disjunctivist approach and a quinean inspired approach to such as Dennett’s. There is no *Erscheinung* blindness here: accounting for the rights of presentation in contrast with representation is precisely what is at stake in disjunctivism. Also, analysis of appearing focuses on perception, not on beliefs, and what is perceived is the world. Perception and world are a very different starting point, from mental contents taken as beliefs-that and natural science as last word on what there is (which is what we find in Dennett). The contrast makes Dennett look not only as guilty of scientism criticized in naturalists by early husserlian phenomenology but also as ‘looking inside the head’ – in other words, heterophenomenology as he proposes it involves a view of experience as a way of ‘being alienated’, to use Martin’s expression.

III.

What are we left with, after comparing the three perspectives on phenomenology and appearing above? A first suggestion is the following: there is one sense of ‘phenomenology’ in which phenomenology should be taken in consideration

when thinking about nature and method of philosophy²⁹, and not just when thinking about the philosophy of mind problem of the place of mind in a physical world. This is something worth learning from husserlian phenomenology and has something to do with what early phenomenologists, Husserl namely, expressed in terms of the importance of givenness (to thought) and appearing (*Erscheinung*). That understating of ‘phenomenology’ is more often than not disregarded in analytic philosophy, especially in the philosophy of mind, but in fact becomes especially important when thinking about appearing, appearances, and perception. The reason is, appearing (of things to thought) is not just one more problem for philosophy, or a philosophy of mind problem when dealing with the issue of consciousness, but rather something that lies at the core of ontological and metaphysical questions. It is no accident, namely, that a quinean conception of ontology makes no room for it – part of what I wanted to show in this article was that without it, without this attention to givenness of things to thought involved in that meaning of ‘phenomenology’, untenable idealism lurks. That was exemplified here by Dennett’s position on heterophenomenology, which has Quine in its background.

Moreover, what we speak about when we speak of “phenomenology” should not to be too readily identified with phenomenal consciousness or the phenomenal character of consciousness, the question in which most philosophers of mind are basically interested when they speak about it. The reason is, there is a difference between the centering on the mental life of individuals phenomenal consciousness appeals to and the focus of phenomenologists when they speak of appearing as *Erscheinung*. This is a difference to which analytical philosophers are surprisingly oblivious. Considering the question of appearing as *Erscheinung* without a restriction to individual mental lives should lead to a more general discussion of the question of givenness in the context of a discussion of thought-world relations. This is something which in recent analytical philosophy has been going on for instance around the work of John McDowell and his criticism of the Myth of the Given³⁰. And that is where the question of appearance-reality discriminability or indiscriminability in conscious experience should lead: straight back to a more general discussion of the question of realism.³¹

29 This is defended by J. Benoist.

30 McDowell 1994.

31 This work is part of the Research Project *Convergences – 21st century post-analytic and post-phenomenological philosophy of thought, mind and language* (MLAG, Institute of Philosophy, University of Porto, 2007-2010).

References

- Benoist, J. 2001, */L'idée de phénoménologie/*, Paris, Beauchesne.
- Crane, T. 2005, «The Problem of Perception », in E. Zalta (ed.), */The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy/* (Spring 2005 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu>.
- Dokic, J. & Pacherie, E., 2007, Too much ado about belief, */Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences/*, 6: 185-200.
- Dennett, D. 1978, Are Dreams Experiences?, in */Brainstorms/*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press.
- Dennett, D. 1988, «Quining Qualia», in Marcel, A. & Bisiach, E. (eds) 1988, */Consciousness in Contemporary Science/*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Dennett, D., 1991, */Consciousness Explained/*, Little Brown, Boston.
- Dennett, D., 2005, */Sweet Dreams—Philosophical Obstacles to a Science of Consciousness/*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press.
- Dummett, M., 1993, */Origins of Analytical Philosophy/*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Martin, M., «On Being Alienated», in Szabo Gendler, T. & Hawthorne, J. 2006, */Perceptual Experience/*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- McDowell, J. 1994, */Mind and World/*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Miguens, S., 2002, */Uma Teoria Fisicalista do Conteúdo e da Consciência—D. Dennett e os debates da filosofia da mente/*, Porto, Campo das Letras.
- Nagel, T., 1981, «What is it like to be a bat ?», */Mortal Questions/*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Pessoa, F., 1981, */Odes (Ricardo Reis)/*, Lisboa, Ática.
- Simons, D. & Chabris, C. 1999, Gorillas in our midst: sustained inattention blindness for dynamic events, */Perception/*, 28, 1059-1074.
- Soldati, G., 2007, Subjectivity in Heterophenomenology, */Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences/*, 6:89-98.

SOFIA MIGUENS

Associate Professor (Department of Philosophy – University of Porto); Researcher (Institute of Philosophy – University of Porto); Principal Investigator of MLAG *Mind Language and Action Group* <http://web2.lettras.up.pt/ifilosofia/mc/mlag>, Main research area: Philosophy of mind.