The Phenomenological Negation of Objective Physicalism

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An outstanding task for contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science is to evaluate the significance and relevance of the phenomenological tradition for the study of mind and consciousness. At the moment, mainstream philosophy of mind stands in relative ignorance of the original work of the key phenomenologists, content either to dismiss phenomenology as muddled and self-contradictory, or to understand it in terms of the interpretations of a few famous contemporaries. Insofar as phenomenology is accepted into the analytic debate, it is seen as playing a supporting role, generating the empirical data of accurately observed experience that then acts as a test of adequacy for analytic theory. The revolutionary aspects of phenomenology, the transcendentalism of Husserl, the destruction of traditional ontology by Heidegger, are placed firmly on the *other* side of the continental divide.

In this paper, I intend to show that authentic phenomenology stands in a fundamental opposition to the assumptions and practices of contemporary analytic philosophy of mind. Phenomenology is not simply a useful tool for generating observations of subjective experience, it is way of engaging in philosophical enquiry that moves in an opposite direction to analytic thought. Unless this is seen clearly, the pronouncements of the phenomenologists will be misinterpreted and inappropriately rejected. To understand phenomenology, one has to enter into phenomenological enquiry 'feet first.' It is not a matter of a theoretical understanding. One of the aims of the phenomenological method is to uncover the pre-theoretical ground of theoretical understanding. Arriving at such a pre-theoretical ground means suspending one's theoretical perspective. And what it means to suspend one's theoretical perspective is itself a phenomenological question.

The point is that a positive theoretical account of the phenomenological method is not going to communicate what it means to uncover the pre-theoretical ground of experience. One has to proceed on the basis of experience and understand on the basis of *negation.* These principles can only be clarified through actual demonstration. This is analogous to what Mary learned on seeing colour for the first time.[1] My plan is to illustrate the phenomenological method through a phenomenological analysis of the general framework within which contemporary philosophy of mind operates. I shall term this general framework *objective physicalism.* What exactly is meant by objective physicalism will become clearer as we proceed.

1 Searle's Critique

To bring the issues into relief, I shall examine John Searle's critique of phenomenology.[2] The intention is to show how an analytic approach misunderstands the phenomenological method, and thereby help to clarify the distinction between them. This begins a process of *negatively* characterising the phenomenological method by showing what it is *not.*

Searle is one of the few analytic philosophers to have examined the work of the major phenomenologists with some degree of seriousness. As a result of a protracted debate with Hubert Dreyfus,[3] he came to characterise phenomenology as "perspectivalism." The gist of Searle's argument is that a phenomenologist is unable to make *de re* or wide scope reference to "basic reality." Instead, phenomenological reference is contained within the scope of a phenomenological operator. Searle is particularly concerned with the validity of objective scientific knowledge. He sees phenomenology as denying the absolute validity of such knowledge, by understanding science, or the individual scientist, as taking up a particular stance or perspective, such that all scientific statements are understood relative to that stance (i.e. within the scope of a phenomenological operator). In this way, scientific claims become tainted with relativism. What may be true for you, having taken up a modern scientific perspective, may not be true for me, having taken up some other, say Aristotelean, perspective. Searle takes it that according to phenomenology, both views can be true, even if they contradict each other. He does not explicitly argue further. As I understand it, he thinks that phenomenology, in questioning the ultimate validity of scientific knowledge, must have arrived at a skepticism about the existence of an external world, and that, in itself, is reason to reject it.

Searle does not deny that we each inhabit a particular first-person perspective. His argument is to do with the logic of language and reference. It is based on the following conception of basic facts and basic reality:

> We know that the basic structure of the universe consists in entities that we find it convenient (if not entirely accurate) to call "particles," and these exist in fields of force and are typically organised into systems. We know furthermore that we and all living systems have evolved over a period of somewhere between three and five billion years by a process of Darwinian natural selection. ... In addition ... we have to add the neurological basis of all human and animal mental life. All of our consciousness, intentionality, and all the rest of our mental life are caused by neurobiological processes and realized in neurobiological systems. ... These three propositions taken together – atomic physics, evolutionary biology, and embodied brain neurobiology – I will call propositions that describe "the basic facts" or "the basic reality"(Searle, 2008, p. 109).

If we accept these propositions, then we also accept that science has arrived at a basically correct conception of how the universe is, independently of our human per-

spective. Searle allows that we may come to alter our theories over time, but this does not invalidate his basic argument about reference. As far as I understand this argument, Searle simply assumes, regardless of our stance or perspective, that in successful speech acts, we can and do directly refer to things and states of affairs in basic reality, and that any sufficiently definite assertions we make concerning that reality are either true or false. Consequently, the truth conditions of any properly constructed scientific assertion that refers to basic reality, and that does not include reference to any subjective mental phenomenon, depend only on the basic reality and not on the phenomenological stance of the person making the statement. Therefore, phenomenology must be false if it claims that scientific statements are conditioned by the subjective stance of the scientist. Scientific statements are precisely that class of statement that make reference to basic reality in such a way as to have eliminated the subjective stance of the person making the statement.

For Searle, there is a clear logical distinction between the observer independent facts that obtain regardless of any mind, and the observer dependent facts that only obtain relative to the intentionality of a conscious agent. So, for example, facts concerning the length of a hammer are observer *independent,* for we *discover* the length of an object, we do not assign it, except insofar as we define the units of measurement. And, in defining the units of measurement, we obviously do not alter the observer independent length, because two different scales can be used to measure the same length. Conversely, facts concerning the *function* of the hammer, e.g. that it is used for hammering, are observer *dependent.* No unconscious thing has any function in itself because functions are assigned by a conscious intentionality that understands in advance what something is for. According to this distinction, phenomenologists are making an obvious logical blunder, and treating all facts as if they are observer dependent, whereas, for Searle, the basic facts are observer independent:

> ... the basic facts do not ... have a relative existence. They have an absolute existence. They are there regardless of what we think. Now this is the point that the phenomenologists I am discussing do not acknowledge. All facts have to be relative to some point of view, some stance. In the case of the existential phenomenologist, it is relative to Dasein. In the case of the late Husserlians, it is relative to the transcendental ego. But the reference to the basic facts is never wide scope, it is never *de re.* It is always inside one of the phenomenological operators (Searle, 2008, p. 131-132).

The picture that emerges is relatively simple. Searle holds to a certain physicalist ontology. The details of that ontology allow for conscious experience to be ontologically distinct from the neurobiological processes on which it depends, although just what this ontological distinctness amounts to is unclear (to me).[4] The main point is that the neurobiological processes are basic and the phenomenological experience of consciousness is dependent on (is caused by) the basic reality of these neurobiological processes.

For Searle this means that my consciousness (my experience of being conscious) has a definite physical location: it is situated in and realised by those neurobiological processes that are causing the experience. This is made clear in Searle's brief discussion of Heidegger's concept of Dasein, or human being-in-the-world:

> Suppose you took the notion of Dasein seriously, in the sense you thought it referred to a real phenomenon in the real world. Your first question would be: How does the brain cause Dasein and how does it exist in the brain? Or if you thought the brain was not the right explanatory level you would have to say exactly how and where Dasein is located in the space-time trajectory of the organism and you would have to locate the right causes, both the micro causes that are causing Dasein and its causal effects on the organic processes of the organism. *There is no escaping the fact that we all live in one space-time continuum, and if Dasein exists it has to be located and causally situated in that continuum* [my italics] (Searle, 2008, p. 125-126).

This makes it clear that Searle is coming to his analysis of phenomenology having already decided on the truth of a certain physicalist ontology, i.e. there is only one basic kind of existence, and that is the existence of entities in an objective space-time continuum. Given his physicalism, combined with his biological naturalism concerning consciousness, he can then conclude that we have direct epistemological access to this basic reality. These points are never in question. The only question is whether phenomenology *agrees* with Searle's conception of language and its reference to basic reality. His (I think correct) conclusion is that phenomenology does not agree with his conception of basic reality. But that, in itself, is not a demonstration that phenomenology is under some kind of an illusion.

The fundamental problem with Searle's critique is that he has failed to understand that phenomenology is not concerned with denying *de re* reference within a physicalist ontology. If physicalism were true in the way Searle understands it then it would be absurd to deny that such reference is possible. Phenomenology is asking a different question, it is enquiring into the ontology of first person experience directly, and in so doing, it is necessarily putting any physicalist ontology in question. The issue is not to claim that the results of phenomenological enquiry are absurd from the point of view of physicalism. An adequate critique must first understand what phenomenology is attempting to achieve, it must enter into a dialogue and an understanding of the motivations that are in operation.

2 Phenomenological Reality

To begin, it will be useful to make a distinction between phenomenological reality and physical reality. Phenomenological reality can only be known directly, as an immediate

experience. As soon as it becomes something thought of, or spoken of, it has been interpreted, and is no longer the immediate experience. It therefore has to be approached via a process of negation. By linguistically indicating what it is *not,* it is possible to pre-linguisitically experience what it is.

Firstly, phenomenological reality is not physical reality, insofar as physical reality is understood metaphysically. Metaphysical physical reality, from a phenomenological perspective, is an interpretation of phenomenological reality, where the physical phenomena manifesting in phenomenological reality are understood as being manifestations of metaphysically physical entities existing in a physical space-time. These metaphysically physical entities are (somehow) phenomenologically perceived by conscious individuals who are (in some way) connected to, or identical with, particular metaphysically physical bodies, or brains. This does not mean, for phenomenology, that there is no such thing as a physical object. If the metaphysical physical interpretation is withdrawn, the physical phenomena become phenomenologically physical, i.e. the very things we see in front of us, as distinct from the things we imagine, or hallucinate, or dream of, and so on.

The point is that there is nothing in the phenomenological experience *itself* to indicate that the things we experience exist in any other way than the way they appear to exist. For example, consider how a thoroughgoing physicalism, from an analysis of light, and the retina, and the brain, will conclude that the objects we see are not 'really' coloured in the way we experience them as being coloured. Our experience of colour may indicate some underlying property of the physical object, but the actual quality of the colour is not a property of the object; it is perhaps an ineffable qualia, or perhaps identical with the brain process that could (in principle) be shown to be counterfactually responsible for our experiencing that colour. The details are not the issue. What matters is that as far as the phenomenological reality is concerned, the objects of experience really are coloured. There is no separation into secondary qualities that are added by consciousness and the real physical attributes of the object.

At the same time, it is important not to think that phenomenological reality is a kind of idealism, where what is intended is a stream of consciousness that (somehow) exists without reference to an external world. To think of phenomenological reality in that way is to have again interpreted it, to have understood it in terms of there being such a thing as consciousness, and the phenomena of experience as appearing within this consciousness, as not being out there, in a world, but appearing in a parallel world, as it were. Whereas, in phenomenological reality, the phenomena really are out there, in a world. That is how we experience it. There is no experience of these phenomena existing in a consciousness, until I interpret experience in that way.

Language remains a problem here. I have made certain positive assertions about phenomenological reality that have every appearance of being interpretations of that reality: e.g. that objects are really coloured, that they are really out there in a world. The question is, on what basis can I claim that these statements refer to the 'real'

phenomenological reality, and that other statements are somehow in error? The answer here must be provisional. All discourse assumes a common background. Here I am assuming that we share a certain experience of the world and that we ordinarily interpret it according to a certain scientifically-oriented metaphysical physicalism. We really do believe that there are physical objects out there, consisting of fields of force, and so on. The first step in phenomenology is to suspend that belief in the independent physicality of the things in the world, and the concomitant belief in an empirical consciousness that experiences that physical world. This is a pure negation. It is not intended as an intellectual exercise of the imagination, it is intended is a full withdrawal of assent, so that the world is *experienced* in a new way. This is related to Husserl's phenomenological reduction.[5] If the reduction is successful, then what was before seen as a feature of the world – its physicalism – is seen as something added on top of a more original experience. Statements about this more original experience are not intended as absolute truths, but only as indications of 'what it is like' to have withdrawn one's assent from a physicalist interpretation of experience. It could be that there are further unrecognised layers of interpretation in the experience, that conceal a more original phenomenological reality. So nothing finally depends on *positive* claims about the nature of phenomenological experience – these claims are provisional and subject to revision on the basis of further phenomenological enquiry.

That is not to imply there is no fact of the matter concerning phenomenological reality, or that it is a relative question as to whether a phenomenological reduction brings us closer to that reality or not. There *certainly* is a fact of the matter concerning phenomenological reality. It is revealed in whatever is being experienced now. Uncertainty arises only in attempting to interpret this reality in thought and language. It is also not to be thought that phenomenology denies there is metaphysical reality that lies behind phenomenological reality. What phenomenology insists is that the nature of the metaphysical constitution of phenomenological reality can only be discovered, if it can be discovered at all, on the basis of a phenomenological investigation, and that such an investigation must not dogmatically assume what it is going to find before it sets out. Phenomenology sees physicalism as just such an assumption, one that covers over the phenomenological reality in such a way that a phenomenological investigation becomes impossible. Hence the requirement of a phenomenological reduction.

3 The Epistemological Priority of Phenomenological Reality

To summarise, according to phenomenology, i.e. from within a phenomenological reduction, physical reality is postulated on the basis of an interpretation of phenomenological reality. This gives phenomenological reality an *epistemological* priority over physical reality because knowledge of physical reality depends on access to phenomenological reality. This priority has two aspects. Firstly, in terms of the historical development of science and the development of each human individual, our understanding of physical

reality is preceded by a pre-scientific, pre-theoretic access to phenomenological reality, out which we infer the existence of physical objects and minds that perceive them. Secondly, the practice and progress of empirical science itself depends on observations that finally appeal to direct experiences of phenomenological reality. In both cases there is a distinction between what is known on the basis of direct evidence and what is inferred from that evidence. Direct evidence is grounded in direct phenomenological experience and thereby inherits a higher degree of certainty than knowledge which is inductively inferred on the basis of such evidence.

To make this clear, I shall introduce the notion of phenomenological fact. Phenomenological facts are the facts of phenomenological reality, i.e. they are what make statements about phenomenological reality true. A statement of phenomenological fact differs from a statement of physical fact in containing no reference to a (metaphysical) physical reality. As with any truth claim, a statement of phenomenological fact is not necessarily true, because we can be in error in terms of how we bring an experience of phenomenological reality to language (i.e. we can misinterpret the experience). However, there is a *pre-reflective* sense in which we cannot be in error concerning a phenomenological fact, because phenomenological reality simply *is* whatever it is that is experienced now. You may be hearing a certain sound that you misidentify as the sound of a bird. It could even be that in identifying the sound as the sound of a bird, your experience of the sound is changed. However, it is still the case that the sound you are experiencing is the sound you are experiencing, there can be no gap here where it seems to you that you are experiencing one experience when in fact you are experiencing some other experience. As has been noted by Searle (and others[6]), when it comes to phenomenological reality, the seeming *is* the reality. It is this certainty of phenomenological reality that grounds the epistemic priority of phenomenological facts over theoretical physical facts. It is not that our statements of phenomenological facts are certain, it is that our statements refer directly to something that is certain, viz. phenomenological reality. The same degree of certainty does not accrue to statements of theoretical physical fact, insofar as the truth of such statements requires the existence of a metaphysical physical reality that is distinct from the phenomenological reality. For example, Searle's basic neurobiological facts go beyond what can be asserted on the basis of phenomenological reality, e.g., by claiming that phenomenological experience, i.e. the *form* of the experience itself and not just its changing content, is caused by neurobiological processes.

A phenomenological fact is a fact concerning an experience of phenomenological reality that remains within a phenomenological reduction. So, in stating a phenomenological fact that refers to a bird I can see in a nearby tree, I am referring to the bird as it is experienced, the phenomenon of the bird just as it manifests to me, over there, in that tree, the same bird that you can see, not some private bird in my experience, but also not some physical bird, that is not really coloured, but is really composed of colourless molecules that reflect light of a certain wavelength. This form of phenomenological

reference is *not* the same as Russell's notion of acquaintance,[7] recently reinterpreted by David Chalmers.[8] According to Chalmers, we are acquainted with the phenomenal qualities of the sensory modalities when we perform a disciplined demonstration of a sensory experience. For example, we can form a pure phenomenal concept of the quality of a particular colour just while we are demonstrably seeing that colour in front of us. The concept refers only to the immediate phenomenal colour experience, making no reference to an external physical reality and, if performed correctly, inherits the same certainty that accrues to all phenomenological experience. In this way Chalmers performs a limited phenomenological reduction that only brackets off the sensory qualities as sensory qualities and leaves out the spatio-temporal physical reality of the objects of perception (and the empirical subject of those perceptions). In contrast, a full phenomenological reduction includes the entire domain of phenomenological reality, such that the experiential contents no longer refer to some presumed physical reality outside of phenomenological reality and the subject of those experiences is no longer understood as an empirical entity somehow attached to, or identical with, a physical location. Here it is again important not to understand phenomenological reality as if it were a private realm of consciousness. Phenomenological reality just is what is immediately experienced now as it is experienced. In Heideggerian terms, it is the *world.* In terms of language and reference it is the ground out of which language and reference emerge.

I think this is a point that Searle does not grasp. He took it that phenomenologists simply do not understand the nature of reference and by placing phenomenological operators around statements of basic facts, they inadvertently fall into a kind of relativism. Searle's view only makes sense on the basis of his assumptions about the nature of basic reality and basic facts, assumptions which phenomenology explicitly sets aside. It is not that phenomenological reference fails to reach the 'things themselves' (in fact, the things themselves are exactly what show up in phenomenological experience). It is that phenomenology explicitly seeks to understand the ground of reference on the basis of an investigation of phenomenological reality, an investigation that starts by discarding, as far as is possible, any presupposed answers. Searle's critique is a critique of the *starting point* of phenomenology, a starting point that he assumes to be false on the basis of what he assumes to be true. The underlying question is therefore a question of starting points: Searle starts from the (metaphysical) physical facts of science, and phenomenology starts from the phenomenological facts of experience. As Searle's critique makes clear, these starting points are fundamentally opposed. The question is, which starting point is the more rational, the more logical?

4 The Phenomenological Inversion

Phenomenology, *authentic* phenomenology, represents a reversal or inversion of the usual physicalist understanding of the order of existence. It is our seeming experience of the world that becomes the reality, and the reality of the (metaphysical) physi-

cal universe that becomes questionable. To think that this contradicts common sense only reveals that common sense already contains metaphysical assumptions. If common sense is understood phenomenologically, then the phenomenological inversion also 'makes sense,' because the phenomenological reality of the physical world literally *is* the world of common sense, i.e. it is the world as it is commonly *sensed.* Common sense, as it is ordinarily understood, is a mixture of what is commonly sensed with what is commonly *believed.* It is this admixture of belief that gives common sense its inferior status in relation to scientific knowledge. Science does not question the epistemic deliverances of purified common sense, it rather *relies* on these observations as the evidence upon which its theories are brought to ultimate account. On this basis, science is able to question the common beliefs that are mixed up with common sense, but only up to a certain limit. That limit, at least for contemporary physical science, forbids questioning the commonly held belief that reality is ultimately physical, in some way or other, that science itself is in the process of determining. This has the consequence that when science comes to give an account of common sense, like Searle, it gives an account in terms of the physicalism which it assumes before it begins its enquiry. We then arrive at a conflicting situation. The common sense that forms the epistemic foundation of scientific practice is seen as causally dependent on the physical entities that science is in the process of understanding. For science, the observations of common sense are the ultimate ground of verification, the basis on which the truth or falsity of scientific theory is decided. But then science, on the basis of its physicalist ontology (and only insofar as it accepts such an ontology as ultimate) understands the observations of common sense as not ultimate after all, for those observations themselves are determined by the very physical entities that we have used the observations of common sense to discover.

There is an easy answer to this apparent conflict: the priority of phenomenological observation is epistemic. That does not imply that phenomenological experience is not caused by (or is not supervenient on) physical processes. Causation (or supervenience) is not epistemic, it is a brute physical fact. The brute physical fact has the causal priority, the phenomenological fact has the epistemic priority. These are different kinds of priority, therefore there is no conflict. This would be enough to justify physicalism, if there were a path of explanation from the brute physical fact to the phenomenological fact that was phenomenologically coherent. Phenomenological coherence would entail that the path can be verified as true on the basis phenomenological experience. Without such phenomenological verification, we lack a reliable standard upon which to judge between competing paths of explanation. I take it that no such phenomenological verification of physicalism has yet been provided.

Here, I am understanding physicalism in a broad sense, as the attempt to give an account of phenomenological reality on the basis of already having posited a spatiotemporal metaphysically physical reality and of taking that reality to have *causal priority* over phenomenological reality. Such causal priority amounts either to a denial that

phenomenological experience has any causal power whatsoever (as in eliminativism and property dualism), or to a denial that phenomenological experience has any causal power that can act independently of the objectively physical (as in the various contemporary non-reductive physicalisms). The unifying property of these physicalisms is that they take the distinction between the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal to be *ontological,* rather than *epistemic.* This can be illustrated by again considering the perception of colour. An objectively physical account of colour takes it that *if* anything is left over after having provided a physical account of colour, that additional something is subjectively phenomenal. This subjectively phenomenal experience is taken as ontologically distinct from the objectively physical, on the basis of its possessing derivative or non-existent causal power. In other words, it is not *we,* as human cognisers, who have divided up the world in this way, on the basis of our subjectivity, there is a real (objective) distinction between the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal – reality itself is jointed in this way.

I take any broadly physicalist position that accepts such an ontological/causal distinction between the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal, to be an *objective physicalism.* It is objective physicalism that phenomenology puts in question. From a phenomenological standpoint, objective physicalism is more than a simple assumption, it is an underlying understanding that takes the world as being a certain way before any enquiry commences. The way that physicalism understands the world is as a *fractured* entity. There is phenomenal experience and there is the physical world. They are divided and it is the task of philosophy to put the fractured entity, like Humpty Dumpty, back together again. Phenomenology denies the fracture. It shows that the world as we experience it, which is the way it presents itself, is not fractured. We self-evidently experience the world as a unity. It is only in the process of analysing the world that we break it up and then pose the problem of how to put it back together.

This is the phenomenological inversion. It starts with the unity of the phenomenological reality of experience. Physicalism starts from a certain interpretation of that experience, an interpretation that is founded on a systematic abstraction from the phenomenological reality of experience (i.e. the abstraction of the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal). Epistemologically, phenomenology is prior to physicalism and therefore is able to investigate the presuppositions of physicalism. Physicalism itself has no prior position from which to investigate itself. It takes its metaphysical ground as a basic truth and thereby denies its origin in phenomenological reality. To see this denial in action, consider the following extract from Searle's critique of phenomenology:

> Given what we know about how the universe works, any human reality at all has to be derivative, and dependent on, or in my jargon, *caused by and realized in,* the more basic reality of particle physics, organic molecules, and cellular biology. *This is not an optional way of looking at things, it is just how the universe works* [my italics] (Searle, 2008, p. 126).

Searle here (and elsewhere) is simply expressing his *belief* in an objective physicalism. He exhibits a confusion that arises from not having separated out the phenomenological reality from the metaphysical physical understanding of that reality. It is the phenomenological facts that have the certainty. The idea that these facts themselves can be explained on the basis of an objective physicalism is *not* a fact, it is (at least until a convincing demonstration has been provided) a *hypothesis.* To assert a hypothesis as if it were a basic fact is Searle's error. In doing this he denies phenomenology rather than refutes it. If the basic facts of basic reality are as Searle asserts, then phenomenology is just the kind of mistake that he takes it to be. However, it is clear that Searle's basic facts do not have the kind of certainty that he attributes to them. Even if phenomenology is rejected, there is still considerable dispute amongst the various positions within objective physicalism about exactly what kind of fact it is that connects consciousness and neurobiological brain processes. If there were a consensus here then *perhaps* Searle's assertion of the basic facts would have some justification (insofar as the vote of a collection of philosophers can act as a form of justification). However, Searle's actual philosophical justifications, when they do not simply assert the basic facts, consist in critical destructions of the other positions within the domain of objective physicalism.[9] His position is, *if* objective physicalism is true, then biological naturalism is the most plausible alternative. But Searle refuses to accept there is an *if* concerning the basic facts and thereby refuses to accept the validity of phenomenology. Phenomenology is the means whereby we can investigate this *if.* But Searle is not interested in such an investigation. For him this is settled in advance.

Searle's final observation is that phenomenology is under an illusion that only phenomenological facts are real:

> In discussing these issues with phenomenologists I have found that in the study of philosophy of mind, where something is not phenomenologically real they suppose it is not real at all, in the sense that it has no mental, intentional or logical reality. And where is it phenomenologically real that is real enough. I call this the phenomenological illusion (Searle, 2008, p. 116).

Here, Searle is partially correct. For something to be accepted as phenomenologically real it must be susceptible to phenomenological demonstration. However, if something is not susceptible to such demonstration, that does not mean it is *unreal,* unless its reality can be *negated* by phenomenological demonstration. There are *possibilia* in the middle that may or may not be capable of positive demonstration or negation, which remain in phenomenological limbo, so to speak. As far as the current discussion stands, Searle's basic facts are just such possibilia, they have neither been demonstrated as phenomenologically real, nor shown to be impossible. They stand in need of further investigation.

Once again, it is important not to interpret phenomenology as some kind of idealism that only accepts the reality of private conscious experiences. Phenomenology is a

form of radical empiricism. In sticking to the phenomenological facts, phenomenology distinguishes between those phenomena that can directly demonstrate their reality, such as the tables and chairs of everyday experience, and entities that can only show themselves indirectly on the basis of other phenomena, such as the quarks of quantum physics. Phenomenology does not claim quarks are not real, but rather that they are *possibly* real. We should remember that this is our actual epistemic situation: we are *not* certain about the reality of quarks. Our certainty, if we have done the science, is that particular phenomena pertaining to measuring instruments have been observed and on this basis it is reasonable to assume that there could be such entities as quarks. But we remain in ignorance about the essential nature of these entities. All we actually know is that there are certain occurrent event structures that can be reliably described in the mathematical language of quantum physics. This is not a denial of the basic facts, neither is it instrumentalism, it is a *description* of the basic facts.

Finally, in embracing the phenomenological inversion, we also invert Searle's critique. Rather than phenomenology being a kind of perspectivalism, when we acknowledge the epistemic priority of phenomenological reality and start from the immediate givenness of that reality, phenomenology becomes a principled method of *discarding* preconceptions and perspectives. The very ethos of phenomenology is this discarding. That is the meaning of the phenomenological reduction, of the injunction 'To the things themselves!', of letting "that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1962/2008, p. 58). Consider again Heidegger's negating definition of phenomenology in the introduction to Being and Time:

> Thus our treatise does not subscribe to a 'standpoint' or represent any special 'direction'; for phenomenology is nothing of either sort, nor can it become so as long as it understands itself. The expression 'phenomenology' signifies primarily a *methodological conception.* This expression does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject-matter but rather the *how* of that research.
> ... Thus the term 'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'To the things themselves!' It is opposed to all free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated; it is opposed to those pseudo-questions which parade themselves as 'problems', often for generations at a time (Heidegger, 1962/2008, p. 50).

In contrast, it is Searle who now exhibits perspectivalism, who has his point of view "built into" his ontology. In assuming the truth of the basic facts about basic reality, Searle is seeing the world as if objective physicalism were true. In not being able to accept that his account of basic reality is an assumption, he takes a perspective on the world while at the same time refusing to acknowledge the perspective is a perspective.

In unquestioningly believing in this metaphysical physicalism, he projects it into the world and therefore sees what he believes as if it were there in the world itself. This is the structure of an unquestioned metaphysical belief. It operates in the background, pre-reflectively structuring the phenomenological experience in such a way that the experience must confirm the belief. Ironically, it is the function of the phenomenological reduction to uncover the projection of such metaphysical beliefs, yet a consequence of such belief projection is that the unacknowledged situation of the believer is also projected onto any position denies the truth of what is believed. Hence Searle's inverted perception of phenomenology as perspectivalism and his insistence that phenomenologists are suffering from a phenomenological illusion.

5 Phenomenological Reference

Searle's charge that phenomenology denies *de re* reference is not entirely answered by questioning Searle's physicalism. If we have no positive (phenomenological) account of how reference to physical objects operates within a phenomenological reduction, then it seems we are exchanging one perspective that (in practice) successfully functions as an understanding of reality for one that negates that understanding and puts nothing in its place. For example, in referring to that chair over there, if there is no *de re* reference to an external physical reality, and there is also no reference to my private conscious experience, then what exactly are we (as phenomenologists) referring to in our linguistic utterances concerning (what we ordinarily call) physical objects?

Here the answer, as always, is to enquire of the experience itself. In speaking or thinking of the chair, I find I am referring to that very chair, there, just as it presents itself to me, not just immediately, this moment, but the chair that *persists,* that remains the same chair even though I may leave the room and return. The same chair that is in front of me at *this moment* and at *this* moment as I move around it, and the same chair that is in front of you, just as it *was* and *is* in front of me. This is the *phenomenon* of the chair as it is revealed to me in my phenomenological experience. The point is that in showing itself in my experience, the chair is doing exactly that, it is showing *itself*, not a sensory image of itself, or even a sensory representation, as if the chair that I experience were somehow made of sensory qualities. No, the chair *is* that particular colour, it *is* that shape. I take the object to be exactly as it shows itself to be.

For physicalism, such an answer simply begs the question. Of course the chair *appears* that way, that is something that everyone knows. The question is, what is the *cause* of the chair appearing that way? To answer this we give an account of the light energy that is absorbed and emitted from the surface of the real physical chair reaching the real physical eye and exciting the rods and cones of the real physical retina, causing certain patterns of excitation in the real physical brain that, given reasonable neuroscientific assumptions, completely specify each detail of my experience of the chair. The problem is that such an account does *not* explain my phenomenological

experience, i.e. it does not explain my being conscious in the first place, or why colour is like *this* or sound is like *this.* At most, such a physical account shows that my experience of the world is an experience whose content is correlated with events that are happening in my brain. To argue this further will get us into unnecessary detail.[10] The point is, for physicalism, that when I refer to the chair, I am referring to the real physical cause of my perceiving the chair, i.e. the real physical chair.

Within a phenomenological reduction there is no question of the physical causation of experience. To think that way is to have already divided up the world, to have left the phenomenological reality and to have posited an objective physical world and a subjective world of experience. In phenomenological reality there is no subjective and objective world, there is the one phenomenological world, the world in front of me now that includes my being conscious of the world as one unified experience. It is important to see that this is not a *theory,* it is a description of the phenomenological reality. Such a description is always going to be misunderstood if taken as a theoretical proposition, because, even in mentioning 'me' and the 'world' I am introducing concepts that break the experience into parts, that make the experience *thinkable.* Whereas phenomenological reality is not thinkable. It is the pre-reflective ground upon which thought operates, it is that which the thought thinks about.

In referring to the chair I am singling out something from this pre-reflective ground of experience, I am indicating *that* chair, *as* a chair. Reference thereby contains an interpretation of the phenomenological reality, while, at the same time, being *part of* the phenomenological reality. As an interpretation, reference also includes the possibility of error. I can misidentify the chair. It may be a table with another object standing on its surface that makes it look like a chair. With the possibility of error, comes the notion of there being a way the world is, that is independent of my interpretation, that can *correct* my interpretation. I walk towards what I took to be a chair, and my experience changes. I now see a table in front of me. This transformation of the phenomenological experience is not necessarily a matter of something indistinct becoming distinct. For instance, if fear is involved, as when a stick is taken to be a snake, then, while the misidentification persists, it is a snake that is seen, not an indistinct snake-or-stick. Careful observation can reveal that the details of the snake's body are 'filled in,' a head is seen, so are the markings – there is a distinct illusion and there is a distinct experience of the illusion dissolving on closer inspection.

The fact of such illusions requires further investigation. The possibility of illusion shows that my pre-reflective phenomenological experience can misrepresent the way the physical world is. That implies there are two realities in question: one, the current state of the physical world, and the other, the way the world is currently presented in my phenomenological experience. Illusion shows that these two realities do not coincide. For physicalism the answer is straightforward: it is the physical world that is the reality and it is my phenomenological experience that is secondary, that presents the more basic physical reality, and sometimes is in error about that reality. Physical reality is

the reality, because it is the fact about which phenomenological experience is in error. There is no question of physical reality itself being in error because it *is* the fact, the ultimate source of verification, not my error-prone phenomenological experience.

Conversely, my phenomenological experience cannot be in error about *itself.* When I am experiencing an illusion, the phenomenon that I am experiencing is the phenomenon of an *illusion.* To say that the illusion misrepresents the physical world is to say something obvious: the misrepresentation is what makes the phenomenon an illusion. When I pre-reflectively experience an illusion, as in the example of the snake, it is part of the experience that I am seeing a snake, even though I do not reflectively consider this, or say to myself 'this is a snake.' Phenomenological experience comes imbued with meaning in such a way that when I turn my attention on an object, I (usually) already know what it is, without any reflection. This already-knowing is what is revealed when we realise that an experience is an illusion. We experience a surprise that shows we already had a certain understanding of what it was we were seeing. Experience is saturated with such understanding, but the continual presence of this understanding means it cannot easily be distinguished, except in moments of breakdown.

The interesting feature of the snake-stick illusion, is that, while I am seeing the stick as a snake, I really am seeing it as a snake, not as something I have reflectively interpreted as being a snake, but as a phenomenological experience that is indistinguishable from my perceiving a snake. It is only retrospectively, once the illusion dissolves, that I come to understand the experience as an illusion. The realisation that I have experienced an illusion shows there is a fact of the matter about how the physical world is (there is and always was a stick in front of me), and that this can differ from the way the physical world is presented in my phenomenological experience (first there was a snake and now there is a stick). *This demonstrates that the physical world and my phenomenological experience of the physical world can come apart and that I can be unaware that this has happened.*

But what has this to do with phenomenological reference? When I point out the snake to you, and you see a stick, to what am I referring? Well, in that situation, I am not referring to anything. My reference has failed. I am intending to refer to the phenomenon of the snake in front of me, which I understand to be a physical object, when, in fact, there is no such physical object in front of me. The thing that is present to me is the phenomenon of an illusion, and if I were to refer to it as such then my reference would have succeeded. However, in this case, I could not have referred to the immediate presence of the illusion, because if I had realised it were an illusion, the illusion would have been dispelled.

The point is that in order to decide whether my reference has succeeded I have to seek corroborating evidence. I need to confer with other perceivers, I need to get up close to the thing I am attempting to refer to, and so on. Even then, there is always room for skeptical doubt. Here is not the place to rehearse these arguments. It is

enough to see that phenomenology does not lead to any absurd position that assumes all phenomenological reference must succeed. Insofar as I am referring to objects in the physical world, the question of whether my reference succeeds is not a matter of introspection, it is a matter of empirical evidence.

The problematic issue is the separation between phenomenological experience and the underlying reality of the physical world that the experience of illusion reveals. If there is a fact of the matter that persists independently of my phenomenological experience, such as the continued existence of the chair when no one is looking at it, or the existence of the stick despite my seeing it as a snake, then surely this fact of the matter, the enduring existence of the objects that I experience, is something separate from my phenomenological experience? This is the central question. What phenomenology says is that we do not know this underlying reality directly. It does not deny that there is such a reality. It is clear that this reality is responsible for all aspects of my phenomenological experience, not just the presence of the physical objects that I perceive. It is also responsible for my perceiving these objects. The phenomenological reduction simply asks that we stop thinking we know what this underlying reality is like. It asks we start with what we do know, the immediate reality of phenomenological experience. On the basis of this experience, we can reasonably assume that there *is* an underlying reality. Where phenomenology draws the line is in not assuming that reality is physical, in the sense of assuming there is an *independently objective spatio-temporal* physical reality.

Phenomenological reference to physical objects refers to physical objects as they appear in phenomenological experience. The chair is the blue thing in front of me now. If I consider the molecular constitution of the chair, I encounter a level of reality that cannot be directly manifested in phenomenological experience. That level of reality can only make itself known indirectly by the phenomena of signs and symptoms. The phenomenological facts are the physical objects that we can perceive, and the perceptible signs and symptoms of an underlying order that we reason must be responsible for producing our phenomenological experience in the first place. Through science we can uncover a mathematical structure that is inherent in this underlying order, but this mathematical structure only describes this underlying order, it does not tell us the manner of its existence.

If we attempt to interpret the mathematics, we immediately start thinking in terms of our experience of the world. We think of fields of force extending in physical space, the same physical space that we perceive in front of us where the chair appears. Phenomenology does not take such thought literally because it goes beyond what we can know on the basis of phenomenological experience. The phenomenological fact is that the mode of existence of the microphysical structure of reality is hidden. We can picture this structure, but we can only picture entities in terms of our existing experience of the world. So we think, along with Searle, of distinct fields and particles spread out in a space-time continuum.

To summarise: phenomenological reference to physical objects does not contain any reference to a spatio-temporal microphysical reality that is assumed to constitute the physical object I perceive or that is assumed to be physically causing my phenomenological experience of that object. It is important to remember this is not a theoretical claim. It is an observational claim concerning the reality of pre-reflective experience. When I refer to the chair, I am reporting on something that is already the case in my pre-reflective experience. I do not need to reflect. I simply report 'I see a chair, *this* chair, in front of me, now.' The *thing,* the chair, is the very thing, there, that I see (unless I am experiencing an illusion). It is not something else, such as a collection of molecules causing me to see a sensory representation of a chair. That is not to deny that there is a story to be told about the molecules. The question is, to what I am referring? And the phenomenological answer is, I am referring to the phenomenon of the chair.

6 The Brain on a TV in a Vat

The phenomenological response to objective physicalism is to deny the coherence of *de re* reference to an objective, spatio-temporal physical reality. This lack of coherence arises from an inappropriate transfer of reference from something I do have access to (phenomenological reality) to something I only conjecture into existence (objective spatio-temporal physical reality). I think, if approached phenomenologically, this is the true import of Hilary Putnam's brain in a vat argument.[11]

The gist of Putnam's argument is that if I am a brain in a vat and I utter the statement 'I am a brain in a vat' then I say something false, therefore I can't be a brain in a vat. The statement is false because, as a brain in a vat, when I refer to the vat, using vat-English, my reference is to the kinds of thing that appear to me in the vat generated world. Experiences of these 'things' are induced in me by the vat machinery. This machinery transmits appropriate signals to my brain and monitors my brain's responses in such a way that I am caused to have the same kind of phenomenological experience as I am having now in the 'real' world. However, in the vat generated world, my experience of 'physical' things is caused by the real vat machinery, and not by the things that appear to me as if they were out there in an external physical world. Assuming a causal theory of reference, it follows that any vat-English reference to a vat, even the supposed vat in which my brain is housed, is not a reference to a real physical vat, but to the 'image' of a vat produced in me by the vat machinery. Image vats are entirely different entities to real physical vats. They have no reality outside of the code that generates them, and no objective presence in any physical space. So, in uttering 'I am a brain in a vat,' my vat-English reference is to something that couldn't be the cause of my experience. Therefore, I am saying something false. If the statement 'I am a brain in a vat' is false it follows that I am not a brain in a vat.

I think Putnam's conclusion is false. Let's say I am a brain in a vat, just as the thought experiment describes, and today (by chance) the data stream from a camera that points to my real brain is switched within the vat machinery in such a way that camera images of my brain in a vat start appearing inside my image-world – say on an image-world TV screen.[12] These vat-images are now causally connected to the actual vat. I have long thought that I am a brain in a vat, and when I see the vat-images on the TV I immediately exclaim, 'That is an image of the vat, and I am the brain in that vat: I knew it!' Now my reference to the vat is through an image that is caused by the vat, so it possesses the required causal credentials. Now I speak truly when I say I am a brain in a vat, whereas yesterday, according to Putnam, I spoke falsely.

If we accept Putnam's argument, it leads to the absurd conclusion that I *become* a brain in a vat once the camera is connected to the image world. This absurdity shows that although my *statement* 'I am a brain in a vat' can be false according to a causal theory of reference, that does not imply, in reality, that I am not a brain in a vat. Putnam's argument mixes up the notion of my being able to refer to something, with the actual existence of that thing. The purpose of the brain in a vat scenario is to produce a situation where it becomes impossible (on a causal theory of reference) for me to refer directly to the vat in which I am encased. But to conclude on that basis that I am not a brain in a vat is unwarranted. I can only conclude, until the camera is connected, that I am *unable* to refer *directly* to the vat in which I am encased. If I do state 'I am a brain in a vat' and my reference is to an image-vat, then my statement is false. But this is the case whether or not the camera is connected. My statement only becomes true once I make the distinction between the image-vats I have been referring to in the past, and the real vat on the TV screen that I am referring to now.

However, it is still possible to distinguish between the real vat and an image-vat *without* the artefact of a camera. To make this clear, I shall again assume I am a brain in a vat. I have read Putnam's paper, but nonetheless continue to believe I am a brain in a vat. Having thought about my situation, I realise that my saying 'I am a brain in a vat' is meaningless when understood literally. Either my vat reference is to an image-vat, in which case my belief is false, or it is an attempted reference to something that stands entirely outside the domain of my current experience. For me, my image-world is the only world to which I can refer. My idea of the vat-world is of something transcendent, something that cannot be thought about or spoken of in ordinary language, because all my ordinary language refers to image-objects, not the reality that causes me to experience these image-objects. However, I realise I can think of the vat-*world*, in its entirety, as being the reality that causes my current image experiences, and in thinking of the vat-world as a unity I am thinking truly, i.e. because the vat-world *is* the cause of my image experiences.

After more reflection, I realise I know more about the reality of the vat-world than its sheer existence. I also know there is a *correspondence* between that reality and my experience. For example, in order to have the image-world experience of there being

a tree in front of me, there must be something in reality capable of producing that tree-structured experience. In the vat-world, this something is the vat-program that encodes and produces the tree-structured experience.

To understand this correspondence more generally, consider the process of hearing a human voice: first there is the intention in the speaker to say something, then the pattern of motor commands in the speaker's brain, then the activation of the vocal chords, throat, and so on, then the sound waves in the air, then the excitation of the hearer's eardrum and ear canals, then the excitation of the auditory cortex, and finally the hearer's experience of the voice. In each step along the way, the voice structure undergoes certain alterations due to noise and compensations for noise, but there remains *something* that is common across all the media through which the voice structure passes. I shall call this something a *pure abstract form* of the voice that is heard. Each experience in the image-world will have a collection of such a forms, whether they are expressed in the program code of the vat-machinery or in the pattern of excitation in the neocortex of the vat-brain, or in the conscious experience of the envatted person.

The additional fact that I now know concerning my envatted state is that for every image-experience I have, there is a corresponding cause in the vat-world reality, and at least one pure abstract form that is the same for both the image-experience and the cause of the experience.[13]

Given the idea of a pure abstract form that is shared between my image experience and the cause of that experience, I have something that bridges the gap between the two worlds, i.e. that is identical for the image-world and the vat-world. So, in referring to the pure abstract form of my experience, I am also referring to the pure abstract form of the *cause* of my experience. Using this device, I can make some progress in asserting that I am a brain in a vat without the artefact of a camera. For I can stipulate that when I say 'I am a brain in a vat' I do not mean that I am a brain in an image-vat. Neither do mean that my use of the word 'vat' should refer to some entity in the vat-world reality. I rather mean my statement is a *hypothesis* concerning the pure abstract form of the vat-world. I have a certain idea of my being a brain in a vat which refers to my image experience. This image experience has various pure abstract forms, depending on the level of detail that the form encompasses. My claim, in asserting that 'I am a brain in a vat' is that there is a pure abstract form of the reality of the vat-world producing my experience that is identical to a pure abstract form of my image-world idea of that reality, i.e. that I am a brain in a vat. In this way, I can, without contradiction, assert that I am a brain in a vat, even though I am unable to meaningfully refer to vats and brains as entities in the vat-world. All I am claiming is that there is some relational structure in that vat-reality, the form of which corresponds to my idea that I am a brain in a vat.

To be clear, I cannot define the form of the vat-world in terms of logical constants and relations, because I have no conception what those constants and relations might refer to. However, I can infer that some unspecified vat forms exist (in whatever sense

an abstract form can be said to exist) because I am already stipulating that the vat-world is the cause of my image experience. If it were the case that the vat-world had no forms, then the vat-world would be identical with the image-world, and we would have an absolute idealism. Otherwise, if we can draw a distinction between the vat-world and the image-world at all, then, in the sense that I am using the term, this distinction must be a distinction of *form.* Using this broad notion of form, I shall call the forms of the *real* vat-world *r-forms.*

In contrast, I *can* provide a logical description of my image-world idea of the vat-world because I can ground my description in image-world entities and relations. For example, such a description could include constants to represent my brain, the vat, the cables, the nutrients, and so on (to whatever level of detail I care to specify), and relations, such as my brain being in the vat, and the cables being connected to my brain, and so on. I shall call such a *phenomenological* image-world form a *p-form.* My claim that there is a pure abstract form that is the same for the vat-world cause and the image-world idea of my being a brain in a vat now amounts to the claim that there exists a structure preserving transformation of a *p-form* representing my situation of being a brain in a vat, into a corresponding existent *r-form*, i.e. where each entity and relation of my *p-form* can be mapped to a corresponding *r-form* in the vat-world.

7 The Phenomenological Vat

The purpose of this digression into Putnam's world is not to show that we actually are brains in vats. Putnam's argument concerns the nature of reference. He hoped to show that there is a logical inconsistency in my thinking I am a brain in a vat, and on this basis to conclude that my *de re* reference to ordinary physical objects must be veridical, i.e. that when I refer to a tree in front of me, there really must be an objectively physical spatio-temporal thing in front of me that is the cause of my experience, and that exists just as my experience presents it as existing (at least in terms of its primary qualities).

The failure of Putnam's argument shows that no such consequence follows. The possibility that I could be a brain in a vat means my *de re* reference is *uncertain,* insofar as such reference implies the existence of external, spatio-temporal, physical objects that correspond to my phenomenological experience of physical objects. Maybe there is an objective spatio-temporal physical reality that corresponds to my phenomenological experience, and maybe there isn't. Either way, our epistemological situation is such that we cannot say. The phenomenological reduction, in refraining from *de re* reference, remains true to this epistemological fact, whereas objective physicalism makes an unwarranted assumption, i.e. it assumes *de re* reference succeeds.

The preceding discussion of *p-forms* and *r-forms* also clarifies the nature of phenomenological reference. It is not that phenomenology denies that there is an underlying reality that determines our phenomenological experience. The situation is rather that reality is only known to us in terms of *p-forms.* Putnam is correct in seeing that if

we attempt to refer to *r-forms* directly (within our *phenomenological* vat), then our reference must fail. Talk of a tree-in-reality, as distinct from the phenomenon of a tree as known in phenomenological experience inherits just the same failure of reference as my brain in a vat attempt to refer to the 'real' vat. All I know are image-vats. The same goes for my reference to the tree. All I know are tree phenomena. Even if I bracket off the secondary qualities, and think of the tree only in terms of its spatio-temporal extension, its micro-physical constitution, and so on, I am still thinking in terms of *p-forms.* This gives me no indication of the nature of the *r-forms.* For instance, it could be that in reality there is nothing corresponding to space and time as we understand them. In that case there would be no directly corresponding notion of separable objects. Perhaps we could imagine a four-dimensional solid, with trajectory volumes corresponding to the phenomenological objects we experience. But even in imagining such a world we are still using *p-forms*.

The notion of *p-forms* and our inability to coherently refer to *r-forms* goes some way to explain the apparently obscure prose of many phenomenologists and their eschewing the language of the usual philosophical categories. Once it is accepted that we can only directly refer in terms of *p-forms,* it becomes impossible to even state what physicalism, or idealism or dualism amount to. All such *meta-phenomenological* positions implicitly assume a reality that it is possible to characterise in *p-form* terms. Whereas our epistemic position is that we cannot say anything about the nature of reality, except by the use of *p-form metaphors.*[14] We can, at most, infer that there is a reality, and that the *p-forms* of our phenomenological experience can be mapped to corresponding *r-forms* in reality, although we have no knowledge of that mapping. This allows that the mathematical *p-forms* of a completed physics, could indeed be correct, in terms of mapping to corresponding *r-forms* in reality. But it also allows that there are other *p-forms* that reveal other aspects of the same reality, just as correctly.

Given the language of *p-forms* and *r-forms,* we can now formulate with more clarity what is meant by objective physicalism: objective physicalism asserts that *r-forms* and *p-forms* correspond in such a way that we can directly refer to *r-forms* on the basis of *p-form* experiences, and that such reference reaches to the ontologically basic *r-forms* that constitute the true and complete structure and being of the universe. We can informally think of this as saying that the universe could be constituted in many different ways, and, although it is *possible* that we possess some vat-like existence, such a scenario is highly artificial and *unlikely.* The most reasonable *positive* position, the one that assumes the least, is to accept that the universe really is as our experience presents it as being, once that experience has been *scientifically purified.*

The problem is, of course, that the scientific purification of experience fractures phenomenological reality into two incommensurate domains: the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal. Objective physicalism then attempts to account for the subjectively phenomenal in terms of the objectively physical, because the objectively physical is assumed in advance to be the ontological foundation of reality. It is

not the purpose of this paper to argue that objective physicalism has failed to give such an account. I am taking that for granted.

In contrast, and *in the first instance,* phenomenology accepts the epistemic reality of our situation and refrains from making any assumption concerning the direct correspondence of *r-forms* and *p-forms.* That is not because some brain-in-a-vat-like scenario is being seriously entertained. It is rather an acknowledgement of the epistemic limitations of reference. Any further discussion of the nature of reality becomes a conjecture expressed in terms of *p-form* metaphors.

Nevertheless, in the absence of compelling arguments to the contrary, it can still be justly asserted that *if* one has to make a positive assertion about the nature of reality, then objective physicalism, in some form or other, is the most reasonable alternative. One only needs to consider what science has already revealed concerning the physical basis of the mind, and then survey the lack of a serious counter-position. The fact that sceptical doubts can accrue is not sufficient reason to reject physicalism, and neither is the lack of a coherent account of subjective, phenomenal experience. Phenomenology is all very well, but what *positive* alternative does it offer?

8 The Phenomenological Negation of Objective Physicalism

Again, I must stress that phenomenological enquiry is a process of negation. The only positivity is phenomenological reality itself. So objective physicalism cannot be negated on the basis of producing a more compelling metaphysical positivity. It can only be negated by showing it is in some sense phenomenologically incoherent.

As we have already discussed, objective physicalism takes the unity of phenomenological experience and divides it into two components: the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal. In what follows I shall assume this characterisation is correct. The basis of the division goes back to Descartes and Locke and the notion of primary and secondary qualities. In the contemporary debate it expresses itself in the notion of *phenomenal experience.* I take phenomenal experience to represent everything that cannot be captured in an objectively physical account of reality. The question of exactly what it means for something to be objectively physical must remain obscure. As Hempel's dilemma shows,[15] we cannot coherently appeal to physics for a positive definition of the physical. Instead we must look negatively at what it means for something to be non-mental.[16] The question of what it is for something to be non-mental leads us back to the distinction between the primary and secondary qualities we began with.

As our discussion concerning *de re* reference shows, it is only on the basis of having already accepted that objective physicalism is true that one can successfully refer to objectively physical entities, and coherently state what objective physicalism amounts to. From within a phenomenological reduction, objective physicalism is a hypothesis about which we can only speak indirectly and metaphorically. That is why we must leave the question of exactly what physicalism amounts to unclarified. However, we

can examine the *consequences* of objective physicalism, i.e. what would be the case, phenomenologically, if objective physicalism were true.

One consequence of objective physicalism is that phenomenal experience becomes causally inert or supervenient on the existence of objectively physical processes. This follows from the division of phenomenological reality on the basis of primary and secondary qualities: now the secondary qualities that constitute phenomenal experience become problematic because they do not enter directly into scientific accounts of causation. If we do not want to characterise mental states as causally inert, we must think of phenomenal experience as somehow identical to, or unified with, the physical processes that are taken to be causally responsible for phenomenal experience. Alternatively, we can accept that phenomenal experience is epiphenomenal, leading to property dualism, or that phenomenal experience is somehow inherent in the microphysical constitution of reality, leading to Russell's neutral monism. In all these cases, what is denied is the independent causal efficacy of phenomenal experience. Such experience does nothing on its own, it only acts in conjunction or in connection with the existence of some objectively physical process.

Underlying these positions is the notion of the causal closure of the (micro)physical. Casual closure holds that physics as a domain of enquiry is complete, in that "every physical event is determined, in so far as it is determined at all, by preceding physical conditions and laws" (Montero & Papineau, 2005, p. 233). It is this notion of causal closure, and the empirical support it has received from the findings of physical science, that provide the strongest indication that some form of objective physicalism must be correct. Objective physicalism does not understand itself as a useful epistemic distinction that has been made in order to delineate a realm of physical scientific enquiry. It considers itself to have captured a basic ontological distinction, one that reflects the way phenomenological experience is divided in reality. The justification for this basic ontological distinction is the scientific, experimental evidence of physical causation in action. Despite our pre-scientific beliefs in spirits and souls as agents of causation, science has consistently demonstrated that there is a physical, causal basis for the events we perceive and for our perceiving them in the first place.

The problem for objective physicalism is that phenomenal experience is independently causally effective in a most phenomenologically immediate way, i.e. in our ability to *speak* of it. This point has already been cogently raised by Todd Moody[17] and elaborated by Avshalom Elitzur.[18] However, rather than invoking a crisis in the foundations of physicalism, the question of our ability to refer in speech to phenomenal experience has been largely ignored. The most thorough treatment of the problem was provided by David Chalmers in his discussion the paradox of phenomenal judgment. But rather than address the issue itself, i.e. how it is that we first come to speak of phenomenal qualities as something independent of objective physical reality, Chalmers addresses another issue, i.e. how it is that zombies could simulate our talk of phenomenal qualities.

8.1 The Paradox of Phenomenal Judgment

The paradox of phenomenal judgment arises from having already accepted the fundamental premise of objective physicalism: that phenomenological reality is ontologically divided into the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal (on the basis of the causal closure of the physical). Given this division, the ability to make correct judgments concerning subjectively phenomenal experiences appears paradoxical, i.e. because phenomenal judgments are expressed as physical events, and yet the phenomenal qualities about which we judge are not supposed to have any independent effects on physical events. Considered counterfactually, this amounts to supposing that physical speech acts concerning phenomenal experience will unfold in just the same way, *whether or not* there is any accompanying phenomenal experience. In others words, *if* zombies were possible, i.e. unconscious entities otherwise identical to you and I, then objective physicalism holds that such zombies would be behaviourally indistinguishable from their conscious counterparts.

Many physicalists reject this zombie scenario by arguing that it involves some form of inconceivability.[19] However, the conceivability or inconceivability of zombies is not the issue here. It is rather the phenomenological coherence of denying independent causal efficacy to phenomenal experience.

Chalmers' answer to the paradox of phenomenal judgment is to introduce the notion of *pure phenomenal concepts.* These concepts are physically instantiated in the brain, but bear no reference or relation to any objectively physical entity. Instead they refer to the pure phenomenal quality of an experience. To understand the idea of a pure phenomenal concept, we must first understand that Chalmers is operating within a *non*-phenomenological reduction. This reduction is realised through the systematic process of abstraction from first person experience that characterises the normal practice of scientific and philosophical enquiry. The idea is to obtain an impersonal perspective on reality that is not distorted by the relativity of an individual viewpoint. So, for example, we abstract away from the particular place, and the particular moment, in which we find ourselves. Then we abstract away from the phenomenal qualities, such as our experience of colour, or sound, that depend on our possessing species specific sensory capacities. The intent is to arrive at the *view from nowhere* that Nagel characterises, a place where the logical form of reality is revealed, a form that is, as far as possible, the same for all cognisers. I shall term this process of abstraction the *objective reduction.*

The objective reduction is no longer a special procedure that is consciously performed by philosophers and scientists. It is a stance that anyone engaged in scholarly enquiry will assume habitually, reinforced by example and education, and entered into without phenomenological reflection. It is only on the basis of having already abstracted from the immediacy of phenomenological experience that the notion of a pure phenomenal experience, as something independent of the totality of phenomenological experience, can come into view. For most of us, the existence of the objectively physical world is something obvious and self-evident. But this obviousness is founded on the

objective reduction, a reduction that immediately produces its subjective counterpart: the domain of phenomenal experience.

The important distinction here is to see that phenomen*al* experience is not phenomen*ological* experience. Phenomen*al* experience is phenomen*ological* experience interpreted on the basis of an objective reduction. In phenomen*ological* experience we encounter the things themselves, the uninterpreted phenomena. In phenomen*al* experience we encounter phenomen*al* qualities: the private experience of a phenomen*al* consciousness. In phenomen*ological* experience we are immersed in the experience, the experience is the reality, and the idea that we could somehow stand outside that reality and refer back to it is seen as unintelligible. In phenomen*al* experience, we are the observers, standing apart within an objective reduction of logical forms, enquiring back into the phenomenological reality from which we have abstracted ourselves.

It is this domain of phenomenal experience that Chalmers has in sight in his discussion of pure phenomenal concepts. Such concepts refer to particular phenomenal qualities that are demonstrated directly in an immediate phenomenal experience. For example, I could be looking at a green leaf on a plant in front of me. Firstly, I perform an objective reduction, whereby I grasp my experience of a patch of greenness on the leaf as something distinct from my experience of the objectively physical leaf. This colour experience, although interpreted as a phenomen*al* experience, has a phenomen*ological* reality: there is an actual quality of green present to me, something I can indicate by ostension: ("I mean *this* green quality"). Here, my ostension does not point to the leaf. Speaking phenomenally, it points to the quality I am experiencing subjectively, independently of any object. An objectively physical account of colour perception would identify this subjective experience with certain processes occurring in my objectively physical visual system. However, the pure phenomenal concept does not refer to these physical causes of my visual perception. It refers to the experience itself, as a phenomenal experience. The phenomenological fact that there is such a pure phenomenal experience is not something that can be argued or even referred to in public language. It is Wittgenstein's beetle in a box.[20] I can point to it privately, but you can never see it. It could be that when you look at the same patch of colour on the leaf, you will experience what-I-would-call-red. I can never know. What I do know is that when I see the patch of colour on the leaf, I experience *this,* and in that reference I am employing a pure phenomenal concept.

Chalmers' argument concerning the paradox of phenomenal judgment contends that my consciousness of phenomenal quality makes no difference to the physical functioning of my brain or my speech behaviour. His idea is that the physical events in my brain that correspond to my forming a pure phenomenal concept, and uttering a judgment employing that concept, are determined (as far as they are determined), according to causal closure, by the preceding physical events and the physical laws that govern them. My experience of phenomenal quality is something additional that accompanies the physical formation of a pure phenomenal concept, and *constitutes* the content of

that concept. The pure phenomenal content of the concept does not *cause* the concept to be formed, and thereby does not violate the principle of causal closure.

8.2 The Acquisition of Phenomenal Concepts

The problem with Chalmers' account is that it fails to resolve the paradox of phenomenal judgment. It rather shows how it is possible for a physically determined, unconscious entity to mimic a certain aspect of human behaviour. What is not addressed is how such an unconscious entity could acquire the ability to wield pure phenomenal concepts in the first place. Instead, we are introduced to a fully formed brain, one that already possesses such abilities, and we are shown how this brain may continue to function in the absence of consciousness, in such a way as to utter judgments concerning direct phenomenal beliefs that would satisfy a Turing test.

Chalmers does offer an account of how unconscious entities (e.g. zombies) could acquire phenomenal concepts in *The Conscious Mind.* There he uses the notion of an information space and a processing system that finds itself within that information space, to explain how such a system could become puzzled about its experience:

> The crucial feature here is that when the system perceives a red object, central processes do not have direct access to the object itself, and they do not have direct access to the physical processes underlying perception. *All* that these processes have access to is the color information itself, which is merely a location in a three-dimensional information space.
> ... Indeed, as far as central processing is concerned, it simply *finds itself* in a location in this space. The system is able to make distinctions, and it *knows* it is able to make distinctions, but it has no idea how it does it. We would expect after a while that it could come to *label* the various locations it is thrown into – "red," "green," and the like – and that it would be able to know just which state it is in at a given time. But when asked just *how* it knows, there is nothing it can say, over and above "I just know, directly." If one asks it, "What is the difference between these states?" it has no answer to give beyond "They're just different," or "This is one of *those,*" or "This one is *red* and that one is *green.*" When pressed as to what that means, the system has nothing left to say but "They're just different, qualitatively."
> ... Given this kind of direct access to information states, then, it is natural to expect the system to use the language of "experience" and "quality" to describe its own cognitive point of view on perception. And it is unsurprising that all this will seem quite strange to the system: these immediately known, ineffable states, which seem so central to its access to the world but which are so hard to pin down. Indeed, it is natural to suppose that this would seem odd to the system in the same sort of way that consciousness seems odd to us.

> So this is the beginning of a potential reductive explanation of our judgments about consciousness: these judgments arise because our processing system is thrust into locations in information space, with direct access to those locations but to nothing else. The direct knowledge will strike the system as a brute "quality": it knows that the states are different, but cannot articulate this beyond saying, in effect, "one of *those*." This immediate access to brute differences leads to judgments about the mysterious primitive nature of these qualities, about the impossibility of explicating them in more basic terms, and to many of the other judgments that we often make about conscious experience. (Chalmers, 1996, p. 290-291).

I have quoted Chalmers at length to make it clear that he gives no account of the acquisition of *pure* phenomenal concepts. All that is discussed is the idea that unconscious systems can come to report and reason about the various physical configurations in which they find themselves. Let us say that such a system becomes advanced enough to investigate its inner workings, and discovers the physical components and processes that underlie its operation. Now it will no longer speak about ineffable experiences and qualities. Like a disciple of Dennett and the Churchlands, it will immediately 'understand' that all its previous talk of mysterious qualities was an illusion. It only *seemed* that way because it did not have access to the physical realisation of its information space. Such an entity will now 'understand' that its 'experience' of red is identical with a certain kind of state it embodies when placed in front of paradigmatically red objects. All its phenomenal colour concepts will now gain a definite reference: they refer to certain internal physical states or functional properties of those states. In Chalmers' terminology, the system's phenomenal concepts will all be *relational* phenomenal concepts. They are relational because the corresponding phenomenal qualities are determined in relation to something else, i.e. states of affairs in the physical world that act as causes both in the forming and deployment of the relational phenomenal concepts.

The question that Chalmers' paradox of phenomenal judgment poses is how an unconscious entity could acquire a *pure* phenomenal concept, i.e. a concept that refers to a pure phenomenal quality that bears no relation with any physical state, property or process. We, as conscious entities, already have sufficient information concerning the operation of the physical brain, to see that our phenomenal experiences have corresponding physical manifestations. But this knowledge has not caused us to discard our notion that there are experiential qualities that are not captured by physical descriptions of the functioning of the brain. The task for Chalmers, in order to resolve the paradox of phenomenal judgment, while maintaining causal closure, is to explain how an unconscious entity, entirely on the basis of its own 'experience,' and knowing all the details of its own physical operation, could come the conclusion, like us, that there is something more to being conscious than it already knows on the basis of physical science.

8.3 Phenomenological 'Seeing'

There is a logical inconsistency in the notion of concepts that refer exclusively to phenomenal qualities that themselves have no independent causal efficacy. Chalmers' account assumes that such concepts spontaneously come into play once I direct my attention onto a phenomenal quality that is immediately present in my phenomenal experience and attempt to form a phenomenal belief concerning that phenomenal quality. However, in order to direct my attention in this way, I must already have an idea of what it is that I will find (i.e. an intention, or directedness-toward). That is, I must already understand that there is such a thing as pure phenomenal experience that corresponds to my pure phenomenal concept.

It is this *pre*-understanding that Chalmers takes for granted. In order for his account to work, we need to explain how it is that an unconscious entity could come to *notice* that there is such a thing as a non-relational, pure phenomenal experience, in the first place. And this, of course, is something that an unconscious entity cannot do, because the very thing that the unconscious entity is unconscious of is non-relational, pure phenomenal experience. The only possibility is that the unconscious entity could somehow be in error about the existence of pure phenomenal experience, i.e. that reality is so constituted that physical law alone is enough for our brains to form the idea that there are phenomenal qualities that cannot be explained in objectively physical terms.

Chalmers attempted to show how such a mistake could be made in his account of information spaces quoted earlier. However, the information space scenario assumed that the unconscious entity remains in ignorance concerning the physical realisation of its information space, just as the brain in the vat remains in ignorance of the vat. Once that artificial barrier is removed, i.e. once the system is given the same access to the world as we have, then Chalmers' argument collapses. The rational response of such a system, once in possession of all the relevant information (and assuming it has not been infected by contact with other conscious entities), is to assert, with Dennett, that eliminative physicalism is true. There is no need to argue this further, Dennett has already done the work.

However, the one thing that spoils the eliminativist picture is that we *do* know there is such a thing as phenomenal experience. Or rather, we know there is such a thing as uninterpreted phenomen*ological* experience, from which phenomenal experience is derived. The question is, how can we know this, if phenomenal experience has no independent causal effects on our behaviour? Again, Dennett is right: if phenomenal experience has no independent causal effect on our behaviour, then we can't know that there is such a thing as phenomenal experience. Therefore our idea of phenomenal experience is an illusion.

Chalmers' argument does not touch this conclusion. The problem is not to explain how I can refer to phenomenal quality using a pure phenomenal concept in such a way that the phenomenal quality is not causally implicated in the explanation. The problem is to explain how a pure phenomenal concept can be formed in the first place.

For example, let us assume I am in possession of a relational phenomenal concept that is formed as I demonstrate a particular shade of green to myself, e.g. "*this* shade of green." My concept refers to the phenomenal experience occurring in me as a result of looking at a green leaf in front of me and so is *related* to my act of demonstration. It is quite conceivable that Chalmers' unconscious system could form a structure within itself that corresponds to this concept. When questioned further it would identify that phenomenal experience with certain events that the light emitted from the leaf causes to occur within its components, just as I can refer my phenomenal experience to certain events that the light causes to occur in my brain. The crucial difference comes when I ask the system to distinguish between its phenomenal experience of green and the corresponding activity of its components. It will have to say there is no difference, that they are one and the same thing. But what about me? What is it that allows me think that my phenomenal colour experience is something more than the activity occurring in my brain? If my phenomenal experience is causally determined by the operation of physical law, then that experience cannot reach out of its causal dependency and start independently influencing my neurons. I may be passively conscious of the greenness of my phenomenal experience, but, according to causal closure, that passive consciousness can have no independent effect on the operation of my brain. So, despite my having the experience, I will be unable to form any thought that corresponds to or even registers the experience as anything more than the physical realisation of that experience. I will be necessarily mute on the subject, not just outwardly, I will be unable to even *think* that there is anything more to my experience than the functioning of my brain. I will be literally trapped in my relational phenomenal concepts, having my pure phenomenal experience, but powerless to form concepts with which to even indicate that such experience is occurring.

And yet, when I contemplate my phenomenal experience of the greenness of the leaf, I do form the conviction that there is something more to the experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms. If I examine this carefully, I do not form the conviction on the basis of some form of induction from experience. I know immediately, from within the experience itself, that there is more to phenomenal experience than can be explained in physical terms. I cannot offer any *positive* justification, I immediately *see* that this is the case.

As it is so central, it is worth examining just what this immediate seeing amounts to. Firstly, it is not a matter of entertaining the assertion that there is more to experience than can be explained in physical terms and then examining the evidence for and against that assertion. In order for the seeing to be effective, the assertion and the conviction of its truth must arise as a consequence of the original seeing, and that seeing must constitute the evidence for the truth of what is asserted. So, returning to the contemplation of the greenness of the leaf: what is it about that experience that can justify my assertion? This is a question concerning phenomenological reality. It is not possible to directly encounter this reality from within an objective reduction.

Such a reduction operates in a domain of abstraction that interprets phenomenological reality according to the precepts of objective physicalism. Instead, one must enter a phenomenological reduction, which, in the first instance, is a suspension of the objective reduction. The idea is to take one's experience 'neat,' to negate the objective stance and its space of thought interpretations by entering the immediate space of *sensory* experience. This means being receptive to the greenness of the leaf, without considering it to be a phenomenal quality of the mind, or a physical property of the leaf. The intention is to discover the uninterpreted quality of the colour, to just 'see' it, now. But such seeing also requires the negation of the initial intention. Rather than *trying* to see the colour, it is a matter of *allowing* the colour to reveal itself as the phenomenon that it is. The important aspect is what is not done: there is no thinking about the experience, no pre-determined construal as to what a colour is, there is just the direct contact, the direct revealing of the essence of colour, behind what we think it is, or what we can say it is. It is the revealing of the essence of colour that constitutes the seeing that justifies the assertion that there is more to experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms.

In order for this seeing to be effective, and to be *true,* something significant has to happen. If we accept the division of phenomenological experience according to objective physicalism, then the pure phenomenal quality that constitutes the non-objectively-physical essence of a colour must have communicated itself in such a way as to have changed the physical state of my brain, i.e. to have caused in me a knowledge of the essence of the colour that is *not nothing* and yet not something that I can positively express. It is not nothing, firstly because the seeing of an essence is itself not nothing, and secondly, because the seeing engenders the knowledge that there is more to experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms. It is in this way that my being conscious exercises a causal influence on my physical brain state: my brain is *receptive* to what is seen in the experience. This receptivity is demonstrated by my being able to notice and speak of what is seen in such experience (albeit indirectly). In standard cases of perceptual experience there is a physical story to be told concerning the physical energies impinging on my body, but in the case of a phenomenal experience of a pure phenomenal quality (when entered into fully and *consciously*) I am in contact with an essence that is not objectively physical and therefore cannot exercise the kind of objectively physical causal effects on my physical nervous system that are associated with the perception of objectively physical objects. In effect, I am performing a phenomenological experiment that isolates the pure phenomenal quality in order to see if it can independently produce any objectively physical effects. Due to the nature of the phenomenon under observation, and our inability to observe the functioning of the brain in sufficient detail, the only source of evidence available concerning the outcome of the experiment is the testimony of the individual performing the experiment. Such an experiment cannot be simulated by *thinking about* pure phenomenal experience, it is only in the moment of consciously experiencing the pure phenomenal quality that

the experimental conditions are fulfilled. Hence the emphasis that is placed on the performance of a phenomenological reduction. This is not a matter of an abstracted contemplation of a philosophical proposition, it is a matter of direct experience and direct communication. Without such direct experience, no knowledge is communicated, there is only information.

8.4 The Phenomenological Consequences

According to the demonstration so far, if we accept the division of phenomenological reality into the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal, and also that the realm of the objectively physical is causally closed, then we have arrived at a contradiction. The contradiction concerns my conviction that there is more to phenomenal experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms. If causal closure were true, and the activities of my brain and body could not in any way be independently influenced by my phenomenal experiences, it follows that I should be unable to form any notion of my having pure phenomenal experiences that are not completely identified with objectively physical states of the world. In that scenario, we would all agree with Dennett, and eliminative physicalism would be an obvious truth. Whereas the empirical evidence is that eliminative physicalism is not an obvious truth, i.e. *many* people have the conviction that there is more to experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms. If we accept the evidence of experience and thereby accept this conviction as true, its truth can only be justified on the basis of a direct knowledge of phenomenal experience. If there is direct knowledge of phenomenal experience, and I am able to state that knowledge, as I am doing now, it follows that my phenomenal experience, properly (consciously) demonstrated, has had an effect on my physical behaviour. That effect is direct and simple: I *see* that there is something more to my experience than can be explained in objectively physical terms. It is that very seeing that is the non-objectively-physical cause of certain objectively physical behaviours, viz. my forming the proposition that "there is more to experience than can be explained in physical terms" and my uttering of that proposition. Even though I cannot positively say what that 'something' is, or produce any reference that makes my proposition intelligible, the very fact of my thinking it is enough to show that my phenomenal experience has objectively physical effects. If phenomenal experience can determine physical behaviour in this way, then the principle of causal closure is false.

The consequence of this result is to put the ontological foundations of objective physicalism into question. Epistemically, the division of phenomenological reality into the objectively physical and the subjectively phenomenal has been extraordinarily successful in terms of the progress of the physical sciences. However, that success does not imply that reality is ontologically distinguished along the lines that physical science tacitly assumes. Our failure to give a coherent account of human consciousness in terms of the objective physicalist program is a clear indication that we may have the ontology wrong. If we relinquish the principle of causal closure and allow that my

being conscious (in certain circumstances) has an influence on my behaviour, then it is no longer possible to clearly divide phenomenological reality along the axis of objective physicalism. That axis distinguishes phenomenal experience on the basis of its casual dependence on the presence of objectively physical processes. It is this dependence that gives the objectively physical its ontological primacy. In denying causal closure, we also deny the coherence of attempting to explain phenomenal experience in objectively physical terms. Phenomenologically speaking, objective physicalism is an unverifiable hypothesis concerning the possible structure of reality, a hypothesis that is negated on the basis of my phenomenological seeing that there is more to experience than can be explained in physical terms.

This negation leads us back to the immediacy of phenomenological experience. We remain unable to positively characterise any reality that lies behind that experience, but we *are* able to reject the hypothesis of objective physicalism. In that rejection we are also rejecting the notion that we can intelligibly refer to an *r-form* reality that consists of objectively physical things. In this respect, Searle's claim that phenomenology denies *de re* reference, is correct. Our reference is rather to *p-form* phenomena. We may justly conclude that there are *r-forms* that correspond to these *p-forms* but we can form no definite conception of their mode of existence. That does not mean that such forms cannot be encountered directly, it only means we have no form of direct reference to express such encounters. We can only speak in metaphor, in poetry, in analogy, in myth, or we can remain silent.

> Of course only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself'. In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not. But *now,* as long as there is an understanding of Being and therefore an understanding of presence-at-hand, it can indeed be said that *in this case* entities will still continue to be (Heidegger, 1962/2008, p. 255).

Notes

[1]Here I am referring to Frank Jackson's original thought experiment concerning Mary, the vision scientist who knew all the facts about colour vision but whose phenomenological colour experience was limited to monochrome (Jackson, 1982). The question is, what does Mary learn when she experiences colour for the first time? The analogy with the phenomenological method is that, as with colour experience, phenomenological enquiry is not something you can understand purely on the basis of a linguistic definition.

[2]The paper is specifically concerned with Searle's most recent critique of phenomenology: *the phenomenological illusion* (2008).

[3]For an example of Dreyfus' side of the debate, see (Dreyfus, 1999).

[4]See *Mind: a brief introduction* for Searle's account of how neurobiological processes cause consciousness while consciousness remains ontologically distinct from the physical processes that are causing the conscious experience (Searle, 2004).

[5]Here I am not concerned with providing a formal definition of what the phenomenological reduction amounts to. The idea is that in sympathetically following the demonstrations in the paper, the reader will naturally be drawn into a reduction. Discussions about what Husserl meant by the reduction, in my opinion, miss the point. A reduction is supposed to lead to a direct insight both into the 'things themselves' and the into the way the 'things themselves' are covered over by the belief structures that are bracketed. However, the debt is there to Husserl for first seeing the significance of the reduction as a necessary pre-condition for phenomenological enquiry. To discover what Husserl himself had to say, see (Husserl, 1970/1992).

[6]For example, see Thomas Nagel (1986) and Galen Strawson (2008).

[7]See (Russell, 1956/2007).

[8]See (Chalmers, 2010a, 2010b). In the second of these references Chalmers addresses Sellars's "Myth of the Given" argument, which is also relevant to the current paper. Anyone thinking that phenomenology falls prey to Sellars's critique is referred to Chalmers' response on pp. 299-303.

[9]For an example of Searle's critical destruction, see (Searle, 1992, pp. 1-57).

[10]For arguments concerning the inadequacy of existing explanations to account for the phenomenological facts, see (McGinn, 1994; Nagel, 1986; Strawson, 2008).

[11]See (Putnam, 1981).

[12]This image-world TV screen is analogous to the TV images that were shown to the detective in the TV series *Life on Mars*.

[13]I am ignoring the possibility of a pure idealism where image-experiences are all that exist.

[14]Consider Heidegger's later poetic style, e.g. (Heidegger, 1999).

[15]Hempel's dilemma was actually formulated by Melnyk (1997, p. 623) and only loosely founded on comments directly attributable to Hempel, e.g. see (Hempel, 1980, pp. 194–195). The dilemma states that either (1) physicalism accepts the physical to be what our current best physics says it is, in which case it is almost certainly false, as physics itself has not settled on a definite theory that (for example) eliminates all the inconsistencies that exist between quantum theory and relativity theory; or (2) physicalism accepts the physical to be whatever a future completed physical science says it is, in which case physicalism is vacuous, as we cannot say what a future physical science may decide, especially in relation to consciousness.

[16]The approach of characterising the physical as the non-mental is known as *via negativa.* See (Montero & Papineau, 2005) for more detail.

[17](Moody, 1994).

[18](Elitzur, 2009).

[19]For example, see (Kirk, 2008).

[20]See Section 293 (Wittgenstein, 2001, p. 85).

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