

ProtoSociology

An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ation ist seit E. Durkheim, den wir als einen Begründer des Fache Soziologie einstufen, ein relevanter Schwerpunkt des Fache Soziologie. Um dabei die Wichtigen richtig zu stellen,

Senses of Self Approaches to Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness

Edited by Marc Borner, Manfred Frank,
and Kenneth Williford

zunge nennt einen besonderen Anspruch vor, der zu sein
denn ist, die soziale Integration als eine Differenzierung
von Mitgliedschaftsbedingungen eine bestimmte allgemeine
Theorie voraussetzt. Unter „Ordnungen“ sind dabei die Be-
gebung der Mitgliedschaftsbedingung und damit die Teil-
nahme an Kommunikationssystemen in der Ausübung von
bestimmten Rollen und Statuspositionen zu verstehen.
Die Mitgliedschaftstheorie fasst die System-Umwelt-Relati-
on nicht als einseitig determiniert (Niklas Luhmann), sondern als
die selbstreferenzielle Entscheidung über Mitgliedschafts-
bedingungen und ihre Selektion, die keine Resonanz in der
nicht-sozialen Umwelt hat. Der Verwechslungszusammenhang
von Sinn, wenn wir das einmal unterstellen, ist in diese Dif-
ferenzstruktur einzuordnen. Gehen wir von der mitglied-
schaftstheoretischen Selbstkonstitution sozialer Systeme
aus, so sind soziale Systeme souverän. Damit geht einher,
dass die soziologische Theorie die folgenden Annahmen
aufgeben sollte:

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Senses of Self: Approaches to
Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness

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WHAT HAS TRANSPARENCY TO DO WITH HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY?

Chad Kidd

Abstract

This paper critically evaluates Amie Thomasson's (2003; 2005; 2006) view of the conscious mind and the interpretation of Husserl's phenomenological reduction that it adopts. In Thomasson's view, the phenomenological method is not an introspectionist method, but rather a "transparent" or "extrospectionist" method for acquiring epistemically privileged self-knowledge. I argue that Thomasson's reading of Husserl's phenomenological reduction is correct. But the view of consciousness that she pairs with it—a view of consciousness as "transparent" in the sense that first-order, world-oriented experience is in no way given to itself—is not compatible with it. Rather, Thomasson's view is, from a Husserlian vantage point, self-undermining in the same way that any genuinely skeptical view is self-undermining: it undermines the conditions of its own possibility. This is one of the motives Husserl has for developing a same-order view of self-consciousness as the complement to his transparent method for self-knowledge acquisition.

§1 Introduction

Given the methodological primacy of Husserl's principle of all principles,¹ which takes the evidentiary legitimacy of adequate intuition for knowledge to be originary, absolute, and foundational (Husserl 2014, §24), it may seem that the only plausible reading of Husserl's view of self-knowledge would be an introspectionist reading. The introspectionist about self-knowledge takes *privileged* self-knowledge—i.e., knowledge of one's own mind which, (i) does not rely on the same sort of evidence as our knowledge of the minds of others (immediate) and (ii) is not subject to the same sorts of er-

1 Whenever I cite Husserl's work, I will refer to the section number and, when necessary, also to the page number of the original publication.

ror as our knowledge of other minds (authoritative)—to derive from an introspective capacity, which grants a special sort of access to our own mental states (grounding immediacy), and which only the subject of experience can utilize (grounding authority).² In a recent series of papers, Amie Thomasson (2003; 2005; 2006) argues that the introspectionist interpretation of Husserl's method for acquiring privileged self-knowledge is false. Rather the proper understanding of Husserl's methodology of the phenomenological reduction is "based in the idea that knowledge of one's own experiences is in some sense based on outer observation of the world, rather than a direct inner-observation of one's own experiences" (Thomasson 2005, 116). In other words, Thomasson interprets the phenomenological reduction as a *transparent* method for the acquisition of knowledge of one's own conscious mental states, a method that answers questions about the nature of one's lived experience by answering questions about the world of which one is aware in having the experience.³ Thus, it bypasses reliance on introspection as a method of gathering evidence for self-attributive judgments for a method that does not rely on introspection at all to justify introspective judgments.

In the following, I will argue that Thomasson's interpretation of Husserl's basic method by which a subject acquires knowledge of her own mind—i.e., as an interpretation of what Husserl calls the "reflective modification" of consciousness—is correct. But I will also argue that her (2006) attempt to pair Husserl's transparent method for reflective self-knowledge with a "transparent" or "adverbial" conception of phenomenal consciousness—a view on which phenomenal consciousness consists in nothing other than a distinctive *way* of being conscious of the world *outside* the current conscious experience—is destined to fail; and that Husserl himself anticipates the failure of any such view in his arguments against "skeptical" views of reflective self-knowledge in the *Ideas* (§79). So, if a neo-Husserlian transparency theory of self-knowledge is to be viable, it must be paired with

2 Henceforth, when I say "self-knowledge," I will mean *privileged* self-knowledge as it is defined in this sentence.

3 Gareth Evans (1982) characterization of the transparency method of acquiring self-knowledge is the most often cited. But, as Richard Moran (2001) points out, Roy Edgley (1969) seems to have been the first to use this term in this application.

a non-transparent conception of conscious experience in which first-order conscious experience of the world also involves *some sort of* awareness of the experience itself.

I will first (§2) review Thomasson's transparency interpretation of the phenomenological reduction. Then (§3) I will carefully examine Husserl's initial presentation of the reflective modification of consciousness in *Ideas* in order to support the exegetical claim that Husserl pairs a non-transparent, same-order view of consciousness with his transparent methodology of self-knowledge acquisition in the reflective modification of consciousness. After that (§4) I will present the argument against Thomasson's attempt to pair a non-transparent view of consciousness with Husserl's transparent methodology of self-knowledge acquisition, an argument that such a view succumbs to the problem that Husserl takes to be characteristic of all genuinely skeptical views: that it is ultimately self-undermining. Finally, (§5) I will provide a bare-bones sketch of Husserl's same-order conception of phenomenal consciousness in order to illuminate the role that it plays as a condition of the possibility of transparent reflection (§6).

§2 Thomasson's Interpretation of Husserl's Phenomenological Reduction

Thomasson takes Husserl's phenomenological reduction to be a method for acquiring *intuitive* self-knowledge, not a method that itself presupposes intuitive self-knowledge or self-awareness as an evidential ground for self-knowledge. Thus, because it is a method that *yields*, but does not *presuppose* or rely on self-intuition, it is a transparent methodology.

Thomasson argues that we can summarize Husserl's method of the phenomenological reduction—the basic methodological tool for Husserl's new science of pure phenomenology, a science of the essence of consciousness—as the employment of two “conceptual transformations that license us to move, e.g., from claims about the world represented to claims about our ways of representing the world” (Thomasson 2006, 12). We might represent these “conceptual

transformations” as something like inference rules that “license” (as Thomasson says) the transition from claims about the world (that one is conscious of in a mental event) to claims about these conscious mental events themselves, and then, ultimately, to claims about their essential nature. As we shall see in the next section, Husserl prefers to speak of these as “modifications” that the conscious subject can make to her own conscious experience. But insofar as both terms—*inference* and *conscious modification*—refer to activities of the subject carried out in accordance with essential law, and insofar as it is the same essential law that validates the transitions in both cases, we can take these two otherwise importantly different kinds of activities to be equivalent in terms of their epistemic import for self-knowledge.

So, what are these conceptual transformations? The first Thomasson calls the “*reductive*” transformation. This is a transformation (or general inference schema) by which we can move from our own first-order, world-oriented representation to a claim that “mentions” this representational state as being such-and-such. Consider, for example, the exemplification of this in the method of semantic ascent, where a subject can move from asserting

1. Bonnie is on the train
to asserting
2. Someone asserted that Bonnie is on the train.

When 1 is *asserted*, 2 is necessarily true. And one need not have any special introspective capacity to know the fact expressed in 2 when it is inferred from 1. However, it is important to realize, it is not that the *fact* asserted in 1 implies or entails the *fact* asserted in 2. Indeed, the assertion made in 1 might be false—Bonnie might not be on the train at all—and the intended inference would still reliably yield a truth in 2. And this is so because the *assertion* of the fact in 1 entails the *fact* asserted in 2. In other words, the reductive transformation as applied to assertions is a logical consequence of “the rules of use of the concept *stated*” or the concept *assertion*: that, when one *states* or *asserts* that *P* one can, in every case, truthfully infer that someone is stating or asserting that *P* (Thomasson 2005, 129).

The changes in the content of 1 that result in 2 under the reductive

transformation are two-fold: “The content (Bonnie is on the train) is transformed into a proposition (that Bonnie is on the train), and the force (stated) is extracted from the *way* in which the proposition is presented in the basic sentence (in this case assertion)” (Thomasson 2005, 129). And, insofar as these same transformations can be carried out on other forms of mental representation (e.g., on perception—seeing that *P* → it was seen that *P*; remembering that *P* → there was a remembering that *P*; and so on), then the reductive transformation embodies a method for coming to know about the intentional content and intentional mode of all our first-order intentional experiences.

Thomasson argues that the reductive transformation is the basic conceptual structure at work in Husserl’s idea of “bracketing.” She argues for this, first, by pointing out that the German term *Einklammerung* is the word used to refer to what in English is called, “quotation marks.” And, of course, one key function of placing a sentence or term in quotes is to separate it from the speaker as an item of *use*, while putting it forward simply as something *mentioned*. Thomasson’s second argument relies on the strong analogy between the two-part transformation carried out in a reductive transformation—where the content (both mode and intentional representation) of the first-order representation is retained, but the “force” of the representation on the experiencing subject is put out of play. Thus, when I bracket my conscious belief that *P*, I do not transform the belief into a doubt or mere presentation. Rather, while the belief remains a belief, it is put to a side and not utilized by the subject, but rather only “mentioned” in her awareness of her own conscious mental life.⁴ And she also points out the striking analogy between her discussion of the method of reductive transformation and the kind of transformation of experi-

4 To illustrate and elucidate this further, consider, the difference between—to use an example from (Dancy 2000, 125)—having a belief self-consciously and having it merely as an object of reflective consideration. Suppose that I believe that there are pink rats in my shoes and, as a result, call the exterminator to get rid of them. This is to have a belief in a completely self-conscious way, i.e., in a way where my awareness of the belief is nothing over and above the way that I take *the world* to be. This is an “unbracketed” mode of belief. But now suppose that I have this same belief, but I call my therapist instead, to get rid of the belief. Here I have the belief in a bracketed mode, it is a feature of myself that I *recognize*, but do not employ in how I operate in the world.

ence that Husserl describes under the heading of the *epoché*, such as when he says,

In relation to each thesis we are able, with complete freedom, to exercise this distinctive *epoché*, a certain withholding of judgment that is compatible with the unshaken and even unshakeable (because evident) conviction of truth. The thesis is “put out of action,” bracketed, it is transformed into the modification “bracketed thesis,” the judgment simply into the “bracketed judgment.” (Husserl 2014, §32, p. 55)

If this is correct, then the reductive transformation can be applied not only to assertions or to beliefs that one still holds at the time of the reduction, but to any intentional experience whatever. For insofar as intentional experience is a particular mental occurrence that represents the world in a particular way, with a certain force (positing, neutralized, with doubt), then the transformations will produce a mode of awareness of this mental state that preserves its basic structure, it just distances it from the subject as her means of engaging with the world to an observance of her way of engaging with the world.

The first conceptual transformation, in Thomasson’s reading, is then paired with a second conceptual transformation, which Thomasson calls the “hypostatizing transformation.” It yields knowledge of the particular experience—suspended “in the brackets”—as an instance of a general type or essence of experience. Thomasson models this as an inference from a claim such as

2. Someone is asserting that Bonnie is on the train.
- to
3. There is an assertion that Bonnie is on the train.

Now, unlike the link between 1 and 2, the connection between 2 and 3 is a fairly trivial logical relation between the contents of 2 and 3, i.e., of *what is asserted* in each. Indeed, setting aside certain sophisticated worries about ontological commitment, 3 can seem nothing more than a paraphrase of 2.

Thomasson takes this inference to be a safe and sure way of bringing out a distinctive ontological commitment to general types or essences that is characteristic of talk about ordinary objects and experience: that each of these is understood as an entity whose conditions of ex-

istence are specified in a general, more or less determinate *type*. And, she argues, this is the way to understand Husserl's conception of *Eidos*. Here, of course, the kind of cognitive engagement that Husserl would invoke to *grasp* this general type would involve the processes of free imaginative variation in the service of the discernment of eidetic structure.⁵ And this whole ontological view can be criticized (and has been, especially amongst Husserl's critics). But since my critical evaluation of Thomasson's interpretation does not invoke any worries about this aspect of her reading, I will set aside such scruples for now and simply work under the assumption that Thomasson's reading of this step in the phenomenological reduction—the step that takes from an intuition of the particular experience to an intuition of essence—is correct.⁶

The important point here is that since this entire process of self-knowledge acquisition does not involve any inner observation of our own mental states, it is not a view that fits the introspectionist mold. Rather, it is view that is better characterized as “extrospectionist” or “transparent” in the sense that it answers questions about the nature of the mind only by consideration of how the *world* is experienced. So, it does not invoke introspection or inner observation as a precondition of self-knowledge.

Before moving on, I want to emphasize how Thomasson's interpretation of the phenomenological reduction accounts for the epistemically privileged status of self-knowledge with reliance on introspective self-awareness. First, since only *I*, the conscious subject, can perform the reductive transformation, given that it is a transformation rule whose validity requires the presence of a conscious experience, then it will only ever yield knowledge that *I* (the conscious subject) am in a position to acquire by application of the rule. This point grounds the *authority* of privileged self-knowledge. And since this method (when performed in the appropriate circumstances, i.e., in the circumstance of my having a conscious experience) always yields true results, this point grounds the *immediacy* of privileged self-knowledge. Thus, in

5 For discussion see Lohmar (2006).

6 For more on Thomasson's interpretation of Husserl's conception of *eidos* and the ontological commitments that it involves, see Thomasson (2017). For a critical evaluation of Thomasson's interpretation, see Tolley (2017).

Husserl's method, we have an account of privileged self-knowledge without reliance on introspection as a special epistemic ground. Rather, all we need is conscious first-order experience of the world and the cognitive capacities to execute the methods of the phenomenological reduction embodied in the conceptual transformations.

§3 Husserl on the Pre-Givenness of Conscious Experience and Motivation

Thomasson (2006) departs from Husserl, however, in claiming that the execution of the transparent method of phenomenological reduction *can be* and *should be* joined with a transparent conception of conscious experience. On the non-transparent conception of *consciousness*, as Thomasson (2006, 9) puts it, "conscious states are states we are (in some sense) aware of." Thomasson, instead, embraces an "adverbial theory of consciousness: understanding seeing a tree *consciously* as a *way* the seeing is done, such that I am aware of *the tree* (not aware of my seeing)." In other words, Thomasson foregoes analysis of the difference between *conscious* and *unconscious* experiences as consisting in a further awareness *of* awareness, which is present in the former, but lacking in the latter. Rather, consciousness is only an intrinsic character of the *way* in which the subject is aware of the *world*. Thus, it is registered as an "adverbial" feature of mental states—one is aware either *consciously* or *unconsciously*; and this does not involve a further feature of the *content of which* one is aware. Thomasson argues that, insofar as Husserl's transparent methodology for self-knowledge does not require any prior awareness of one's own mental states, it is open to a neo-Husserlian phenomenologist to pair it with an adverbial conception of consciousness as completely transparent, i.e., as consisting solely in an awareness of the world outside the mind.

There are two prominent non-transparent conceptions of consciousness with which Thomasson contrasts her own view. One is the higher-order awareness view, on which a mental state is conscious because a separate mental state of the same subject represents it. The other is the same-order awareness view, on which a mental state is

conscious because it (or the subject) is, in some way, aware of itself (or herself). Husserl holds, as I will argue here, a certain variety of same-order theory.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl talks of the process of acquiring self-knowledge of one's own experience as a process of "reflection."⁷ In §37 of *Ideas*, Husserl illustrates how the total intentional object of a conscious intentional experience is not always to be identified with the object that the subject "apprehends," i.e., the object that the subject *attends to* in the experience. Husserl observes that while it is the case that "we cannot be turned toward a thing otherwise than in the manner of apprehending," it would nevertheless be a mistake to think that "a consciousness's *intentional object* [...] means the same as an *apprehended object*"—a mistake motivated by the fact that in simply thinking about or saying something about a thing, "we have made it an object in the sense of something apprehended" (Husserl 2014, §37, p. 67).⁸

For example, "In the act of evaluating [...] we are turned toward the value, in the act of joy we are turned toward what is enjoyable, in the act of love we are turned toward the beloved, in acting toward the action, without apprehending any of that" (Husserl 2014, §37, p. 67). When I saw the sunshine this morning (breaking through for a few hours in the gray winter months) and judged that *it* is lovely, I am not attending to/apprehending the value of "loveliness," but rather I am attending to the sunshine—more precisely, attending to the sunshine *as being lovely*. To attend to/apprehend the sunshine's property of loveliness would require turning my attention away from the sunshine and towards this property of the sunshine. And this requires transforming the intended but not apprehended value-property of loveliness into "an apprehended object in a unique 'objectifying turn'"—that is, into a "having' [of] the value '*as an object*' in the particular sense of an apprehended object, such as we must have it in order to apply predicates to it—and so, too, in all logical acts that refer to it" (Husserl 2014, §37, p. 67). In other words, it would subject the original experi-

7 "[...] [T]he phenomenological method moves entirely in acts of reflection" (Husserl 2014, §77, p. 144). "Reflection is, as we may also put it, the name for consciousness's method of knowing consciousness at all" (Husserl 2014, §78, p. 147).

8 This observation anticipates Charles Siewert's (1998, 194–97) criticism of higher-order theories as falling prey to the "consciousness-of trap."

ence of apprehending the sunshine to an essential modification—a transformation—that yields the act of apprehending the *loveliness* (of the sunshine), thus setting up the actualization of further conscious determinations of and judgments about this value-property.

Now, after drawing this distinction between two modes of intending an object in experience, Husserl claims:

We may add further that, living in the cogito [i.e., a conscious intentional experience, which has the essential characteristic of apprehending something],⁹ we do not consciously have the *cogitatio* itself as an intentional object. Yet at any time it can become that. The intrinsic possibility of a “*reflective*” shift of focus is an essential property of it, and naturally [this is] a shift of focus in the form of a new *cogitatio* that is directed at it in the manner of simply apprehending it. In other words, any *cogitatio* can become the object of a so-called “inner perception,” and then, as a further consequence, the object of a *reflective* evaluation, an approval or disapproval, and so forth. (Husserl 2014, §38, p. 68)

Given the context, we can see that Husserl is here doing two things. First, he is drawing a sharp distinction between the kind of awareness one has of the properties of an object in a mode of consciousness wherein one *attends* to the object *as* having such-and-such properties (i.e., where the object is apprehended, while its properties are not, but still given in the total intentional content of the act). Second, he is drawing a similarity between the mode of pre-giveness of the intended-but-unapprehended properties of objects of experience and the mode of pre-giveness of the experience *to itself*. Just as intended-but-unapprehended properties of apprehended objects *can* become apprehended by a certain “modification” of consciousness, so an *intentional act* can be subjected to a *reflective modification*, which transforms the act itself into an apprehended object of awareness. The key difference here, however, is that the first-order, world-oriented act does not show up initially as a part of its intentional object. So, reflection is a different kind of modification from the shift of attention that transforms unapprehended properties into apprehended properties. Rather than being a transformation that brings intended-but-unapprehended objects into apprehension, it is a transformation that brings objects that are *not given in the manner of intentional objects at all* into apprehension.

Now, all of this might seem nothing more than grist for Thomason's mill. For it seems to affirm that, whatever else may be required for reflective self-knowledge, prior intentional awareness of one's own experience is not one of the requirements. However, things become more complicated on this front when Husserl takes up the theme of reflection again later in *Ideas*, this time with a concern to articulate the *conditions of the possibility* of the reflective modification that results in knowledge of one's own experience. Husserl writes,

Experience [*Erlebnis*] inherently has the kind of being such that a discerning perception can direct its focus in a completely immediate way at every actual experience that is alive as an originary present [*Gegenwart*]. That happens in the form of "reflection," which has the remarkable property that what is perceptually apprehended in it is characterized intrinsically as something that not only is and persists within the focus that perceives it, but *already was before* this focus turned toward it. "All experiences are conscious"—this statement means then, specifically with respect to intentional experiences, that they are not only consciousness of something and not only on hand as such [*als das ... vorhanden*] when they are themselves objects of a reflecting consciousness but that they are already there, unreflected, as a "background," and thus that they are intrinsically ready to be perceived, in a sense analogous, at least initially, to how things that we do not attend to [that is, things not apprehended] are there in our outer visual field. (Husserl 2014, §45, pp. 83–84)

In interpreting this passage, it is helpful to note that in the section immediately preceding this quote, Husserl argues that it is essential to the consciousness of material things (such as mid-sized dry goods) that they are only ever given *imperfectly* and *indeterminately*, where this indeterminacy

necessarily means *determinability of a firmly prescribed style*. It *points in advance* [*deutet vor*] to possible manifolds of perception that, continuously passing over into one another, merge into the unity of a perception, a unity in which the continuously persisting thing shows new (or recurring old) "sides" again and again, in ever new series of profiles. (Husserl 2014, §44, p. 80)

In other words, it is a part of the transcendental conditions of apprehending consciousness of material things that "we are conscious of them in a certain way already, namely, as something that we have

not paid attention to, and that means, in their case, insofar as they appear [*erscheinen*]” (Husserl 2014, §45, p. 84). What this observation sets out, then, is

1. a determination of the essence of what Husserl calls “appearance” [*Erscheinung*];
2. an essential correlation between the apprehension of a material thing and its manifestation *in appearance*, i.e., its essentially imperfect manifestation in an infinite series of perceptions, which altogether constitute an objective determination of a firmly prescribed style. In other words, for a material object to be an intentional object of perceptual consciousness at all is for it to have a *determinable indeterminacy*—for it to be caught up manifolds of possible perceptions of the same object that yield further determination. This is so because it is an essential part of what it is for perception have the sense of a *disclosure* (as opposed to a creation) of a transcendent, “external” thing. And
3. it points out that a transcendental condition of the transformation of intended-but-unapprehended objects into apprehended objects is the fact that objects are intended *in the mode of appearances* as a part of the background intentionality of lived experience. For it is the structure of appearance that *motivates* the shift in attention that makes an object an object of apprehension. As Husserl puts it,

The background field, understood as the field of what can be observed in a straightforward way, encompasses, indeed, only a small part of my environment. The phrase “it is there” [in the background] means rather that *possible* and, to be sure, continuously and coherently *motivated* series of perceptions with ever new fields of things (as unnoticed backgrounds) lead from current perceptions, with the actually appearing background field, up to those very connections among perceptions, in which precisely the relevant thing would come to appear and be apprehended. (Husserl 2014, §45, p. 84)

Analogously, Husserl argues that the transcendental conditions of “immanent perception” or, in other words, the conditions of the possibility of reflective apprehension of experience itself, involve “certain

conditions of readiness [*Bedingungen der Bereitschaft*]” for unreflect-ed experience, “although in a manner completely different [from material-thing perception] and in keeping with its own essence” (Husserl 2014, §45, p. 84). Just as for perception of material things, these conditions of readiness for reflective apprehension must account for the sense that reflective experience is not a *productive* consciousness, but rather a *disclosive* consciousness, that is, a consciousness of something that was “already there,” as “background.” And this requires that the experience be something the subject is already aware of, in some manner, *before* the reflective modification is carried out on it. This is so because a reflective shift of attention must be motivated in some way; and motivation for a conscious act always involves consciousness of the motivating factor. However, the conditions of readiness for the reflective apprehension of a lived experience are importantly different from those of the intuitive consciousness of a material thing, since experiences cannot “appear” incompletely and as determinable indeterminates. Experience itself is, rather, given in the same way as the instantaneous mode of appearance of the material thing. So, since this awareness of experience is itself a part of the fundamental structure of *appearance*, it itself cannot partake of this structure. Thus, it is a kind of background givenness that motivates reflection, but *not* by means of the structure of appearance.¹⁰

I will have more to say about the nature of the pre-reflective, non-appearance-mediated givenness of experience to itself later (§5). For now, let’s take stock of what we’ve learned so far about Husserl’s conception of the transcendental conditions of reflective self-knowledge in the *Ideas*:

1. The pre-reflective givenness of experience to itself is a necessary condition of the reflective modification of consciousness.
2. Reflective consciousness is the result of a transformation carried out on intentional experience, which transforms something that is given in the experience, but not as a part of the intentional content of the experience, into an apprehended

10 For more on Husserl’s concept of motivation and its importance for his phenomenological analyses of experience, see Walsh (2017).

object of experience.

3. The pre-reflective givenness of an experience to itself is distinguished from the intentional content of experience insofar as it is not a part of what is given in the structure of *appearance*. Rather, it is given in a *sui generis* form of intentional consciousness.

§4 Why Prefer Husserl's View? The Skeptical Self-Undermining of Thomasson's Theory

If the reading of Husserl in the previous section is correct, then there are some important differences between Husserl and Thomasson regarding not only their conceptions of consciousness, but also their conceptions of the conditions of the possibility of reflective self-knowledge through the phenomenological reduction. First, while it is clear that Thomasson's interpretation of Husserl's method of phenomenological reflection is consistent with his general characterization of reflection, her commitment to the adverbial conception of consciousness does not posit the givenness of experience to itself as a condition of the possibility of a phenomenological reduction. Second, while Thomasson analyzes consciousness of the transcendent world as involving a certain mode of intentional awareness (the mode of being "consciously aware"), Husserl maintains that this must involve a *sui generis* intentionality in itself—that the givenness of appearance to the subject is itself a certain kind of intentional awareness.

What reason is there to prefer Husserl's more complicated view of consciousness over Thomasson's? Thomasson (2006) offers some arguments against same-order views that she believes raise problems for same-order theories that her own adverbial theory does not face. And it is for these reasons, all other things being equal, that her adverbial theory is to be preferred. However, as I shall argue, alongside the fact that Thomasson's arguments against same-order views are not ultimately convincing (§5 below), all is *not* equal between the adverbial and the same-order view that Husserl advances. For the ad-

verbal theory faces a skeptical problem—a problem of undermining the conditions of its own possibility as a theory of consciousness that one could honestly affirm or have evidence for—which is prefigured in an argument Husserl gives against a “skeptical” view of reflective consciousness in the *Ideas* (Husserl 2014, §79).

For Husserl, the common characteristic of all skeptical views in philosophy is that they are self-undermining.

Every genuine skepticism, of whatever kind and orientation, shows itself by way of the intrinsic absurdity of implicitly presupposing, in its argumentation, as conditions of the possibility of its validity, just what, in its theses, it denies. (Husserl 2014, §79, p. 155)¹¹

The skeptical view of self-knowledge that Husserl addresses in *Ideas* is voiced in a critical review of Theodore Lipps’s views by Henry J. Watt (Husserl 2014, §79). According to Watt, reflection cannot yield self-knowledge because first-order experience of the world is not already a knowing of itself. Thus, for it to become self-knowledge is for it to undergo an essential inner modification. So, the object we come to know in reflection is not the experience *as it is lived*, but rather only a modified version of it, the experience *as an object of reflection* (Husserl 2014, §79, pp. 152–153). This view is a skeptical, self-undermining view insofar as its denial of the possibility of knowing lived conscious experience undercuts any possibility of acquiring evidence for the truth of this claim. It affirms that experience undergoes an essential modification in becoming an object of reflection. But this assumes that one knows what the thesis denies we can know, namely, the structure of first-order, unreflective experience of the world.

Now, Thomasson is not denying that reflection can yield knowledge of experience as it is prior to reflection, like Watt is. Rather, she agrees with Husserl that this knowledge is guaranteed by the phenomenological reduction in the reductive transformation. However, her view agrees with Watt’s in that first-order experience does not involve any mode of self-givenness; and from this a different kind of skeptical self-undermining arises. Without the self-givenness of experience to the subject, it is left unclear what would motivate the subject to *apply* the reductive transformation. Furthermore, it is left unclear what would motivate the subject to apply the reductive transformation *in*

the appropriate circumstances, i.e., in the circumstances of *having* a conscious experience, such that the application of the rule is truth-conducive. If the subject, in having an experience, is not conscious in any way of this fact, then how could the subject ever be motivated to apply the reductive transformation to it? And, in the cases where the subject does apply the reductive transformation, how could she ensure that the circumstances are appropriate for its application, such that it would reliably yield true self-ascriptive judgments? Without any answers to these questions, it seems that Thomasson's view of reflective self-knowledge undermines the conditions of the possibility of self-knowledge. And insofar as self-knowledge is itself a mental phenomenon, Thomasson's theory also undermines the conditions of the possibility of its own rational grounding. It is, in other words, a theory that makes the application of the methods of self-knowledge acquisition impossible, and thus also a theory that undermines its own possibility as a theory of self-knowledge, i.e., as something that we can know to be true.

Let me spell this objection out in more detail. According to Thomasson, the complete field of conscious awareness, for a subject that is not reflecting, is occupied with the world outside the mind. It is focused completely on the world, and it does not involve any awareness of itself in any form. Now, according to the reductive transformation, when I have a conscious experience, I have epistemic license to infer the claim

S: I ϕ that P (where ϕ stands in for some particular *mode* of awareness—perception, positing thought, doubt).

But if all that I am aware of in my experience is the world beyond the experience—i.e., aware of whatever it is in the world that P is about—then there is no indication to me in conscious experience that I am having a conscious experience of a particular sort, such that I could apply the reductive transformation to it. In other words, conscious experience supplies no motive to apply the reductive transformation to my current conscious experience. Therefore, even if we grant the validity of the transformation rule for acquiring self-knowledge, it will be of no use to a conscious subject in the process of acquiring self-

knowledge. For the subject will never be able to know that she is in a position to apply the transformation.¹² Therefore, the truth of Thomasson's adverbial theory of consciousness undermines the possibility for one to perform the reductive transformation. And this means that the theory could not possibly be true, since the process it describes is impossible.

Since the only way one can come to know one's first-order experience, according to Thomasson's view, is by applying the reductive transformation, and since a theory of the methods of self-knowledge acquisition is a theory of a conscious mental phenomenon, then Thomasson's theory also undermines itself by denying any possibility of coming to know the truth of the theory. To know a claim to be true, one must have evidential grounding for one's knowledge. And to honestly assert a claim as true, it must at least seem to one, one must believe that, one has evidential grounding for what is asserted.¹³ But insofar as the truth of Thomasson's thesis denies the availability of evidential ground for self-attributive judgment, then it also denies the possibility of a subject ever knowing or honestly asserting the truth of Thomasson's theory. Therefore, not only is Thomasson's theory theoretically self-undermining, in that it denies the conditions of its own truth, it is also, as Husserl (1970, 136) puts it, *noetically* self-undermining, in

12 Victor Caston raises this objection against Thomasson's view, independently of any reflections on Husserl, in the following way,

what good does all this do me, if I don't already have some awareness of the fact that they do obtain? Otherwise, wouldn't the conceptual connections here equally license third-person judgements about our mental experiences, just as they plainly do in the case of speech acts? How, in short, do these connections speak to either the immediacy or privileged access that first-person knowledge appears to have? It is not clear how the connections involved here give us any distinct kind of leverage. [...] Adding the requirement that such states must be conscious won't help on the current account: for Thomasson, conscious states are states in which we are aware of the world, and not those in which we have some internal awareness of the state itself. The question still remains: what puts us in a distinctive position with regard to our own mental states, if we do not also have an awareness that we are having them? How will it help us, in particular, to discern features of that experience, such as its modality—whether, for example, we are seeing the shape of an object rather than feeling it? (Caston 2006, 3)

13 For defense of this claim, see Marcus and Schwenkler (2019, §2).

that it denies the conditions of its being known or even honestly asserted by a subject.

§5 The Pre-Reflective Givenness of Consciousness

But the consequential self-undermining of Thomasson's adverbial theory of consciousness in conjunction with Husserl's phenomenological reduction (or reductive transformation) makes the articulation of the structure of self-consciousness in lived, unreflected experience all the more pressing for the viability of Husserl's view. Therefore, in this section, I will review Thomasson's reasons for preferring the adverbial view over the same-order view in order to show how they are not convincing as objections to Husserl's view. Furthermore, in turn, addressing these objections from the perspective of Husserl's view will help elucidate how the pre-givenness of consciousness overcomes the objection just levied against Thomasson's view.

Thomasson argues that same-order views face an insurmountable dilemma that builds on the question of how conscious experiences represent themselves. If experiences do represent themselves as objects, then the state must have a two-dimensional representational content. But then this raises a problem about how to individuate a mental state that has two representational contents. Since mental states are individuated by their contents, then it seems impossible to have a single mental state that has two representational contents. Indeed, it seems safer just to go back to a higher-order view. However, if the same-order theorist does not posit two dimensions of representational content, then "they seem ill-suited to help explain the evidence that motivated adopting inner awareness accounts of consciousness in the first place" (Thomasson 2006, 6).

But this argument is not convincing against Husserl, since he can easily get around the first horn of the dilemma.¹⁴ This is because Husserl denies that conscious experiences are individuated by their representational contents alone. In the *Logical Investigations*, for instance,

14 Again, Caston (2006, 4) makes the same observation; except he does not, as I do here, make it in connection with Husserl.

Husserl observes that it is possible for a conscious experience to having multiple intentional contents. And he accounts for this possibility by construing intentional contents as universal types which are “realized” as moments or dependent parts or properties of conscious experience. Therefore, insofar as it is possible for one thing to exemplify multiple dependent properties at once, it is also possible for the same act to have two different intentional contents at the same time.¹⁵

However, even though Husserl has the theoretical tools to make sense of the givenness of experience as a part of its own complex intentional content, as we have seen in §3, he does not opt for this. Rather, he admits the self-givenness of the experience as a part of the content of experience that is not given in a structure of appearance, in a *sui generis* mode of intentional awareness. Thus, while the experience “is there” in first-order consciousness of the world, in a way that motivates the subject to shift her attention to it in the reflective modification, this does not happen *as the object* of a coherently motivated series of appearances, as it does for material things that are intended-but-unapprehended in the background of consciousness.

So, how does it happen? What is Husserl’s *positive characterization* of the sui-generis intentional awareness of experience itself? Unfortunately, I do not have space here to deliver a fully adequate positive characterization of Husserl’s view of this. But it is clear that Husserl takes the self-awareness of conscious experience to be a fixed structure of the basic self-temporalizing, original flowing-off of conscious experience. As Zahavi puts it, “The absolute flow of consciousness simply is the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our experiences” (Zahavi 1998, 155). In other words, it is built into the essential temporal structure of experience that its temporal unfolding is both a basic structure of presenting the transcendental world and a mode of self-presentation, which grounds the motive for reflection.

With this, we can at least see that, with his analysis of the temporal structure of consciousness, Husserl builds a kind of self-manifestation into the *way* that consciousness brings transcendent things to the subject’s awareness. In other words, Husserl builds a reflexive struc-

15 For further discussion of this view of meaning and the important implications of the possibility of one act having many contents for Husserl’s theory of knowledge and mind, see Kidd (2019).

ture of self-manifestation *into* the adverbial aspect of consciousness. But, again, further clarification of this mode of givenness is best reserved for another place.¹⁶

§6 Conclusion: Transparency and Self-Consciousness

If the foregoing analysis is correct, then Husserl's view of consciousness and self-knowledge combines two things that are often thought to be incompatible or, at least, not worth combining: a transparent method of self-knowledge acquisition with a non-transparent, same-order self-awareness conception of consciousness. This kind of combination would be inconsistent or not worth pursuing, *if* the self-awareness constitutive of conscious experience is posited as an evidential ground for reflective self-knowledge. For this is the very thing that the transparency method of reflective self-knowledge is supposed to do without. But, as we have seen, Husserl's view avoids this potential inconsistency by posting the pre-reflective self-awareness of consciousness, *not* as an evidentiary ground for self-knowledge, but as a motivation for the *act* of carrying out the reductive transformation on the conscious experience—a process which constitutes *its own* evidentiary ground, by *constituting* (but not presupposing) an immediate awareness of the current lived experience. Furthermore, if Husserl's argument against the transparency view of consciousness, as a theory that does not have the resources to account for its own theoretical and noetic possibility, is correct, then it turns out that *any* transparent method of self-knowledge would require a model of consciousness that involves some sort of self-consciousness. As a

16 Dan Zahavi (1998; 2003; 2005, chap. 3–4) has, in my opinion, written the most clear and accessible characterization of this aspect of Husserl's view (of Husserl's positive characterization of pre-reflective self-consciousness) and its function as a transcendental condition on the reflective modification of consciousness. However, Zahavi's interpretation of Husserl's view of pre-reflective self-awareness as a fixed structure of the essential temporal flow of experience is still a subject of controversy. See, e.g., the discussion in DeRoo (2011). And for an alternative reading that more explicitly locates the self-manifestation of consciousness in the adverbial aspect of consciousness, see Smith (2005).

result, Husserl's transparent methodology of self-knowledge acquisition, paired with a non-transparent conception of consciousness, is not only historically significant, but is of great contemporary significance as well.

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