

A 'Hermeneutic Objection'

Language and the Inner View

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*They said, 'You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are.'*

*The man replied, 'Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'*

(Wallace Stevens, 'The Man with the Blue Guitar')

I: The View from 'Without' & 'Within'

In the worlds of philosophy, linguistics, and communications theory, a view has developed which understands conscious experience as experience that is 'reflected' back upon itself through language. This indicates that the consciousness we experience is possible only because we have culturally invented language and subsequently evolved to accommodate it. This accords with the conclusions of Daniel Dennett (1991), but the 'hermeneutic objection' would go further and deny that the objective sciences themselves have escaped the hermeneutic circle.

The consciousness we humans experience is developed only within the context of crossing the 'symbolic threshold' (Percy 1975; Deacon 1997) and one of the earliest and most important symbols we acquire is that of the self, or 'the subject of experience'. It is only when we achieve self-awareness that the world, as such, comes to exist for us as an object (which contains categories and sub-categories of objects). Any consciousness imputed to prelinguistic stages of development is based on projection and guesswork, since we can know nothing directly of it. It can be said that any experience which does not separate an inner subject from an outer world is probably a continuum of sensation in which environmental stimulus and instinctive response are experienced as a unity; it may be 'lived experience' but it is experience 'lived' non-consciously.

Speech requires assertion and by learning to speak we find ourselves asserting, in essence, our *selves* into the world. The narrative form of language allows us to develop life stories, self-knowledge, and, most important, narrative memory coincident with narrative time. All this is made possible with the intersubjective 'net' of language which allows us to know ourselves by first identifying with the viewpoint of others; and, later, such allows us to identify with other minds as we anticipate their reception our communication. These three, assertion, narrative, and intersubjectivity are the essence of what language is and are the keystones that make culture possible outside of nature.

Outside of language there is nothing to which we can directly refer, since all language is indicative only of itself.¹ Thus knowledge outside of language is literally unthinkable. Lacan (1977) makes it clear that, for whatever reason, it is an error of immense proportion to simply assume that there is a world of experience 'out there' or 'in here' previous to or beneath or beyond language to which we have access. In fact, the world anticipates and forecloses us:

Symbols ... envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth ... the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and even beyond death (p. 68).

We find ourselves created in the net of language and have no sense whatsoever of the creation or the end of the self we 'find' ourselves to be. Birth and death are abstract concepts inconceivable because the self is only experienced between them; yet this self has had its linguistic creation prepared for it before its biological birth and it will leave linguistic echoes after its biological demise.

Lacan deals with the biological substrate with his conception of the 'real', referring, it seems, to raw, instinctive drives. Alan Sheridan, in a translator's note to Lacan's *Ecrits* (1977), explains this important concept this way:

The 'real' ... stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its 'raw' state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic x' (pp. ix-x).

Experience of the 'real', outside language, must therefore certainly exist. But it can lead to no new knowledge. As soon as comprehension is attempted, one is drawn into the inescapable web of the hermeneutic enclosure of language.

II: The View from Within

What if all this theory's the equivalent of nightmare, its menace masquerading as philosophy?

... wouldn't anything I'd come up with have to be a monstrous mix of substance and intention?

(C. K. Williams, 'The Method')

1. The Methodologies

Such a variety of approaches tends to leave a reader feeling somewhat helpless. Psychological introspectionism does appear to share much with philosophic phenomenology. Though both appear in many varied manifestations, both also rely finally on language. Both seek to 'step back' from what is thought to be direct experience and to take positions outside the usual 'stream of consciousness' to observe experience in action, as it were. Such observations can be as mundane as the listing of

all sensations while one has a just-as-mundane perception, or it can be elaborated into analysis of the psyche, body-image, intuition, or even time-consciousness.

In either case, it is the position of the observer that creates doubt in this commentator's mind. Can one really undertake deeply abstract cognition without, in essence, creating a new version of self who observes the old version of self? It seems likely that such high-level self-abstracting is in fact delving further and further into more minute symbol processing. The position of the observing self is cast further back in the temporal penumbra from the postulated present of actual experience.

Meditation, though often surrounded by all sorts of conceptual games and abstract edifices that eventually appear as religious dogma, at the same time actualizes a very different route. As I understand it, at first the meditator takes the position of an observer 'watching' his or her own experience right down into the basics of breathing and heartbeat. The major difference between the first two methodologies and meditation is that in the latter case this observation is entirely passive and does not seek a 'conceptual grasp'. Eventually, the meditator hopes to do away with the observer, as well, and merely *become* awareness without a content of such awareness. This also is very different from the assumption of (most) introspectionism (going back to Locke) and phenomenology (going back to Brentano) that consciousness must have both content and direction (intentionality) or it is something other-than consciousness.

It is difficult to address such divergent methodologies, though they agree on the inner nature of such explorations and the central importance of temporality. It is intriguing that all three methodologies implicitly or explicitly call for further temporal distancing — experience further from the moment of bodily activation than even that provided by linguistic consciousness — as the position from which normal conscious experience is to be analysed, as in the first two methodologies, or undercut for more profound experiences, as in meditation. According to Depraz, Husserl understood his phenomenology to be made possible by observations made from increasingly extended time from the actual events in question. Transcendental subjectivity is essentially memory. Wallace likewise declares that such time-regression is the position taken by the mind as it opens out toward non-content (even though the eventual goal is commonly timeless awareness).

If my thesis that we languaged animals — who have built empires and created worlds out of our time-delayed reaction-systems — are prisoners of our own device is taken seriously then it must be wondered toward what sort of 'devices' the increasing abstractions of the three 'views from within' are leading. If the abstractions are further and further from natural experience and simultaneously further and further time-delayed, then such hyper-methodologies make possible only abstracted 'knowledge' in self-created and virtually isolated worlds of their own, far from the life of natural experience.

Another major concern is the assumption that conscious experience can occur 'within' yet not necessarily require a subject of such experience. In their introduction,

Varela and Shear declare right off that it is necessary that the 'process being studied ... appears as relevant and manifest *for* a "self" or "subject" that can provide an account' (p. 1). This is a very good definition of human conscious experience, especially as it admits the need to 'provide an account'. They agree that *experience* in some sense may occur that is unaccountable, but they insist it cannot be called a methodology without 'public verification and validation according to complex human exchanges' (p. 1). Again the question presents itself as to how we can be so certain that such unaccountable experience can be called conscious when in fact it may be *lived* without any awareness of its being so?

Varela and Shear are aware that experience happens that does not reach consciousness. Since the 'notion of consciousness itself is clearly meant primarily to designate the fact that the subject knows about, is informed about, or in other words is aware of, the phenomenon' (p. 4), it remains confusing to see them concurrently standing by Nagel's 'what it's like to be' definition of consciousness. Nagel himself in the original (1974) article declared that we cannot know whether or not it would be like anything to be a bat. We have no reason to assume that there is a bat-subject which 'knows about, is informed about, or in other words is aware of' any of its experiences. Assuming consciousness without a subject of consciousness is to delve beyond human knowledge into realms of pure speculation. This does not imply that the boundaries of consciousness cannot be expanded or shifted, as the authors intend.

There is an attempt to get around this by the process of expert validation of inner experience. To validate what *seems* to be private inner experiences (whether of phenomenological observation or of contemplation), Varela and Shear call for 'second-person' mediation. They don't just ask for mutual dialogue; they ask for exchange with someone 'steeped in the domain of experiences under examination' (p. 10). This seeking of validation by outside authorities is common in all cultures and helps to determine the value of one's own experiences. This is also the essence of cultural transmission: Experiences are made conscious by validating or invalidating them within the web of cultural articulation. Secondly, of course, is the hermeneutic entanglement which asserts that since *subjects of experience* are at least partially linguistic creations then any 'public verification' which takes place will alter the original experience and to some extent self-determine it in the future.

To their credit, Varela and Shear are cognizant of this quandary and do not claim 'privileged access' within any of their methodologies. Simultaneously, however, they deny that any such 'unprivileged access' — i.e., intersubjectively validated access — 'creates nothing but artifacts, or a "deformed" version of the way experience "really" is' (p. 14). But when the depth of how language creates experienced worlds is understood, there simply is no 'really is'. All intersubjectively experienced worlds are created worlds. Inner methodologies in this understanding, important as they are for experiential exploration, cannot claim the status of revealing consciousness as it 'really is'.

2. Introspection

Introspection seems to take one of two forms. Either it is an infinitely boring compendium of internal observations, or it is based in speculative reverie. Introspection is an essential part of conscious experience; there would be little to being conscious without it. As such an integral part, however, it cannot stand outside of consciousness and — using the language of consciousness — describe what it subjectively experiences *objectively*. Its veracity is forever compromised by its involvement in the hermeneutics of the eternal return: To describe is to change and to be changed is to alter the 'object' being described. It is a nice circular practice, however, and certainly worth the trouble in the name of expanded consciousness. The mistake is to assume that anything universal or of scientific value can emerge from one's self-study.

Introspectionists in this issue of *JCS* wisely suggest that private introspections be compared with introspections of others and ultimately with a mutually agreed upon set of objective standards. This adds something important to the mix but it seems likely that what will be constructed will be another cultural matrix — an exchange of ideas based upon institutionalized ideals and standards. To break these walls, perhaps it may be possible to study also the fabric of such walls: language. Linguist Wallace Chafe (1994) suggests just this: 'When careful and consensual introspective observation can be paired with public observations — and especially with overt evidence from language — the resulting combination may be the most powerful one we have for advancing understanding of the mind' (p. 15).

The illusion that something of scientific value is emerging is unnecessary. Something more important than science may be taking place in such exchanges. The cultural matrices of literary circles are far more interesting, imaginative, and, finally, more enlightening than any introspectational methodology. Why not let in emotion and literary language? The arts have done the best so far in revealing what human experience in this world is like — or so it seems to me.

3. *Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is being recommended as a cautious means of both expanding experience *and* its understanding, a combination which, it is promised, will break new ground in consciousness studies. This is a demanding undertaking and I admire those who are willing to attempt to work their way through it.

Natalie Depraz in this issue gives a compelling portrait of Husserlian phenomenological praxis. Still, just as Husserl himself seems to have done, she runs almost immediately into the problem of the subject. She states the goal of praxis is 'phenomenological scientificity' which is ultimately capable of 'giving rise to a new type of objectification' (p. 97). This is also to say a 'new type of subjectification'. This new subject will concern itself with 'apodictic evidence' and thus escape the net of language, at least, presumably, until scientific explanation is required. The whole notion of 'self-evident evidence' has already been questioned by the editors of this issue and I concur.

Ignoring the power of language over our perceptions and cognitions has been recognized as the major error of all metaphysics, and metaphysics is what we have as soon as we speak of knowledge outside of language. Husserlian phenomenology depends for its reduction and praxis on the ability of language to *express* previously occurring experience (i.e., observations of a transcendental ego) essentially without changing that experience or being implicated in it in the first place. As a source of knowledge, such demands to exceed language may be asking too much.

Derrida has famously contested the idea that philosophy can work its way back to a logic of meaning derived from the immediate data of consciousness itself, sans language. There is no beyond of language for Husserl any more than for anyone else, according to Derrida. Husserl's insistence that his language went beyond the indicative to a purely expressive posture was deconstructed by Derrida, according to Norris (1982), to reveal 'that the totality of speech is caught up in an indicative web' (p. 31). The positing of the position of the transcendental ego or the activity of the 'transcendental reduction' were exemplary evidence for Derrida (1973) to expose the covert figurative ploys within Husserlian phenomenology. No language expresses pre-existing experiences. All words, sentences, and works are 'indicative': that is, indicative of other words, sentences, and works.

Varela early notes that 'consciousness does not contain time as a constituted psychological category' (p. 113). It could not, in fact, insofar as time is constitutive of such consciousness. The position I have taken is that the same applies to language. Language, subjective consciousness, and time may well be different aspects of the same underlying reality. (And, as I hope I have made clear above, consciousness without a subject of consciousness is inconceivable.)

Varela, however, works hard to portray time — especially the duration of the present in experience — as both preceding and being essential for subjective consciousness. He may well be right but it is not assured through his co-examination of Husserl and of neuronal cell assemblies, i.e., *neuropsychology*. His test case of neuropsychology appears highly successful in that he shows how phenomenological philosophy and neuroscience can complement each other in 'bipartisan' research; however, there is no way of confirming that what we think of as time has anything to do with the reality of time, and this applies as much to Varela's 'triple-braided analysis' as to previous linear-point time assumptions. It is widely agreed that time and consciousness are intimately intermingled (e.g., Ricoeur 1984-88; Wood 1989) but less widely accepted that time itself precedes consciousness, though it *may* well be the case. Objective information gives strong evidence of this, as Varela shows, but it is most dubious that subjective experience can do so.

Varela, it should be noted, is not indifferent to the question of language, experience, and knowledge. He recognizes that actual memory (as opposed to the penumbral 'presence of the past') depends upon it, as does the 'aim' of the 'perceptual horizon' (p. 115). But he brackets the question for the sake of his test case. The question is whether such bracketing is justified when dealing with conscious experience.

The question in point is the 'three scales of duration' from section three. His first durational scale concerns the usual physical conception of time that concerns events at the '1/10' scale. No consciousness and probably no experience of any sort here. The next scale has durational events on the '1' scale. This appears to be equivalent to nonlinguistic or prelinguistic 'consciousness' based in instinctual responses (which correlate with appropriate cell assemblies). Is Varela suggesting non- or primary conscious species/entities *intentionally* 'constitute objects-events'? If so, this is precisely the heart of Derrida's (1973) deconstruction. If not, there is no reason to believe that perceptual events are *consciously* constituted at all² or even constituted *for a consciousness*.

Varela recognizes the final durational scale as relating to 'descriptive-narrative assessments' on what he calls the '10' scale. What I wish to note is that there would be no objective understanding of the first level without this third level. As far as durational scale two is meant to relate to non-descriptive or non-narrative consciousness — and perhaps non-intentional consciousness, as well — the question remains at least moot that such non-subjective 'consciousness' could ever be experienced by human minds — phenomenologically, introspectively, or otherwise. What I am here suggesting (and I'm not sure Varela would object) is that his three durational scales do not necessarily portray one level arising from the previous one but may, instead, be a subtle circle with the third narrative-descriptive scale 'turning back' and becoming involved in the manifestation of the first two scales.

Indeed, Varela sees the connection between scale three and human narrative identity which is, of course, narrative time. Since human identity is so central to all our conscious experiencing, it must still be wondered what sort of time awareness or indeed consciousness of any sort is imagined to exist before or transcending the 'broad temporal horizons' provided by imagination and remembrance through the symbolizing mind. It seems to this writer more likely that all such imagined pre- or trans- experience is 'always already' deeply ingreidenced with language.

Most phenomenological philosophy and certainly Varela's article continue to use figurative language. It is not clear just how completely Varela wishes to keep language out of his picture. He forthrightly calls upon the reflexive act and remembrance to access the flow of time. This application of the linguistic mind seems most reasonable. He calls upon *reflection* and quotes Husserl saying 'Every experience is itself experienced' that surely would be impossible without a conceptual grasp. But at the same time, he notes that experiences themselves 'appear slipping into the past and gradually disappear into the fringes of time' (p. 126). For whom do these appearances appear if not to a conscious experiencer who has the symbolic capacity to understand such experiencing, i.e., experience which is itself experienced? This is to say that even for the best phenomenological methodology, we begin and end with indicative reference — and with a narrative self that remains unable to 'jump over his own shadow' (Heidegger 1987, p. 199).

4. Meditation

Ah meditation, the rose that flourishes above this circular morass of linguistic consciousness. There is no doubt that meditation, in all its multifoliate forms, accomplishes something. The question is: does it live up to its claims to gain knowledge or wisdom in a direct fashion, beyond language and culture? Can it even lead into the hallowed precincts of the 'pure consciousness experience' (PCE)?

From the foregoing, it should be clear that spiritual revelations are based in the conceptual imagination. Furthermore, every single word that is uttered to explain the direct experience brought about through contemplation, chanting, or meditation is self-evidently a culturally constructed phenomenon. As soon as the experience is spoken of, it changes, becoming influenced by the expectations and projections of a cultural matrix. This is to say that meditation, no matter how enlightening it feels, does not bring new knowledge to the rest of us not so enlightened. Every experience must be interpreted and interpretation is always a linguistic, cultural, and psychological manifestation.

But there is still the experience itself, directly enlightening for the experiencer who will thence be changed by it, is there not? There seems to be, if one accepts the many accounts from different times and places of such experiences. Again, however, the nuanced words used to explain or explore such experiences connote, most often, either spiritual or at least transcendental awakenings. *Why else mediate?* However, there is no need whatsoever to declare or even imply that any *beyond* is 'there', waiting to be experienced. What seems to be much more likely is that the 'pure consciousness experience' (Shear 1990) is related instead to 'pure pre-conscious experience'. That is to say, through prolonged meditation techniques the practitioner undergoes an atavistic return to the energetic source of all sensation and perception, but still a source of this world.³ The 'pre-/trans- fallacy', in this view, is no fallacy, no matter how forcefully Ken Wilber (1995) may deny their identity: transcending self-consciousness is actually returning to a pre-conscious (animal) state, but without the instinctual compulsion to act.

Shear and Jevning in this issue imply not only that the pure consciousness experience occurs and is real, but that it can also be remembered. From experience to memory: Here is the crack between the twilight and the dawn! It is quite believable that some have *succumbed* or *abnegated* into an experience of awareness without bounds (without experiencing space, time, or substance). But it must be wrong to say one 'had' such experience. This would be to place oneself beyond or even above such an experience — or, at the very least, to imply that one's self or ego-identity remained present as an observer, distinct from the rest of the unbounded unity.

If the PCE is really without any distinctions or attributions then it must be pure experience itself — without an *experiencer*. To claim an experiencer who privately 'possessed' the PCE would be to set definite limits and indulge in obvious duality. If such an experience is indeed real, it is beyond anything that can be said about it, beyond personal consciousness or memorable attributes, beyond even the qualities that make up the larger, dynamic experience we call life. Memory would become an active possibility only as one returned to daily consciousness, i.e., human consciousness, and would require the return of the subject-who-remembers. Since this subject could not

have been present during the experience, it would now be forced to interpret the nature of said experience through the 'impressions' left upon it, like assuming the wind by noting the bending boughs or wondering what animals had previously passed by observing tracks in the snow. What we reclaim, i.e., re-member, from self-transcendent experiences are the impressions such experiences have made upon the patiently awaiting ego-self (the subject-of-experience). It could be no other way if, as so many commentators have observed, memory and self are so inextricably linked.

To experience is one thing, but it reeks of idealism or the irrational possession of religious belief to claim one's self has experienced self-transcendence. To experience so purely must be to experience 'no-self', though this is denied by Shear. To have awareness without content or contexts must surely exclude the personal self since such a self, no matter how it is understood, is at the very least a context for consciousness, if not necessarily a *content*. But such experience without a subject of experience is drawn back before the symbolic the rift into what I (and others) have been calling 'nonconscious experience' or, perhaps, 'pre-conscious experience'. Nothing can be said about experience beyond words

If it is claimed that consciousness is being brought to what was previously unconscious potential, then this is something else entirely and far beyond anyone's ability to contest rationally without having such experience for oneself. However, for this writer who has had no such experience, a certain involuntary distaste creeps in upon thinking about it.

There must be some 'potential energy' source which is called forth to become a self-in-the-world through the circumstances I have described and deep meditation may indeed bring meditators in touch with it. But why one would do so? If consciousness is a creative act, as I propose, then to seek it in non-action is sheer abnegation. To atavistically return to an undifferentiated state of contentless awareness smacks strongly of life-denial in the first degree. It opposes evolution, natural and cultural, and puritanically denies those facets of life that are the richest and deepest, if necessarily transient: physical action, passion, and thought itself. Desire and yearning (along with good doses of fear and anxiety) may be the forces which foundation our humanity and wonderful they are when fulfilled. To avoid them or the frustration of not attaining them by mantra-chanting into what might well be self-induced trances seems so obviously contrary to what the *Sturm und Drang* of life has to offer that I must question not only the epistemology which surrounds such efforts but even the actual value of the experience itself *for the experienter* (if there is one).

This is not a humanly conscious experience where selves and worlds interact. Forlorn as it may be to some, I strongly feel that human consciousness begins only with the separation of self and world — with our banishment from the garden of the senses into our virtual, symbolically recursive 'experiencing of experience'. To the extent that deep meditators, too, become 'nonhuman' (and consciousness is understood as a human creation) such meditators have little to offer consciousness studies.

III: Conclusion

*Death of the self in a long, tearless night,
All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.*
(Theodore Roethke, 'In a Dark Time')

Existence then, is for us a suspension over the abyss. Consciousness (or higher-order consciousness) has been gained over long periods of time with great effort as the result of the development of speech, narrative, and intersubjectivity. Its survival value consists in the 'capture' of our environment, which becomes our world. There is no escape from our lives and our predicament but we may choose to retreat into navel gazing, which, at least, 'feels really good' even though it helps neither our world nor our actual understanding. Norman O. Brown has insisted that our task is so much larger: 'The integration of the psyche is the integration of the human race, and the integration of the world with which we are inseparably connected. Only in one world can we be one' (p. 87). Because we are the *worldmaking animal*, we are the only animal who can save the world.

The idea that we can better understand existence and do more for the world through nonlinguistic exercises seems to this author patently absurd. It is only through the symbolic that we can imagine that which might be in the first place. As Gaston Bachelard protested, 'How unjust is the criticism which sees nothing in language but an ossification of internal experience! Just the contrary: language is always somewhat ahead of our thoughts, somewhat more seething than our love. ... Without this exaggeration, life cannot develop' (1983, p. 30). Abandon hope, all ye who abandon language. To lose language is to lose conscious experience.

To the cries of 'anthropocentric!', I can only respond 'anthropomorphic!'. This paper makes no claims that we are at the top of the evolutionary ladder. If life is war, I'd guess we're doing pretty good. On the other hand, we continue to have a disquieting sense that we have 'eaten of the tree of knowledge' and been banished from the 'paradise' of physical impulsion and sensory grandeur. If the life given by nature consists in awakened senses and an overwhelming sense of aliveness, then we will need all our culturally developed resources and rationality to avoid going mad for, in general, this 'aliveness in the moment' escapes us. Within language and now the rapidly expanding intersubjectivity of the computerized media, we face the move into, at best, a kind of psychic mutuality which might be called 'love' or, at worst, a descent into a final, global insanity. We have become permanent exiles from our origins and, to a large extent, from our own natural processes and have condemned ourselves to live our span within the prison of our own minds — intersubjective minds, yes — but still our own minds.

The passion with which the question of existence and consciousness is argued is testament to the passion for meaning we each have. What are we all really doing reading and writing on *consciousness studies*? Let me state baldly here that we are doing what we are driven to do: to seek *meaning* in our own exile. Discovering no

meaning, we attach our selves to philosophies of consciousness and hope to create life-meaning for ourselves by convincing others of our truth. However, language has the last laugh. Our truths become our prison — *including the 'truths' explicated here*.

Such a stark realisation of the hopelessness of perfect communication in the world in which we find ourselves may lead us eventually to yearn for escape from these intolerable conditions. In all brute honesty, it must be considered that we are forced to accept that consciousness holds our experience of reality in a non-actual, time-delayed 'present'. It gives us 'self' and gives us a modicum of power but life itself desiccates as we hold it in the grip of the hermeneutic garrote.

On the other hand, this is all the life we have. The hermeneutic circle need not be a *vicious circle*. It seems more likely that Bachelard is right, that we need language to give us dreams of what might be. Experience outside language does indeed occur; we see it daily. But the only way we *know* of it personally is through those impressions left by its passing on our own re-membering self. Though indicative language used literally cannot *express* those impressions adequately, non-literal, metaphoric language such as that found in mythopoetics may at least succeed in conveying the *feel* of such things. In fact, all the expressive arts have done so for millennia and will, hopefully, continue to do.

Perhaps we ask too much of science (including 'inner-science') to express experiences which are trans- or pre- or beyond language. Such expression may be best left to the arts, even though we live in times when the arts in general are seen as peripheral to the mainstream of current technocratic culture. Not that the various 'views from within' in this issue are without value. On the contrary, if consciousness is created reflexively through language and intersubjectivity, then these methods — especially introspection and phenomenology — are most certainly studying consciousness from within it. But isn't that exactly what we are all doing here now?

Notes

1. '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*' (Derrida 1976, p. 158).
2. Even human perceptions are seldom 'consciously constituted'.
3. Jonathan Shear has long supported the importance of attaining PCE for understanding consciousness. (e.g., 1990, Shear & Jevning, 1999); however, though he calls the experience 'pure consciousness', he does not feel it necessarily implies a separation from nature. D.T. Suzuki (1964) agreed calling the 'new consciousness' arising in Zen, actually the return of paradisiacal 'old consciousness' (which transcends nothing but ordinary experience). Like Shear, Suzuki considered the experience to be beyond or before language; unlike Shear, he also considered the experience to be one of no-self and, in the usual sense, *non-conscious*: 'In Zen, consciousness in its ordinary scientific sense has no use; the whole being must come forward' (p. 179).

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