

The View 'Within': Is There a Way Out? Seeking the 'Self' in Interpersonality

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Abstract:

The paper deals with some misconceptions concerning the 'privileged' (and at the same time 'mysterious?') access to own experiences from the first-person perspective, points at limitations of such an immediacy, and doubts the solipsist privacy of subjectivity. Based on the conviction that identification of 'point of view' and 'perspective' proved problematic the author argues that we may have different perspectives from the same (person) point of view. As embodied and embedded cognitive persons we practice exchange of perspectival attitudes toward own subjectivity more easily and frequently in our daily lives than we are prone to admit in our theories. The sort of methodology, part of which is also the objectivist third-person approach, does not have the power to revise the irreducibility between the subjective and the empirical, but it does plea for the mind open to the intersubjective space, in which what is not reducible can still be communicated, compared and complemented.

Introduction: Open Questions

Any attempt to define consciousness seems nowadays to be doomed to excuses (that current standard of scientific competence has not yet advanced enough to provide us with the final knowledge that would make it less mysterious), to paradoxes (that what seems to be most intimate part of our 'self' proves to be so difficult to access and report), to warnings (that the object of description is not a single or unified one, and that we actually deal with multiple consciousnesses), to doubts (whether empirical research can account for the subjective feels), to speculations (whether silicon matter can ever produce consciousness), etc.

The "mystery of consciousness" does not only result from the current inability to give competent and complete explanation to the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions concerning consciousness, but it already emerges at the very fundamental level of recognition *that* something physical can give rise to psyche, *that* matter can cause mental phenomena at all. Maybe, as I argued elsewhere (2005), instead of asking the '*what* is consciousness?'-question, we should be advised to ask *when* is a mental state conscious (analogous to Nelson Goodman's „what is art?“ with „when is art?“ question).

In such a way we would treat it not as a state but as a *process*, and instead of the tendency to locate it we might find it more useful to look how it is realized in time and how forms of its manifestation change.

This might well be in accord also with Max Velmans' attempts to follow the co-evolutionary interdependence of the biological matter and conscious mind (as he does for instance in his most recent paper, 2008).

Most attempts to locate consciousness anyhow evoke erroneous conception that it is something mysteriously closed within the depths of privacy inaccessible to other minds, and even to the self-observing mind. The standard theoretical equipment of the study of consciousness in the form of 'perspectives' additionally emphasizes the double and irreducible nature of the subjective side of the mind according to what is reportable from the subjective (first-person) perspective is not accessible to the scientific (third-person) perspective. How justified is this insistence on the solipsist privacy of the qualitative conscious states, as contrasted to the so-called objectivist account of the externally observable manifestations of it, is one of the basic concerns of this paper.

1. Consciousness as Perspectival

The characteristic feature of human beings that distinguishes them from other organisms is that they are "minded creatures" – living beings capable of consciousness and thought. That what characterizes human mind is further marked by uniqueness of *a way* the 'things in the world' become objects of individual experience, and for which terms such a 'perspective' or 'point of view' are used.

"What the daffodil lacks and the 'minded' creature has is *a point of view on things* or (...) *a perspective*. The minded creature is one for which things are a certain way: the way they are from the creature's perspective. A lump of rock has no such perspective, the daffodil has no such perspective." (Crane, 2001: 4)

This is very much in accord with John Searle's saying:

"My conscious experiences, unlike the objects of experiences, are always *perspectival*. They are always *from a point of view*. But the objects themselves have no point of view. Perspective and point of view are most obvious for vision, but of course they are features of our other sensory experiences as well." (1992: 131; emphasis added)

The perspectival nature of consciousness is also what characterizes subjective experience:

"Subjectivity has the further consequence that all of my conscious forms of intentionality that give me information about the world independent of myself are always from a *special point of view*. The world itself has no point of view, but my access to the world through my conscious states is always *perspectival*, always *from my point of view*." (Searle, 1992: 95, emphasis)

added)

“When I talk of perspectives, - says Tim Crane - I do not mean that a perspective *is* a state of mind; it is meant to be a *condition* for being in the state of mind” (2001. 4). The clarification is important and helps make difference between two uses of the same term that are commonly confused. It is this another possible meaning of the term (the one that will be in use below, and refers to ‘perspectives’ from a person’s point of view: ‘first’, ‘second’ or ‘third’) that, it seems to me, is exactly the case when a perspective *is* a state of mind. And while in the former case the ‘perspective’ refers to a mode objects are had in experience, in the latter case the object is experiencing itself, and its accessibility to the conscious mind.

Thus a difference should be made between experience itself (according to which consciousness is perspectival) and a, say, ‘first-person’ perspective *on* it. It can be also added that perspectival nature of consciousness (in the sense mentioned above) is not limited whereas the first-person methodology (as a theoretical means) meets too many obstacles in order to be limitless.

For one thing is to say that we have experiences (with which we are born or get to shape them throughout life) and another thing is to claim that we have them from a particular perspective. We, as conscious beings, are not born with the first (or any other) ‘perspective’; it is something we get to ‘know’ and ‘learn’ as we mature as conscious persons, on the one hand, and as we start to investigate conscious states theoretically and scientifically, on the other hand.

2. First-Person Perspective

What one commonly understands under the ‘first-person’ perspective is the lived experience, also defined as phenomenal experience or simply experience (Chalmers, 1996) as it appears in consciousness from the point of view of the “I”. In the philosophy of mind literature it is also used as synonymous for subjectivity. More often than not, in order to stress the phenomenal character of experience one grants the ‘first-personness’ all that what cannot be accessed from other perspectives whereby insufficient attention has been paid to what the former really can convene, and in particular, what it cannot.

My concern in this presentation is basically twofold: on the one hand I question the widespread assumption that suggests that the first-person perspective always necessarily reveals what lies (according to that view) ‘inside’ or ‘within’, the consequence of which is the conception of the ‘closed’ mind. But this is for me a highly problematic stance, for I do not think that the first-person perspective is predestined to foremost get insight into our mysterious inwardness - some deep hidden layers accessible only to the solipsist subject. On the other hand, I will share with you my trouble with the common understanding of the notion of ‘within’ as reduced to isolated qualitative states

as distilled and abstracted from the lived experience. Even more, such ‘raw feels’ are granted sort of independent existence (e.g. redness or sweetness). However, we have to realize that the qualitative states in such a ‘pure’ form exist only in the heads of theorists, not in the heads of the subjects their theories are about.

A widespread fallacy is manifested in the conviction, or expectation, that the ‘first-person’ modus has the capacity to (almost automatically) reveal what is going on, personally and subpersonally, in a conscious world of each of us. It is believed that whenever I switch to the perspective from the “I” point of view a cognitive road is opened to unbiased subjectivity; that, in a way, it is this very immediacy that can bring us to what can be considered as the consciously ‘given’: the blueness of sea, the cry of a baby, the whiteness of milk, painfulness of toothache, etc. But the givenness of any sort is highly problematic (as we have learned in the philosophy of science and theory of knowledge), and it is not different in the study of consciousness either.

For the questions arise as: How do we select the ‘felt’ (what do we ignore, and what do we promote as consciously dominant)? And how do we weigh the many forms of appearances (for only tiny fraction of the sensed becomes experienced)? And especially how do we transcribe it in a reportable form?

Another theoretical means that favors unbounded susceptibility to subjectivity is that of the “privileged access” to the sphere of experience. However, it is frequently used to mean more than it actually can. After all, the ‘privilege’ means nothing more than that it is *me*, and not somebody else, that is in possession of particular subjective states. Animals, I would guess, are privileged in the same way; they too have their consciousness though they lack a perspective on what they are privileged about.

The expectations on the ‘first-person’, on the part of theorists, are very high, and often also mistaken. High (and unrealistic) expectations prove to be in regard to the “privileged access”, and mistaken is the naïve belief that a faithful first-person mirroring of experience (if it would be possible) would teach us anything. Yet, the ‘privilege’ can only mean that no one else can have access to our own subjectivity, but it does not allow for the conclusion that the privilege is limitless or that it discloses itself to us either automatically or without mediation. And an ‘ideal’ first person report (the one that would be capable of authentic and faithful representation of subjective feels – a duplicate) would have zero explanatory power.

Surely no one knows better than me how I subjectively feel, but it does not follow that either I am the only one knowable of those feels or that they can exist only within my first-person perspective. Here we meet a sort of paradox: though the first-person perspective is most authentic it is at the same time least (explanatory) telling. Indeed, it seems to me that we are ignorant of the fact that *directness does not speak for itself*, that *immediacy can be*

*uninstructive, that closeness may blind us*¹.

No wonder then that what is considered to be most intimate element of the mind turns out to be most difficult to account for. We are in general poor observers of our own internal processes, and that holds for qualitative states, too.

The elements of the idea that we appear as “strangers to ourselves” (Wilson, 2002) can be found already in Hume as he remarks:

“When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other (...) I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.” (1739: 252)

The elusiveness of the “I” as a self-reflecting subject is to be found also in Maurice Merleau-Ponty as he says: “The other can be evident to me because *I am not transparent for myself*...” (1945: 410; emphasis added).

And Dan Zahavi, recapitulating Merleau-Ponty’s view on embodied self-awareness, puts it in the following way: “(...) I am never so close to myself (...)“ (2001: 163), and also: “I am always already a stranger to myself (...)“ (163).

Now, though I tend to disagree with Searle’s denial of the role of introspection² he brings the point about the difficulty of self-awareness or self-observation that is relevant:

"The very fact of subjectivity, which we were trying to observe, makes such an observation impossible. Why? Because where conscious subjectivity is concerned, there is no distinction between the observation and the thing observed, between the perception and the object perceived. The model of vision works on the presupposition that there is a distinction between the thing seen and the seeing of it. But for 'introspection' there is simply no way to make this separation. Any introspection I have of my own conscious states is itself that conscious state." (Searle, 1992: 97)

Well, if it is so that the result of the first-person methodology is qualitative states exclusively accessible to the mind that cannot be conceived other than ‘closed’ then the question emerges: “Is there a way out?”

We could imagine different possible answers to it, ranging from the negative one (basically based on the irreducibility thesis, and the assumption that there are no equivalents to the qualitative states of consciousness) to those that allow that ‘perspectives’ other than the first-person may also prove to be potent in revealing the nature of subjectivity. What is implied in the first case is that there is no equivalent for authenticity of subjectivity, and no possibility to replace it in any way. However, it does not exclude the logically existing opposite according to which a reductive (scientific) formula of consciousness is in principle possible (but for now it lies completely in the future).

It has become almost a commonsense notion that each of us is authorized only for the ‘first-person’ perspective, and that only other than ourselves can act

from, or be apt for, the 'second' or 'third' person perspective. I think that much of the confusion has been created just by literal attribution of the 'perspectives' (first, second, third) to different persons, with further implication that what is accessible to one point of view remains alien to another. On the contrary, I believe, one and the same cognitive subject can, and as a rule does, practice multiple perspectives. A cognitive person can switch from one to another form of 'reading' (even between irreducible ones) as easily as one can perceptually zoom and adapt from one to another plane of perception.

Though it is the very nature of subjectivity that it is shaped within the individual and particular point of view, what we often miss to point out is that it is neither unanimous nor fixed, unchanged or unalterable. In spite of the fact that it is limited (e.g. my point of view can never acquire a perspective on bat's experience) it is flexible and adaptive, and allows each of us multiple accesses to the conscious world we experience. For that reason I do not take 'perspective' and 'point of view' as synonymous³, and claim that multiple perspectives are possible from a single point o view.

The conscious "I" can do a lot more than to conform to exclusively first-person modality. In other words, nothing prevents the 'self' to be aware of own consciousness from perspectives other than the 'first' one. (And, as we will see below, the same can be said for the third-person point of view, too.) For instance, I can feel pain in my lower back (to which no one else has access), and I can also internalize my doctor's (third-person) report on the cause of my pain (the diagnosis may come as a relief even before treatment), and make it partly re-shape the experiential status of my subjective feel, but I can also be 'hurt' in that I experience the suffering of others (caused in an empathic way through an interaction with the 'second-person').

3. The Second-Person Perspective

One of the implications of philosophy that affirms human cognition as *embodied*⁴, *embedded*⁵, *enacted*⁶, and *extended*⁷ is a conception of consciousness not localized 'within the head', but immersed in the bodily apparatus that actively participates in the events in the world – physical, social, cultural, and other. Such a consciousness is in a decisive way opened to the world of interpersonal relations. A powerful means of establishing bonds to other 'selves' is empathy⁸ - in older views a 'Mitgefühl' that emerges as a result of imaginary (as if) transposition in the mental world of other 'selves'; in a more recent accounts a sort of interpersonal bond made possible by folk-psychological 'theory of mind', on the one hand, or by (mostly affective) mimicking on subpersonal (prereflective and preverbal) level, on the other hand⁹.

If we start from the cognitive agent as embodied and embedded, and if we take empathy seriously, the problem of other minds in its radical form does not

occur at all. Due to the mind's openness to the world the first-person view is never a solipsist story told by an internalist 'self'. Rather, the first-person experience is recognized within the 'second-personness'.

"If one were confined to one's own first-person point of view, such that one had absolutely no emphatic openness to others (...), and hence to how one would be experienced by other (empathy as the experience of myself as being an other for you), one would be incapable of grasping that one's own body is a physical object equivalent to the other physical things one perceives. A physical object is something that can stand before one in perception, but the living body, from an exclusively first-person point of view, cannot stand before one in this way." (Thompson, 2001: 19).

It is this "empathic openness to others" that gives ground for the revision of the conception of consciousness as completely private event inaccessible to other minds. Not only are we mentally open to the world, natural and human, of which we are a part, but we get to learn about ourselves in otherness.

Paradoxically (but in an accord with the idea above that immediacy of the first-person perspective may lack a needed cognitive distance), we get to be aware of our own embodied conscious states, and in a way learn about them, just in the interaction with other living conscious beings which makes me be both subject and object of own conscious activity. Such an empathic relation is symmetrical; more mutual than one-sidedly projected. Or as Evan Thompson would say:

"(...) I empathically grasp your empathic experience of me. As a result, I acquire a view of myself not simply as a physical thing, but as a physical-thing-empathically-grasped-by-you-as-a-living-being. In other words, I do not merely experience myself as a sentient being 'from within', nor grasp myself as also a physical thing in the world; I experience myself as recognizably sentient 'from without', that is, from your perspective, the perspective of another. In this way, one's sense of self-identity, even at the most fundamental levels of embodied agency, is inseparable from recognition by another, and from the ability to grasp that recognition empathically." (2001: 19-20)

Thus, empathy is not only a mode of experiencing other's mental states, but also of grasping own experiences as empathically perceived by others. If there is a possibility of empathical 'mirroring' (of me in others and others in me) then there must be a way out of the imprisonment of the 'first-person perspective'.

4. The Third-Person Perspective

It is quite habitual in the contemporary literature on consciousness to contrast the first-person methodology with the third-person perspective in a way that hardly leaves a possibility of affiliation, and even less of an exchange. The first-person (subjectivist) data are most commonly defined just in opposition to the

(objectivist) third-person reports. The way these methodologies are then conceptualized from the start implies that qualitative experience of the former cannot (ever) be adequately captured by the scientific means of investigation of the latter (behavior, brain processes, environmental interaction, computational models). The “hard problem” of consciousness (Chalmers, 1996) makes the gap between the two unbridgeable, and paves the path for the irreducibility. Yet there are also those who claim that a thoroughly empirical account of consciousness is possible (...). Let me try, at least for the current purpose, to distance myself from the radical options and look for the domain where eventually the exclusiveness does not hold or is not applicable. I find it in language.

Maybe in no other domain does the formative power of language come more to expression than in the field of consciousness. The very verbal labeling of colors¹⁰, the music characterization of sounds, enologist’s narrative of taste sensations, kinesthetic training of movement, etc. all witness that the ‘higher level’ cognitive processes, as expressed in language, shape the ‘low level’ sensations. Meanings make their impact all the way down to the sensory experience so that it is difficult to draw the strict dividing line between the former and the latter.

Verbal interventions and narratives interfere on the very fundamental level of experience. For instance, a simple onomatopoeia can shape the way something (footsteps, a church bell, a phone sound, a cock, an ambulance, jet plain, etc.) is heard.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to hear a pure auditory sensation, and the way we hear sounds as sounds *of* something tells us that the cognitive shapes the experiential. Is then a bottom rock of sensation for which we can say that we are conscious of as of pure sound or pure color conceivable at all? Are we really ever conscious of unbiased raw feels as advocates of qualia wants us to believe? Is there (analogous to the eye and vision) anything like ‘naked’ or ‘naïve’ conscious mind?

Contrary to those who believe that we can be conscious of ‘pure experience’ (*das pure Erleben*; Metzinger, 1991) or ‘raw feels’ to which we are consciously exposed in an unmediated way, this very ‘nakedness’ poses a problem for me and causes a difficulty in uncritical accepting of ‘transparency’ of qualitative states (and is also a problem for the first-person methodology, as expounded above).

Let us take the example frequently used to illustrate qualia - a sound of a music instrument or ‘redness’ of a strawberry. However, to say that the sound we are conscious of is a sound of a musical instrument is to admit that the experience is already culturally laden in the sense that we recognize immediately, first, that a sound is produced by a device we recognize as music instrument, and second, that it is, for instance, bassoon and not oboe. (It is also possible that we have conscious experience of a sound we know comes

from a music instrument but cannot tell which). The conscious state of a person that has music (instruments) in her experiential repertoire and the person without it must be two not identical subjective states.

Also, redness of a strawberry is never actually perceived in its isolated chromatic feature, but is first of all a sign of ripeness, and indirectly of possible taste. And redness of a face (cheek) is difficult, if not impossible, not to be seen as meaning, say, excitement, shame, etc.

If it is so are we not forced to conclude that instead of treating the sensorial as primary, upon which the cultural infrastructure is added, we should rather take the latter as a condition of having the former? (Yet, if we were to introduce the *cultured qualia* would we not be sinning against the very core idea of quale as unmediated and unintentional sensorial quality.) (But the problem is, at least for me, whether we ever experience qualitative states in such a proclaimed distilled and abstracted form. And, in an anticipation of what is yet going to be discussed is that quale seems to be a theoretical construct that the experiential subject never meets in such a form.)

If language (as a form of culture and as social construct) is to be treated as the third-person methodology then the intimate reports on the subjective states bear already traits of the 'objectivist' perspective. If I am not mistaken in attributing to language a third-personness (which simply means that there is no private language) than we have elements of objectifying perspective right within the first-person subjectivity. True, the verbal repertoire of introspective reports is limited and vague, whereas scientific language is much more precise and variegated, yet both versions can be shared by both types of language-users. In the medium of language the "pure experience" gets shaped by what can be considered as impure methodology or a betrayal of the strict first-personness. In saying that I do not suspect irreducibility, but do question exclusiveness of perspectives.

The message of Francisco Varela and Jonathan Shear in this respect is witty but straightforward:

"(...) our stance in regards to first-person methodologies is this: don't leave home without it, but do not forget to bring along third-person accounts as well." (1999: 2).

However, it can hardly be the case that we can 'forget' what so naturally belongs to our consciousness. It is rather the other way round: it is quite difficult to see how the 'purification' procedure should succeed, the result of which would then be isolated qualitative states reduced to qualia, and unbiased by anything that is not privileged first-personness. The capacity to observe ourselves, and our mental states, is provided not only by introspection and other modes of first-person attitudes, but also by internalizing the so-called external perspective.

After all, is it that unconceivable that I may have *my* third-person sense of my 'self'? Am I not observing myself as if it were a 'self' that I can in a way approach from an external perspective? Am I not articulating my subjective feels in personal (verbal) reports that already are using the form that is by no means only private?

Also, is it not so that even the scientific approach can never escape first-personness, for no matter what the subject of anyone's concern is it is always us, human beings (being in the role of a scientist or the one the scientist investigates) that never depart from what constitutes us. In short, no matter what the cognitive role (exemplified here in the form of 'perspective') we can never escape our first-personness, but it, on the other hand, does not condemn us to the exclusive 'view within'.

I guess it is wrong to apply 'what it is like to be' case on the mental exercise required 'to be' in a perspective other than first-person. It is not the same to try to guess how it feels to be a bat (because we do not possess physical conditions to get to the quality states of the subjective world based on echo experience), and how it feels to be in a position of, for instance, third-person (because as active persons we are permanently exercising all of the 'perspectives', switching all the time from one modus to another, since our biological apparatus serves us good enough for active engagement in all of the perspectival roles).

I am in this respect in full agreement with Thompson as he says: "scientists rely substantially not only on subjects' introspective reports, but also on their own first-person experience. Without relying on their own experience, scientists would not only be unable to make sense of what subjects are saying; they would also be unable to grasp what cognitive phenomena are." (2007: 311)

This amounts to the conviction that the same way the 'first-person' has a capacity to make sense of the third-person strategies there are reasons enough for the support of the belief that an objectivist perspective of the latter cannot really be operative without himself/herself possessing experiential know-how of the former.

Unlike in the philosophical literature on consciousness, where perspectives are mostly strictly kept apart, whereby insistence on their irreducibility is made pronounced, in the mental worlds of us as conscious beings, all the perspectives coexist and are permanently practiced in our daily lives. The splits the theorists have created are ignored by the conscious subjects they are investigating.

To say this does not mean that there is a common denominator for the different modalities. Indeed, the perspectives cannot be *reduced* to one another, and they cannot be experienced simultaneously - but they can be *related*. Each is

authentic in its own terms, but each is *a* description of a conscious mode *open to* other possible descriptions. *Irreducibility*, after all, does not imply either *incommensurability* or *incomparability*. (A parallel with Kuhnian paradigm is not out of place here; the ‘perspectives’ may be taken to parallel the paradigms. A critical remark that paradigms, though incommensurable, are not for that matter incomparable, holds also for perspectives: no matter how different they are they can be mutually related, compared, and eventually complemented.)

5. Intersubjective Perspective

Where do we come to in the study of consciousness depends to a great extent on what we start with. If you start with *quale*, and ambition to find adequate forms of representation of it, your ‘perspective’ will be adjusted accordingly, in an approach that cannot be but closed within an internal subjective world; if on the other hand, you treat the conscious subject as open to intersubjective relations, the ‘perspective’ has to be chosen and accommodated appropriately. To choose the second instead of the first does not mean that *quale* has to be eliminated (which is anyhow impossible), but that it is to be placed in another context. “How it feels” ceases then to be a matter of solipsist conscious existence and becomes a matter of intersubjective exchange instead. What seems to be consciously most intimate discloses itself on the interpersonal level.

If one possible lesson from the above could be that there is no immediate path to the conscious “I”, as it is commonly assumed or taken for granted, another one could be that the authentic form in which the conscious self is realized is intersubjectivity (elements of which we have already discovered within the second-person approach). An adequate perspective in that case proves to be *intersubjective* rather than *intrasubjective* (as in the case of the first-person mode). An important point in this respect is brought by Varela and Shear: “(...) dealing with subjective phenomena is not the same as dealing with purely private experiences, as is often assumed. The subjective is intrinsically open to intersubjective validation (...)” (1999: 2).

That subjectivity is not solipsist and isomorphic but always immersed in the social world where our ‘self’ and other ‘selves’ interact, is formulated by Dan Zahavi in a straightforward manner:

“(...) subjectivity and intersubjectivity are in fact complementing and mutually interdependent notions. Thus, the introduction of intersubjectivity should by no means be taken to imply a refutation of the philosophy of subjectivity.” (1999: 166)

Indeed, intersubjectivity is to be taken as a medium in which subjectivity is realized, and phenomenology has a great deal to say about it¹¹.

“The subjectivity that is related to the world gains its full relation to itself, and to the world, only in relation to others, that is, in intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity exists and develops only in relation between world-related

subjects, and the world is brought to articulation only in the relation between subjects.” (Zahavi, 2005: 176-7).

Intersubjectivity by its nature is not examinable from any single perspective, what leads to the conclusion that an appropriate methodology should combine the available options, and to the suggestion that eventually a new notion of *interpersonal perspective* could be introduced to account for the intersubjective character of consciousness.

To the dilemma whether we are capable of dealing with multiple perspectives is responded above; now it can be only confirmed that conscious subjects are not specialized in one or the other approach, and also that we skillfully shift the perspectives all the time in our daily lives, but are obviously reluctant to admit it in our theories.

Every conscious self is mentally equipped to apply and practice different perspectives on own subjectivity. Even the irreducibility of subjectivity is no obstacle to the constant interplay of changing perspectives from one point of view that all conscious subjects permanently exercise. More than that, the way we go about own subjectivity is not confined to the ‘perspectives’ theorists impose on the conscious minds they investigate.

6. Consequences and Conclusions

One of the basic conclusions following from the above is that one should quit the naïve belief that any methodology in the science of consciousness is there to *replace* the (mysterious) object of its consideration. Expectations are particularly high on the ‘first-person’ approach to possibly faithfully mimic the qualitative conscious states, but it itself proves to be a complicated and difficult to accomplish mission. Because, I assume, the ‘perspectives’ are not designed to mirror but to describe and eventually explain, the theoretical aim can not be anything like faithful re-production of conscious states. Yet, expected faithfulness is anyhow impossible to achieve in the ‘picturing’ of consciousness as it is in the painter’s picturing of the visible world. In neither case is faithfulness (e.g. equivalent of ‘redness’) either possible or required for it could bring about nothing but duplication, which has no explanatory power.

Though no one denies the ‘privilege’ and authenticity of the first-person perspective we have to be aware of its limitations. The closeness is not necessarily revealing, and immediacy might prove impotent; it may just blind us and make us look for own experiences in the ‘external’ world, natural and human, with which we permanently interact. The intimacy of subjectivity might then disclose itself in the world of intersubjectivity. That in turn might initiate a shift from the privacy of qualitative states to a more communal (empathic, social) character of consciousness, not excluding also that of science. Accordingly, no matter what point of view one takes it has to be open also to other person’s methodologies.

To do so is not to disavow the irreducibility thesis, or even to weaken it, but simply not allow it 'have the last word'. For in spite of irreducibility (also incommensurability) versions of reports on conscious processes, containing descriptions and explanations as formulated in terms of 'perspectives', can be *communicated* beyond the demarcation line dividing the 'first' from the 'second' and also from the 'third' person methodology; and they can also be *compared*. *Irreducibility does not imply incomparability*. True (like in the duck-rabbit picture) one cannot be within two perspectives simultaneously, but one can switch from one to another, relate, compare and complement them, and even appreciate the differences.

It is true that everything we are conscious of is experienced from a particular (singular) *point of view*, but it is also true that this 'point' is not stable, fixed or unchanging, and is potent to naturally practice *different 'perspectives'*. In other words, without having to part from our bodies in order to get in possession of a 'second' or 'third' person perspective, we can rely on our embodied and embedded minds that are perfectly apt for flexible exchange of cognitive strategies that manifests itself in multiple possible perspectives on our subjective worlds.

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¹ In another context I have first time thematized this in my (1996) article.

² Unlike him I would say that introspection is possible but limited in its capacity. For the nice account of the role of introspection see Vermersch (1999).

³ Contrary to many authors that take them as synonymous (e.g. Crane, 2001, Ch. 2).

⁴ Contrary to, for instance, 'black box' model of mind the term 'embodiment' is used to denote biological and sensorimotor constellation as an instrument of cognitive interaction with the world.

⁵ 'Embedded' cognition sees the crucial role of environment or „rich real-world surroundings“ (Clark, 1998) in formation of cognitive processes. It is nowadays also extended to all other aspects of mind.

⁶ Cognitive subjects are seen as agents that actively interact with surroundings and 'other minds'.

⁷ Authors of the concept (Clark and Chalmers, ..) advocate „active externalism“ based on the idea that objects in the environment play decisive role in cognitive processes, and are thus put on equal footing as the internal processes.

⁸ See for instance Thompson (1999).

⁹ The latter is related to the work of V. Gallese, G. Rizzolatti, M. Arbib, A. Goldman and others on the so called 'mirror neurons'.

¹⁰ In many cases we have problems in attributing a 'color' to the chromatic sensation; in that case it seems that we do not know what we are conscious of as long as we do not find the appropriate verbal label.

¹¹ See for instance Zahavi (2005; particularly Ch. 6).