

PART III

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 9

CONTENT AND CONSCIOUSNESS REVISITED

9.1 Introduction

This closing segment of the study rounds off our work on Dennett. In this concluding chapter, we examine the methodological basis that informs the formulation of Dennett's theory. Analysis of Dennett's unrelenting third person approach to the study of mind takes up a major part of the investigation which is then followed by evaluation of Dennett's heterophenomenological method. Subsequently, we focus our attention on Dennett's claim to have explained consciousness. The relation between content and consciousness is then analyzed alongside with issues pertaining to syntax and semantics. If readers have not been sufficiently persuaded with earlier analyses in Part I and II, it is hoped that considerations of these foundational issues here help reinforce and tie-up earlier discussions and perhaps, in a way, make up for the insufficiency of earlier analyses.

9.2 First Person Vs Third Person Methodology

As seen in the third chapter, the line-up (in importance) of Dennett's stances may not necessarily hold. This part of the thesis develops further this position in the

context of first and third person, followed by an excursion into the heart of Dennett's approach to mind, heterophenomenology. Henceforth, let's briefly review some of Dennett's claims. "I begin, then with a tactical choice. I declare my starting point to be the objective, materialistic, third-person world of the physical sciences" (IS 5; see also p.7; Dennett 1988b: 495). "[F]rom the outset I worked from the 'third person point of view' of science, and took my task to be building – or rather sketching the outlines of – a physical structure that could be seen to accomplish the puzzling legerdemain of the mind" (BC 356; see also pp.339, 357), "using the *intersubjectively verifiable* methods of physical science" (CE 70) that ensures objectivity (see also SHCE 161, Dennett 2002c: 1) for "all science is constructed from that perspective" (CE 71; see also p.72).

Dennett also claims in relation to the third person that only facts garnered from the outside count as data (CE 70). In fact, "we can adopt a resolutely third-personal perspective, viewing the subjects from the outside *only*, as it were....If we are scrupulous about these matters, then whatever it is that we are studying, and however well or ill we are studying it we will be studying it *empirically*" (SHCE 160, emphasis added; see also p.174). Naturally then, there cannot be a first person science (RWE 230, FFP), as first person rendition is invariably "a treacherous incubator of error" (CE 70), a futile dead end, as "a discipline with no methods, no data, no results, no future, no promise. It will remain a fantasy" (FFP 8). Hence, "[a]s usual, the third-person point of view makes progress, while the

first-person point of view peters out into a systematically mysterious question about imagined intrinsic properties" (IS 107).

The power of science to generate "testable hypothesis, reliable *formalizations*, and *quantifiable* results" (DDI 353, emphasis added) is what distinguishes it from the subjectivity of the first person, as shown by the following allegory from zoology (aiming to underline further the accuracy and neutrality of science). "You don't do serious zoology by just strolling through the zoo, noting this and that, and marveling at the curiosities. Serious zoology demands *precision*, which depends on having *agreed-upon* methods of description and analysis, so that other zoologists can be sure they understand what you're saying. Serious phenomenology is in ever greater need of a clear *neutral* method of description, because, it seems, no two people use the words the same way, and everybody's an expert" (CE 66, emphasis added). Objectivity of the third person entails properties "that can be detected and confirmed in replicable experiments" (RWECE 231).¹ Evidently, "[w]hat inspires faith in arithmetic is the fact that hundreds of scribblers, working independently on the same problem, will all arrive at the same answer.... This unrivalled objectivity is also found in geometry and the other branches of mathematics, which since antiquity have been the very model of certain knowledge set against the world of flux and controversy" (Dennett 1999a:

¹ Related somewhat, Dennett observes, "in crashing obviousness lies objectivity" (SHCE 165; CE 80).

99). Dennett here clearly sees mathematics as the model of objectivity science ought strive for.²

We observe, in the foregoing, first and third person are in large measure being treated as some kind of incompatible dichotomy. This is made clear by Dennett's following assertion, besides the aforesaid, that third person "provides a theory-neutral, objective catalogue of what happens – the phenomena to be explained. It does assume that all these phenomena can be observed, directly or indirectly, by anyone who wants to observe them and has the right equipment.... What alternative view is there? There is only one that I can see: the view that these are *subjective* phenomena beyond the reach of any heterophenomenology" (DC 211, emphasis added).³ As Searle summarizes: "[t]he peculiarity of Daniel Dennett's book can now be stated: he denies the existence of the data.... He thinks there are no such things as qualia, subjective experiences, first-person phenomena, or any of the rest of it" (Searle 1997: 99). Hence, more than anything else, it is perhaps

²It is "a standard of truth to be aspired by all truth-seekers, a standard that has not only never been seriously challenged, but that has been tacitly accepted – indeed heavily relied upon, even in matters of life and death – by the most vigorous opponents of science. [Whilst]... science almost never looks as uncontroversial, as cut-and-dried, as arithmetic" (Dennett 1999a: 99). "Ideally science strives for a description of the universe that is as thorough and comprehensive as possible, composed in an orderly mathematical idiom" (Taylor and Dennett 2002: 2).

³Lets see what Dennett takes subjectivity to be concerned with and his corresponding position thereof. "Sellars went so far as to claim that all of the physical sciences would have to be revolutionized to make room for occurent pink and its kin. Few philosophers went along with him on this radical view... Thomas Nagel have supposed that even revolutionized science would be unable to deal with such properties: 'The *subjective* features of conscious mental processes – as opposed to their physical causes and effects – cannot be captured by the purified form of thought suitable for dealing with the physical world that underlies the appearances'.... Philosophers have adopted various names for the things in the beholder that have been supposed to provide a safe home for the colors and the rest of the properties that have been banished from the 'external' world by the triumphs of physics: 'raw feel,' 'sensa,' 'phenomenal qualities,' 'intrinsic properties of conscious experiences,' 'the qualitative content of mental states,' and, of course, 'qualia' the term I will use.... In the previous chapter I seemed to be denying that there are any such properties,

the recourse to this estrangement that mainly contributes to his hostility over intentionality and phenomenology. In what follows, it is argued that this misguided conception - contributing to Dennett's resolute third person absolutism, forming thereby the *raison detre* of much of his thoughts and approaches - is indefensible (nor warranted). Insofar as this is successful in instigating doubts, it would have, thereby, raised pertinent issues that put Dennett's key theoretical conviction in doubtful lights.

Analysis below is, however, built around a point that Dahlbom alludes to in passing.

The purportedly interesting difference between a third- and first-person view of something is this difference between hard work and having something for free, between hard-won interpretation and easy acquaintance. Since Dennett does not believe that there is anything in the latter category, he should really stop describing himself as taking a third-person view of things. My view of the world is always my view, and no one's else, and the distinction between a first- and a third-person account that works so well in everyday life should not be pressed into philosophical service (Dahlbom 1993a: 6).⁴

and for once what seems so is so. I am denying that there are any such properties" (CE 372, emphasis added).

⁴ There is nothing novel in this claim of interdependence between viewpoints (see Guzeldere 1997, Mc Ginn 1983, Vallicela 1991: 88, Nagel 1979: 206, Velmans 2000: 169-190, Baker 2000: 76-87, Thompson *et al.* 1999: 161). Searle, for instance, asserts that "[w]e need to distinguish the epistemic sense of the distinction between the first- and the third-person point of view, (i.e., between the subjective and the objective) from the ontological sense. Some statements can be known to be true or false independently of any prejudices or attitudes on the part of observers. They are objective in the epistemic sense. For example, if I say, 'Van Gogh died in Auvers-sur-Oise, France,' that statement is epistemically objective. Its truth has nothing to do with anyone's personal prejudices or preferences. But if I say, for example, 'Van Gogh was a better painter than Renoir,' that statement is epistemically subjective. Its truth or falsity is a matter at least in part of the attitudes and preferences of observers. In addition to this sense of the objective-subjective distinction, there is an ontological sense. Some entities, mountains for example, have an existence which is objective in the sense that it does not depend on any subject. Others, pain for example, are subjective... They have a first-person or subjective ontology. Now here is the point. Science does indeed aim at epistemic objectivity. The aim is to get a set of truths that are free of our special preferences and prejudices. But epistemic objectivity of method does not require ontological objectivity of subject matter..... One part of the world consists of ontologically subjective phenomena. If we have a definition of science that forbids us from investigating that

So, first person accounts may be “a treacherous of error” (CE 70), and folk psychology⁵ is the embodiment of conceptual infelicities and incoherencies (BS xix), which “is itself something of a mess, at least compared with the clearly defined mathematical field of recursive function theory” (BS xvii; FFP 5). They may not even be “well-behaved” or theoretical states that could even be defined (BS xx). However, despite these supposed inadequacies (or shortcomings), they can hardly be the ground for eschewing phenomena occasioned by means of the first person (for instance, in his quinning of qualia and his corresponding degradation of intentionality besides his contention that the subjective world of heterophenomenology portrays only fictional world of subject) whilst exalting third person as *the* epitome of “objectivity and [the] precision of good science” (DDI 495n).

As Dennett himself points out in the context of intentionality, “[i]ntentional theory is vacuous as psychology because it presupposes and does not explain rationality or intelligence” (BS 15). Arguably, the same could be said of third person viewpoints.⁶ Third person (or Dennett’s heterophenomenology)⁷ is

part of the world, it is the definition that has to be changed and not the world” (Searle 1997: 113-114; see also Marbach 1994: 255, 262).

⁵Which according to Dennett, “is the perspective that invokes the family of ‘mentalistic’ concepts, such as belief, desire, knowledge, fear, pain, expectation, intention, understanding, dreaming, imagination, self-consciousness, and so on” (IS 7).

⁶This problem of circularity also appears in other guises, for example in the study of the phenomena of consciousness: “George Miller thinks that perhaps the unique difficulty involved in the understanding of consciousness stems from the fact that consciousness is both the phenomenon we try to investigate and the very tool we need to use to pursue this investigation. ‘Turning a tool on itself,’ he says, ‘may be as futile as trying to soar off the ground by a tug at one’s bootstraps.’” He then continues: “[p]erhaps we become confused because whenever we are thinking about consciousness, we are surrounded by it, and can only imagine what consciousness is not. The fish, someone has said, will be the last to discover water” (Miller 1962: 25; cf. Guzeldere 1997: 24). Third person characterizations also invariably invoke mental properties, if this is so, then

vacuous as the standpoint to investigate mental phenomena precisely because it presupposes and does not explain mental items it is to examine.⁸ To the extent that manifestation of the first person in third person investigations is taken for granted, disparagement of the first person would in consequent imply or necessitate the overthrowing of the third person itself (of which more later). Given this, third person cannot be the foundation for studying mind, analogous to Dennett's very own contention that "intentionality can be no foundation for psychology" (BS 15), for if the "psychology's task is to account for the intelligence or rationality of men and animals, it cannot fulfill its tasks if anywhere along the line it presupposes intelligence and rationality" (BS 58). So, contra Dennett, if somewhere along the line, mentality (and intentionality) is presupposed in the articulation of the third person, it cannot thereby be the *foundation* to anchor or study mental phenomena.⁹

employing third person to study the mind would be circular the way it is with consciousness for not unlike the later, it is "both the phenomenon we try to investigate and the very tool we need to use to pursue this investigation."

⁷ Heterophenomenology is Dennett's "third person approach to subjectivity" (RWE 232), or the "maximally inclusive science of consciousness" (FFP 5; RWE 231, Dennett 1997f: 118). "The objective facts about someone's subjectivity are precisely the subject matter of what I call heterophenomenology – phenomenology from the third person point of view" (Dennett 1993g: 196). In other words, it is Dennett's science of subjectivity. "How does one take subjectivity seriously from a third-person perspective? By taking the reports of subjects seriously as reports of their subjective experience. This practise does not limit us to the study of human subjectivity; as numerous authors have noted, non-verbal animals can be put into circumstances in which some of their behavior can be interpreted" (RWE 230).

⁸ Just as Dennett notes elsewhere, "saying one thinks in thoughts is really no improvement. It just postpones the question, for a thought is just whatever happens when we think" (CE 298).
⁹ For somewhat similar treatment, see especially Nagel (1974, 1986). So, for instance, Foss asserts that "[t]he strong intuition that the facts concerning the subjectivity of consciousness are simply beyond the grasp of objective science is the highest barrier to an intuitively convincing materialism in the philosophy of mind. We are steeped in a tradition which has it that there is, to state it from the first-person point of view, an epistemic difference in principle between my introspectible experience, which only I can apprehend and which form the domain of the natural sciences. This contrast is sometimes cast as that between the subjective stuff of first person introspectible consciousness and the objective stuff of the natural sciences... Thomas Nagel is perhaps the spokesman for this view..." (Foss 1993: 725). Foss has also, in the same passage, discussed in passing other authors with similar leaning. However, citing this passage does not

Following this, if failure of intentional theories *per se* does not invalidate psychology, we should not therefore expect failure in third person account of mentality (as in the case of heterophenomenology) to discredit mental items! If this is not unreasonable assessment, then mere imperfections in first person allusions ought not to jettison the existence of first person phenomena (see also Levine 1994: 120). For perfection is at best a standard we aspire to, a goal we approximate but never quite attain. If evolution thrives precisely because it takes advantage of or capitalizes on the mistakes and errors in experimenting (and tinkering processes) of natural selection in adapting to surrounding challenges, there is no reason to expect imperfections of first person thereupon to warrant repudiation. For, if we are the outcome of evolution, imperfection is only expected. As Dennett himself acquiesces, even science is ceaselessly striving to perfect itself.

Is the line straight? How straight is it? In response to these questions, we develop ever finer tests, and then tests of the accuracy of those tests, and so forth, bootstrapping our way to ever greater accuracy and objectivity. Scientists are just as vulnerable to wishful thinking, just as likely to be tempted by base motives, just as venal and gullible and forgetful as the rest of humankind. Scientists don't consider themselves to be saints.... Scientists take themselves to be just as weak and fallible as anybody else, but recognizing those very sources of error in themselves and in the groups to which they belong, they have devised elaborate systems to tie their own hands, forcibly preventing their frailties and prejudices from infecting their results. It is not just the implements, the physical tools of the trade, that are designed to be resistant to human error. The organization of methods is also under severe selection pressure for improved reliability and objectivity..... The methods of science aren't foolproof, but they are indefinitely perfectible. Just as important: there is a tradition of criticism that enforces improvement whenever and wherever flaws are discovered. The methods of science, like everything else under the sun, are themselves objects of scientific scrutiny, as method becomes methodology, the analysis of methods... The irony is that these fruits of scientific reflection, showing us the ineliminable smudges of imperfection, are used by those who are suspicious of science as their grounds for denying it a privileged status in the truth-seeking department (Dennett 1999a: 98, 100).

imply that the author agrees completely with the view that objectivity and science could have no role to play in the investigation of mental phenomena.

Analysis above could be further extended with the aid of some thought experiments. Before that, it could be illuminating to recast the issue slightly in the *intuitive* context by which Dennett sees consciousness.

Our ordinary concept of consciousness seems to be anchored to two separable sets of considerations that can be captured roughly by the phrases 'from the inside' and 'from the outside.' From the inside, our own consciousness seems obvious and pervasive: we know that much goes on around us and even inside our own bodies of which we are entirely unaware or unconscious, but nothing could be more intimately known to us than those things of which we are, individually, conscious....When one considers these others (other folk and other creatures), one considers them *perforce* from the outside....The obvious presumption is that the various outside indicators are more or less reliable signs or symptoms of the presence of that whatever it is each conscious subject knows from the inside (Dennett 1987d: 161).

With this interpolation, the issue could be more clearly restated as the question: is any 'outside' consciousness possible without 'inside' consciousness? Or more specifically, what could be of 'outside' consciousness (the presence of which crucial if any third person perspectives is to be possible at all) if there is no 'inside' consciousness.¹⁰ This hopefully throws lights on the question of relation underlying subjectivity and objectivity.

More specifically, let's examine exactly what that underwrites the distinction between the first and third person vantage point. Is it reducible (merely) to the question of perspective (or orientation)? Is this alleged contrast sufficiently distinctive to warrant characterizing them into antagonistic viewpoints, so much so that third person is single out as *the* approach to the investigation of mind, with corresponding contemptuous annulment of its antithetical counterpart. It is plain

¹⁰ Of course, this way of putting things could only be metaphorical. Consciousness is likely not what it is without one or the other.

that water takes different forms depending on conditions. Nothing could be more different, yet we know they are identical. Could the same be said of the different viewpoints we are considering? Or is the difference just another instance of confusion or misconception, ala the “legendary blind men examining different parts of the elephant” (CE 68)?

Lets make use of Dennett’s own illustration, prosthetic vision, with some minor alterations, to better underscore the point.

Prosthetic devices have been designed to provide ‘vision’ to the blind and some of them raise just the right issues. Almost twenty years ago, Paul-y-Rita... developed several devices that involved small, ultralow-resolution video cameras that could be mounted on eyeglass frames. The low-resolution signal from these cameras, a 16-by-16 or 20-by-20 array of ‘black and white’ pixels, was spread over the back or belly of the subject in a grid of either electrical or mechanically vibrating tinglers called tactors. After only a few hours of training, blind subjects wearing this device could learn to interpret the patterns of tingles on their skin, much as you can interpret letters traced on your skin by someone’s finger. The resolution is low, but even so, subjects could learn to read signs, and identify objects and even people’s faces... The result was certainly prosthetically produced conscious perceptual experience.... After a brief training period, their awareness of the tingles on their skin dropped out; the pad of pixels became transparent, one might say, and the subject’s point of view shifted to the point of view of the camera, mounted to the side of their heads. A striking demonstration of the robustness of the shift in point of view was the behavior of an experienced subject whose camera had a zoom-lens with a control button. The array of tinglers was on his back, and the camera was mounted on the side of his head. When the experimenter without warning touched the zoom button, causing the image on the subject’s back to expand or ‘loom’ suddenly, the subject instinctively lurched backward, raising his arms to protect his head (CE 339-341).

Assume that X, who has congenital blindness is the subject of our thought experiment. Apart from her blindness, other of her perceptual modalities function normally.¹¹ Based on her taste buds, X could sense the following differences: salty, sweet, bitter, sour and spicy.¹² Taste, of course, cannot be discussed

¹¹ Some readers find this part not easy to follow. But essentially the purpose here is to establish the significance of subjectivity in the formulation of the objective.

¹² See CE (46). Those are the four classical quality of taste. Besides this, they are others that have been proposed. For instance, the proposed categories of metallic, astringent and umami (Lawless 2001: 616).

separately from the olfactory sensations. As Dennett observes, “for the most part, we taste with our noses” (CE 46). X’s olfactory sensitivity is as acute and remarkable as any “in the absolute number of different types of stimuli it can detect, its sensitivity, and its discriminatory ability” (Cowart and Rawson 2001: 568). X’s hearing is important in characterizing and describing her acoustic environment (e.g., for object identifications and sound localization, speech perception and the directing of visual attention). The cutaneous perceptions, commonly regarded as an “inferior form of vision, providing information about objects in space in a poor imitation of visual ability” (Lederman and Pawluk 1993: cf. Weisenberger 2001: 536), convey to X sensations of pressure, temperature, pain and vibration and kinesthetic perception in what is known as the active touch.¹³

All these modalities of perception are the archetype of subjectivity. Consider the following evocative portrayal of oral irritancy: “the fizzy tingle from carbon dioxide in soda, the burn from hot peppers, pungency from black pepper and from spices such as ginger and cumin, the nasal pungency of mustard and horseradish, the bite from raw onions and garlic, not to mention their lachrymatory effects” (Lawless 2001: 626). Also, androstenone, for instance, is described by humans

¹³ “In everyday life, the sense of touch is routinely used to identify, or at least extract the material properties of objects and surfaces. The information available from tactile and thermal stimulation allows judgements of weight, stiffness, elasticity, material (e.g., metal, plastic, etc.), and roughness. This information is often rendered imperfectly by other sensory systems, such as vision, and thus touch supplements visual information about size, shape, color, etc. in object identification. Equally important is the role of tactile feedback in the manipulation of objects, where touch and thermal information permit fine-tuning of the motor response in precision grasping and movement” (Weisenberger 2001: 548).

who can smell it as “urinous, sweaty, musky, or sandalwood-like” (Coward and Rawson 2001: 587). Certainly, the infinite nuances of tactility are also no less colorful and refine. These are all subjective, and hence first person, because there is no way science could detect them or for that matter subject them for impersonal investigations.

That said, however, it is important to reckon with the way these sensations contribute to objectivity. Insofar as we rely on them to *reveal* properties about external objects in identification and categorization of the external world - despite its inadequacy (its susceptibility to errors and so on) – both the subjective and objective standpoints appear to be more interwoven than Dennett recognizes. Consider sweetness. Crudely, if Y signifies sweetness, and in some simple taste identification experiments, X, under most circumstances, is able to identify as Y, properties that result in sweetness (found in sugar and other artificial sweeteners such as saccharin, aspartame, and protein molecules such as Monellin and Thaumatin (Lawless 2001: 610)), then the subject has detected some objective properties (i.e., elements that contribute to sweetness),¹⁴ though the experience itself remains subjective.¹⁵

¹⁴This crude objectivity is a mirror (or rough approximation) of the more sophisticated (and hence more precise) analysis of the properties that contribute to sweetness by means of their molecular structure in science. True, there is nothing in the object itself that tastes (or feel/smell) this or that way. By themselves, sea water is not salty and neither is chili spicy. The sensations we have only reflect the peculiarities or idiosyncrasy of our physical make-ups. However, insofar as it conveys an orderly *pattern* or *regularities* that is there to be discerned, there is in its presence some measure of objectivity (see BC 95-120, IS 25-29, 34, 37, 39-40). For, even in Dennett's heterophenomenology, which is certainly *the* objective method to investigate subjectivity, its aim “is to explain, in the end, every *pattern* discoverable in the heterophenomenological worlds of subjects” (FFP 7-8, emphasis added). See also Chapter 4, pp. 108-109 and p. 315 of this Chapter.

¹⁵ Consider a close analogy: temperature. Our ability to discern warmth and cold is certainly a fine instance of first person subjectivity. Even without thermometer, we could discern, albeit crudely -

Consider music! Technically, similar musical scores could be produced by independent professional musicians listening to the same piece of music. Surely, the indescribability of musical experience is without question,¹⁶ however, musicians are still able to communicate and understand each other through musical theories. Hence, there exists independent and neutral means in which musical sounds are characterized. This could be taken to convey strong connotation of impersonal objectivity because any trained musicians playing similar musical score are, technically speaking, able to produce identical music, *ceteris paribus*. This objectivity¹⁷ is made possible because of our ability to *conceptualize* experiences, representing, as seen above, sweetness (or 'Y') as well as musical notations (representing musical tones). Hence, these sensations could not, without injustice, be estranged completely from third person objectivity, given the role they play in its realization.

Sight has not been discussed. So, let's concentrate on vision in the context of X. Surely, X who is congenitally blind has no vision, as indeed, "picture galleries for the blind are a waste of resources" (CE 52). We have described the inner world of X upon her use of the prosthetic device in the foregoing. However, according to Dennett, "prosthetic human vision is, obviously, one sort of seeing on the same

with the aid of our subjective sensitivity to the nuances of heat - the very *pattern* of temperature generated by the more objective and precise thermometer. But the mere fact that meaningful and objective patterns (ala the very pattern generated by thermostat, though less perfectly) could be generated out of subjective nuances suggests that absolute severance of the subjective from the objective is likely fallacious!

¹⁶ There is, for instance, no way I could describe the distinction between Stravinsky's and Beethoven's music to someone having no pre-acquaintance whatsoever with the music.

¹⁷ Objective in the sense that different subjects, undergoing the same 'exercise' or experiment are able to independently verify the result.

footing as the others" (IS 107; BC 159). So, on Dennett's construal, X sees. If X sees or has vision with the aid of prosthetic devices, then vision constituting our major and most important access to the world is somewhat akin to the perception accorded by cutaneous sensibility. That is, even though vision is the crux of our perceptual knowledge (CE 55-56) – as far as science goes – it is only one sense modality amongst the many, and hence not unlike the other sensory modalities, is also necessarily subjective.¹⁸

Hence, insofar as there is no principle difference between vision and other modalities, perceptions afforded by sight, not unlike that of the other senses described in the foregoing, are subjective. If there is no way one could describe the taste of durian or the music of Bach, short of one actually having a first hand experience of them, there is also no way we could describe the perception of an apple to someone who does not already have the experience.¹⁹ But if vision is the chief modality that makes up most of our third person viewpoints, whence is its objectivity derived?

¹⁸ For these modalities work in concert with one another to reveal information about different features or properties of an object to present a more comprehensive picture to further enhance subject's apprehension of it. So, for instance, the tactile perceptual mechanisms convey the complexities of "surface texture, compliance and thermal conductivity" (Weisenberger 2001: 536) better and more precise than any other modalities. Whilst taste and olfactory combined revealing chemical make-up of objects that is largely oblivious to the rest of the perceptual modalities. Of course, all this may be obvious and banal, but the detour by way of prosthetic vision hopefully draws out more forcefully the point I wish to make and thus make the argument more cogent.

¹⁹ For instance, Dennett says "if someone really wanted to know what I meant by the 'this' and 'that' in my protocol, I might find it more convenient to convey what I meant by drawing a picture for him, but if I did this, I would not be drawing a replica of what I was aware of, nor could my drawing, in virtue of being a drawing, stand in relation of any 'higher fidelity' to the mental state I would be trying to communicate" (AP 106; see also CE 53).

As was briefly discussed (in the context of other modalities earlier), what is actually represented is the conceptualization of the experience, but not experience *per se*.²⁰ As Dennett observes, “[o]ne can no more paint a realistic picture of visual phenomenology than of justice or melody or happiness” (CE 55). So, third person science, and hence its objectivity, clearly seems to be likewise constructed.

I believe that the first step in the setting of a ‘real external world’ is the formation of the concept of bodily objects and of bodily objects of various kinds. Out of the multitude of our sense experiences we take, mentally and arbitrarily, certain repeatedly occurring complexes of sense impressions (partly in conjunction with sense impressions which are interpreted as signs for sense experiences of others), and we correlate to them a concept – the concept of the bodily object. Considered logically this concept is not identical with the totality of sense impressions referred to: but it is a free creation of the human mind. On the other hand, this concept owes its meaning and its justifications exclusively to the totality of the sense impressions which we associate with it. The second step is to be found in the fact that, in our thinking (which determines our expectation), we attribute to this concept of the bodily object a significance, which is to a high degree independent of the sense impressions which originally give rise to it. This is what we mean when we attribute to the bodily object ‘a real existence.’ The justification of such a setting rests exclusively on the fact that, by means of such concepts and mental relations between them, we are able to orient ourselves in the labyrinth of sense impressions. These notions and relations, although free mental creations, appear to us stronger and more unalterable than the individual sense of experience itself. ...On the other hand, these concepts and relations, and indeed the postulation of real objects and, generally speaking, of the existence of ‘the real world,’ have justification only in so far as they are connected with sense impressions between which form a mental connection (Einstein 1954b: 291).

The very fact that the totality of our sense experiences is such that by means of thinking (operations with concepts, and the creation and use of definite functional relations between them, and the coordination of sense experience to these concepts) it can be put in order, this fact is one which leaves us in awe, but which we shall never understand. One may say ‘the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility’ (Einstein 1954b: 292).

Hence, we see these dual facets of the subjective and objective are jointly present in the modality of vision. It is not clear what becomes of objectivity if subjectivity

²⁰ Consider, for instance, number. By way of rigorous mathematical formulations, it has become *sine qua non* to science and is *absolutely indispensable* to the proclaimed precision and objectivity (hence independent verifiability) witnessed in science. However, number does not by itself appear in our visual field. We do not see number as such but it is its abstract rendition we perceive (there is controversy in the philosophy of mathematics as to what number is, but this question of ontology is not the concern here). Dennett for one concedes that number, like proposition is an *abstract* object (RLM 284). So, what is relayed is the abstract representation or rendition in conceptual terms of our perceptual experiences. The same applies to many of the properties we attribute to physical objects manipulated in science. In our visual experiences, one does not actually see temperature or weight, or charge, or momentum, volume, among other things. They

is usurped, for they seem inseparable (or mutually dependent). However, if Dennett argues it is *the* brain processes that ultimately account for the robustness of science without needing to invoke intentionality and other mental properties (parallel his treatment of the subjectivity of the heterophenomenology world as fictional), then Dennett ought to give up his recourse to the third person as the *raison d'être* of his method, for third person manner of describing things necessarily invoke the mental.

If the foregoing assessment is not far off the mark, objectivity in essence is subjectivity made precise, or rigorous²¹ (see also Marbach 1994: 255, 262). Should this be the case, then Dennett's view is problematic both for its one-sided exaltation of the third person and its ill-motivated aim of relinquishing the subjective from the third person.²² It is self-defeating the way it is nonsensical to

are essentially generalization (or outgrowth) borne of conceptualization. In other words, to capture these properties, we have no choice but to resort to this maneuver to pin them down.

²¹ True to the spirit of evolution, precision (and hence its corollary – objectivity) ought not be seen as absolute and intrinsically valuable, the way Dennett seems to deem the third person vantage point as absolute. It is surely not necessary for survival. The frog's blind striking at dummy target is a case in point. Similarly, our senses, considered by themselves, without the accompanying higher cognitive functions are excruciatingly imprecise and subjective. However, as far as evolution is concerned, if they enable relevant species to negotiate the environment successfully – thriving by passing on its genes – subjectivity and impreciseness is neither a vice nor for that matter disadvantage. For subjectivity and objectivity exist in array of plausible coalescence of both within one single continuum, with its corresponding hybrid finding niches they best thrive in. So, some creatures thrive in niches suited for great degree of imprecision or subjectivity (too much precision could be too costly to build and in any case unnecessary), whilst others (like us) aspiring for greater – and different kind of – mastery of nature aim for more comparative precision and objectivity. But if objectivity and subjectivity exist in continuum, then not unlike the interrelation of heaviness and lightness (or other such antipodal notions), they are mutually dependent (inter-defining in other words). Just as heaviness is unintelligible without its analogue, lightness, what is objectivity without the subjective?

²² Somewhat paradoxically, however, Dennett himself has curiously noted in passing that “[g]ood, objective science made out of subjective raw materials – the essence of cognitive science” (Dennett 1993b: 51). But this would go against what he has been proposing all along, especially given his portrayal of heterophenomenology.

claim that one could dance without having one's foot on the floor.²³ Thompson's analysis of the issue is especially perceptive.

Although Dennett portrays himself as the champion of science and the 'third-person' perspective, his approach actually impoverishes the scientific project because he takes away its very subject-matter, thus forcing science into the essentially self-defeating predicament of having to explain away or expunge perceptual experience. Where, then, does this leave the issue of the status of the qualitative aspects of perceptual experience... [Dennett infers that] although there seems to be quality, there is really no such thing: there is only judgement. This further inference is mistaken. Quality and content cannot be separated, because there can be no such thing in perception as contentless quality and qualityless content. Perception is always intentional... and it is always qualitative – it always presents its objects in a qualitative manner. The two cannot be separated, or can the one be reduced to the other.... (Thompson 1995: 296; see also Voorhess: 57-58).

Hence, the contrast between the objective and subjective, whilst serving well to facilitate and systematize discussion, the distinction is in fact a superficial one. In other words, Dennett's concerted attempts to dispose of the subjective misfire, because they threaten to undercut Dennett's very commitment for the third person.²⁴

9.3 Heterophenomenology

In this part of the study, let's scrutinize more closely Dennett's realization of the third person vantage point by means of heterophenomenology. To Dennett,

²³ Hence, we should be wary of Dennett's claim "that the objects of heterophenomenology are theorist's fictions" (CE 97), and that "[t]he heterophenomenology exists – just as uncontroversially as novels and other fictions exist. People undoubtedly believe they have *mental images, pains, perceptual [and sensory] experiences, and all the rest*, and these facts – the facts about what people believe and report when they express their beliefs – are phenomena any scientific theory of the mind must account for. We organize our data regarding these phenomena into *theorist's fictions, 'intentional objects'* in heterophenomenological worlds. Then the question of whether items thus portrayed exist as real objects, events, and states in the brain... is an empirical matter to investigate. If suitable real candidates are uncovered, we can identify them as the long-sought referents of the subject's terms; if not, we will have to explain why it seems to subjects that these items exist" (CE 98, emphasis added).

heterophenomenology is *the* empirical method of studying consciousness. But there is nothing novel or new about it, because it is merely the application of the standard scientific repertoire to the study of mental phenomena (see SHCE, CE 70-72, DC 211, FFP 3, 11; Dennett 1993e: 153, 1993d: 890). To recapitulate, heterophenomenology as “a way of interpreting behavior” (CE 95) is in fact “a reasoned, objective extrapolation from *patterns discernible in the behavior* of subjects, including especially their text-producing or communicative *behavior*, and as such it is about precisely the higher-level dispositions, both cognitive and emotional, that convince us that our fellow human beings are conscious” (RWECE 231, emphasis added). Basically, this is the crux of Dennett’s approach to the study of mind and consciousness.

Heterophenomenology clearly serves as the key to Dennett’s persistent and more systematic program to quine qualia, to banish qualia from the phenomenological garden we are supposedly ensnared (which we examined in Chapter 7).

Significantly, Dennett is suggesting here that heterophenomenology is the only respectable method to study mental phenomena (see, for instance, GR 566n87, FFP 3, 9, 11),²⁵ hence, it naturally follows that phenomena not susceptible to heterophenomenological scrutiny or, for that matter, failed to be verified nor confirmed by the method would not exist (of which more later).²⁶

²⁴ Dennett does not seem to have provided cogent response to Seager’s claim that his account involves vicious circularity (Seager 2000: 95-124, see also Carr 1998: 335, 338; Thompson 2000: 208), that it presupposes what it is supposed to explain (see Dennett 2000a: 353-354).

²⁵ As in fact he challenges Chalmers, for instance, to “name a single experiment (in good repute) which in any way violates or transcends the heterophenomenological method” (FFP 11).

²⁶ Dennett’s commitment here is clear, for instance, in a passage, it is claimed that “[a]s heterophenomenologists, our task is to take this text, interpret it, and then relate the objects of the

In dubbing his method heterophenomenology or the “third-person approach to consciousness” (RWECE 230), Dennett persistently emphasizes and reiterates the neutrality (and hence objectivity) of his approach (Dennett CE 71-72, 83, 85, 95, 98; FFP 2, 4, 6-7, 10; Dennett 2002f: 2). Hence, let's take this as the starting point of analysis. As pointed out earlier (in the beginning section), neutrality or agnosticism (FFP 3, 9) is a vital property associated with the third person approach from which emerges objectivity (in observations and analyses). But let's examine further how far is this neutrality thesis (in relation to Dennett's heterophenomenology) - which is the important supporting claim of Dennett's undertaking here - vindicated. Arguably, if this is found wanting, then the neutrality claim would lose the set of tooth (or the hegemony and authority) it is claimed to have because it is itself not strictly observed in Dennett's own theoretical construction.

Prima facie, the neutrality of the method is compromised because Dennett's method appears to leave out those that do not have verbal capacities for communication²⁷ (the mute, babies and children, and also the mentally retarded).

resulting heterophenomenological world of Dennett to the events going on in Dennett's brain at the time” (CE 407). Also, more recently, replying to Goldman's query, “I have pointed out that they trust their S's introspective reports to be fine accounts of how it seems to them – with regard to every phenomenon in all modalities.... They ‘trust’ their S's only after they've discovered, independently, that their statements, interpreted as assertions about objective, third-person-accessible processes going on in their brains, are reliable. In other words, they only ‘rely on’ S's statements when they have confirmed that they can be usefully interpreted as ordinary reliable reports of objective properties” (FFP 9).

²⁷ Dennett in discussing a drug used in surgery that nevertheless leaves the patients conscious has the following to say. “The patient...under the knife, and made not the slightest frown, twitch or moan, but when the effects of the curare wore off, complained bitterly of having been completely conscious and in excruciating pain, feeling every scalpel stroke but simply paralyzed and unable to

Certainly, we want to include many animals we regard conscious and hence possessing some sort of phenomenology. But due to their lack of verbal capacities, at least not the kind humans could apprehend, their phenomenology (if there is any) is beyond heterophenomenology. Hence, the method would not do justice to this class of beings lacking proper communication abilities – the capability to discourse in language understood by the experimenter. One then risks committing anthropocentric bias, for her investigations primarily concern beings she communicates with (lets denote this H_1).

However, Dennett does acknowledge that heterophenomenology without text is possible, as in the case of the study of animals (CE 446-447, RWE 230, FFP 3).²⁸ To compensate for the muteness of these creatures (at least in the eyes of humans), Dennett suggests we use our *imagination*s to imagine what it is like to be a bat or other languageless creatures, based on their structural and physiological make up (CE 441-447).²⁹ Lets hereby label this (H_2). Even setting aside the question as to the efficacy of this exercise, by far this only serves to

convey their distress" (BS 209; see also KM 12). And as Dennett himself realizes, "although such verbal report is the canonical mark of conscious apprehension, it is not without problems, especially when we try to generalize from it, and deal with the obvious consideration that such verbal 'report' is generally held to be neither sufficient nor necessary (the subject can remain silent while conscious) for passage through the imagined medium of consciousness" (Dennett 1996: 3; see also CE 140, Guzeldere 1997: 1, Goldman 1997a: 111, Van Gullick 1994: 451).

²⁸ "I have not yet seen an argument made by a philosopher to the effect that we cannot, with the aid of science, establish facts about animal minds with the same degree of moral certainty that satisfies us in the case of our own species" (BC 339).

²⁹ "Nagel claims that no amount of third-person knowledge could tell us what it is like to be a bat, and I flatly deny that claim. How might we resolve this dispute? By engaging in something that starts out as child's play – a game in which one person imagines what it is like to be x, and the other then tries to demonstrate that there is something wrong with that particular exercise of heterophenomenology.....The sorts of investigation suggested by this exercise would take us a long way into an account of the structure of the bat's perceptual and behavioral world, so we could rank order heterophenomenological narratives for realism, discarding those that asserted or

undercut Dennett's claim of neutrality (or agnosticism), for the hallmark of neutrality is suppose to be its impartiality. If we are to begin imagining the phenomenological world of bats, we are surely injecting our personal and exceedingly idiosyncratic interpretations into the bat's heterophenomenological world. Consider, for instance, "[w]hen we imagine what it is like to be a languageless creature, we start, naturally, from our own experience, and most of what then springs to mind has to be adjusted (mainly downward)" (CE 447). Whence objectivity then?³⁰ Besides, Dennett has certainly not provided a more complete illustration as to how this imagined heterophenomenological world of the bat is to be accomplished. Hence, it appears that Dennett could only generalize his heterophenomenological method to non-verbal subjects at heavy price – at the cost of impartiality of the method! However, one way or another, this puts the theory in unenviable position. To generalize (H_1), the way we see it

presupposed discriminatory talents, or reactive dispositions, demonstrably not provided for in the ecology and neurophysiology of the bat" (CE 442-443).

³⁰Dennett has elsewhere claimed that "thanks in large measure to language – so different from that of any other species that to call the other varieties consciousness is to court confusion" (Densmore and Dennett 1999: 759). "We naturalists think that consciousness, like locomotion or predation, is something that comes in different varieties, with some shared functional properties, but many differences due to different evolutionary histories and circumstances" (ZH 38). If the consciousness of other species is so unlike ours, then to imagine their consciousness based on our own experiences would have little meaning. It cannot be anything more than arbitrary. Consider the extent of difficulty involved in imagining the inner world of snake. "It seems that a snake does not have a central representation of a mouse but relies solely on transduced information. The snake exploits three different sensory systems in relation to prey, like a mouse. To strike the mouse, the snake uses its visual system (or thermal sensors). When struck, the mouse normally does not die immediately, but runs away for some distance. To locate the mouse, once the prey has been struck, the snake uses its sense of smell. The search behavior is exclusively wired to this modality. Even if the mouse happens to die right in front of the eyes of the snake, it will still follow the smell trace of the mouse in order to find it. This unimodality is particularly evident in snakes like boas and pythons, where the prey often is held fast in the coils of the snakes's body, when it e.g. hangs from a branch. Despite the fact that the snake must have ample proprioceptive information about the location of the prey it holds, it searches stochastically for it, all around, only with the help of the olfactory sense organs" (Sjolander 1993: 3; cf. GR 548).

in (H₂) leads to undesirable consequences, whilst not generalizing leaves the theory severely handicapped (as is the case of H₁).

Above notwithstanding, other issues also threaten to cripple Dennett's thesis. Above all, Dennett maintains that the text must be supplied with intentional interpretations. So, for instance, "[f]rom the recorded verbal utterances, we get transcripts, from which in turn we devise *interpretations* of the subject's speech acts, which we thus get to treat as expressions of their *beliefs*, on all topics. Thus using the intentional stance, we construct therefrom the subject's heterophenomenological world. We move, that is, from raw data to interpreted data" (FFP 2, emphasis added). Interpretations are notably subjective, a tool of exegesis not commonly seen in the standard practise of science, presumably employed when there is no one determinate or concrete way to pin something down. Insofar as Dennett's method relies on interpretations, there is inevitable contamination of subjectivity arising from personal elements (in the course of interpreting processes), thus undermining Dennett's claim of neutrality. Besides, Dennett likens heterophenomenology to the study of novels and fictions, but surely interpretations of these literary creations are far from the standard alluded to in objective science.

Meanwhile, as the foregoing excerpt makes clear, ultimately the transcribed text is to be set in the vernacular of intentional stance in order to construct a

heterophenomenological world,³¹ for it is the subject's beliefs about their subjective experiences that constitute the central data, not the experiences itself (FFP 7, CE 76-77, SHCE 161-162). He says, for instance, "using the intentional stance, we construct therefrom the subject's heterophenomenological world" (FFP 2). But intentional stance is surely a non-neutral tool to analyze mind. For it is itself a perspective (theory or hypothesis) with heavily colored presumptions and distinctive commitments as to what mental phenomena amounts to.³² How then could one possibly safeguard the impartiality and neutrality of the method to investigate mental phenomena when the nature of one of its important properties is already presupposed from the outset.³³

The theoretical baggage it carries appears to undercut the very foundation of agnosticism the method claims to espouse. Dennett may be justified in employing intentional stance to construct the subject's heterophenomenological worlds, but this could not be free from personal prejudices (predilection or penchant whatsoever) of the person taking the stance, notwithstanding the fact that the

³¹ Note, for instance, Dennett says that "[h]eterophenomenology exhausts the intentional stance theory of consciousness" (GR 527). And more pointedly, he also speaks of the "welcome – indeed, indispensable – power of adopting the intentional stance as scientific tactic in heterophenomenology, the objective science of consciousness" (DDI 356n7).

³² As interpreted data contains "a catalogue of the subjects' convictions, beliefs, attitudes, emotional reactions" (FFP 2), this "subsequent assessment as expression of belief about a subjects' 'private' subjective state" (FFP 2) is achieved by adopting the intentional stance. As Dennett makes clear, "we use precisely the principles of the intentional stance to settle what it is reasonable to postulate regarding the subject's beliefs and desires" (FFP 4).

³³ "The reliance on an intentional interpretation of the subjects is in any event an ineliminable part of such experiments, both in the interpretation of the data, and in the prior process of *experimental design* [for example in preparing and debriefing subjects; see FFP 4]" (SHCE 162, emphasis added).

theory is controversial and is hardly widely accepted.³⁴ It is also worthwhile to note, as was seen in Chapter 4, that one of the important attributes of intentional stance is the indeterminacy and impreciseness of its interpretations - there is no way one could fix a stable interpretation - it is unclear then (and this certainly stand oppose to the crux of the theory Dennett proposes), how one could single out a *stable* interpretation³⁵ in the context of the heterophenomenological theory (CE 77-78, SHCE 162),³⁶ for even interpretation of novels or fictions, as was briefly discussed above, which Dennett takes to be analogous to intentional interpretations in his method (SHCE 163-167, CE 78-81), is more than likely to produce multiple versions.

Besides, as Carr aptly notes, Dennett "betrays his non-neutrality by mislabelling the subjectively experienced world a fiction. To be consistent he might have considered the Feenomanists' description of the anthropologists' world: they might consider it a 'fictional' world because their beloved Feenoman, and all his works, were absent from it. But if they were good phenomenologists they would

³⁴ Hence, his claim that "[a] hallmark of the method is its cageyness, its *metaphysical minimalism*; it begins by cautiously saying nothing at all about what consciousness might be, or even where it might be found" (SHCE 159) surely understates the theoretical and metaphysical commitment of the method.

³⁵ "Steps can be taken, and are routinely taken, to remove sources of ambiguity and uncertainty in the experimental situation, so that one intentional interpretation of the text...is overwhelmingly dictated - has no plausible rivals" (SHCE 162).

³⁶ Consider the followings. "[M]y view is that propositional attitude claims are so idealized that it is often impossible to say which approximation, if any, to use" (GR 525). "I also maintain that when these objective patterns fall short of perfection, as they always must, there will be uninterpretable gaps; it is always possible in principle for rival intentional stance interpretations of those patterns to tie for first place, so that no further fact could settle what the intentional system in question really believed" (IS 40). In disputes concerning the principle of interpretation, Dennett contends that "the opposition between Projection and Rationalizations at most a matter of emphasis...quandaries that are resolvable - to the extent that they are - only by resort to normative considerations: we should project only what is best of ourselves, but *what counts as*

realize that to the anthropologists this was the real, not the fictional, world, and they should neutrally describe it as such" (Carr 1998: 337). Presupposing fiction of the heterophenomenological text ought not be the (presumptive) mindset of an impartial investigator.³⁷ Besides, this surely runs counter to the claim of heterophenomenology as *ultra-cautious* methodological approach to the studying of mind (CE 327).

Perhaps what is of more interest is the ultimate upshot of heterophenomenological method. Dennett concludes that "the objects of heterophenomenology are mere theorist's fictions" (SHCE 178).

The method describes a world, the subject's heterophenomenological world, in which are found various objects (intentional objects), and in which various things happen to these objects. If someone asks: 'What are those objects, and what are they made of?' the answer might be 'Nothing!' What is Mr. Pickwick made of? Nothing. Mr. Pickwick is a fictional object, and so are the objects described, named, mentioned by the heterophenomenologist. — 'But isn't it embarrassing to admit, as a theorist, that you are talking about fictional entities — things that don't exist?' Not at all. Literary theorists do valuable, honest intellectual work describing fictional entities, and so do anthropologists who study the gods and witches of various cultures. So indeed do physicists, who, if asked, what a center of gravity was made of, would say, 'Nothing!' Heterophenomenological objects are, like centers of gravity or the Equator, *abstracta*, not *concreta*. They are not idle fantasies but hardworking theorists' fictions (CE 95-96).

best under the circumstances is itself a matter of interpretation" (IS 344). In view of the above, Dennett should at least have shown how the supposed stable interpretation is to be attained!

³⁷ We see, for instance, Dennett maintains that "[w]e can compare the heterophenomenologist's task interpreting subject's behavior to the reader's task of interpreting a work of fiction" (CE 79). That is, "let us apply the analogy to the problem facing the experimenter who wants to interpret the texts produced by his subject. Let us consider the advantages of adopting the tactic of interpreting these texts as fiction....as generators of a theorist's fiction. Just as the literary critic or hermeneuticist of fiction lets the text constitute a (fictional) world, a world determined by fiat by the text, exhaustively extrapolated as far as extrapolation will go and indeterminate beyond, so our experimenters, whom I shall now call the heterophenomenologist, lets the subject text constitute what I shall call the subject's heterophenomenological world" (SHCE 166; CE 81). He also affirms that "[t]he heterophenomenology exists — just as uncontroversially as novels and other fictions exist... We organize our data regarding these phenomena into theorist's fictions, 'intentional objects' in heterophenomenological worlds" (CE 98). Note also, for instance, Dennett's response to the followings. "Is consciousness, like belief, an observer-relative 'calculation-bound entity' or 'logical construct'? No, but heterophenomenological objects are" (Dennett 1994b: 179).

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Dennett is here employing the same yardstick he employs in intentional stance. Phenomenon that is claimed to exist but finds no corresponding viable mapping of sorts to the brain would be like building castle in the air, amounts to nothing. Specifically, in his own words,

[m]y suggestion, then, is that if we were to find real goings-on in people's brains that had enough of the 'defining' properties of the items that populate their heterophenomenological worlds, we could reasonably propose that we had discovered what they were really talking about... And if we discovered that the real goings-on bore only a minor resemblance to the heterophenomenological items, we could reasonably declare that people were just mistaken in the beliefs they expressed, in spite of their sincerity (CE 85; see also p. 98, FFP 5, 9).

So, phenomenal garden is made to disappear by appealing to this hard physicalist benchmark.³⁸ To Dennett, anything that violates or does not correspond to this standard have no legitimate places in his world of reality. Indeed, "[p]ostulating special inner qualities that are not only private and intrinsically valuable, but also unconfirmable and uninvestigable is just obscurantism" (CE 450).

Dennett, by using the Shakey allegory, contends that part of the justifications for irrationalism of subject's verbal reports is "that they confabulate; they make up likely sounding tales without realizing they are doing it; they fill in the gaps, guess, speculate, mistake theorizing for observing. They are, then unwitting creators of fiction" (SHCE 173).³⁹ Further, "they don't have any way of seeing the process

³⁸ Dennett in responding to Siewert's analyses has this to say, "Siewert sees that there is an ominous stability (ominous by his lights) to my position, and he diagnoses its dependence on an epistemological position of mine he calls 'third person absolutism.' As one who thinks absolutism of any sort is (almost!) always wrong, I heartily dislike the bloodcurdling connotations of this epithet, but I think he's got my epistemological position clear" (Dennett 1993e: 153).

³⁹ Arguably, however, to what extent Shakey's utterances are fictional depends very much on the way it is designed. There is no reason why it cannot be designed to say things that conform largely to the processes that govern its functioning (this may be more demanding technically, but it is surely not insurmountable). In spite of his repeated emphasis on neutrality of

that govern their assertions, but that doesn't stop them from having heartfelt opinions to express" (CE 94). But this raises problem which forces Dennett's views into awkward position. Dennett may be justified to claim that if someone says, for instance, she sees a purple cow, she is more than likely coming under an illusion. As indeed, "Raskolnikov's dark brown hair, like the purple flank of the cow you imagine, does not exist" (SHCE 179). So be it with phenomenal stuffs.

But what if someone says I see an apple before me.⁴⁰ This is certainly an utterance, some sort of verbal report. Is this another confabulation? How do we know? Now, if we appeal to Dennett's heterophenomenology to decide the issue, what could we know? As seen, Dennett denies the existence of phenomenal properties because there is no real goings-on in the brain one finds correspond to these properties. What about perception of the apple? At present state of knowledge, it is still not clear if there is anything in the brain that could be indubitably single out as *the* real goings-on corresponding to the perception of an apple either. So, by force of the argument, on Dennett's contention, we ought to similarly conclude that the subject is hallucinating. The perception is illusionary.

But, if this is right, it opens up the floodgate for a whole lot of undesirable consequences, putting Dennett's theory in undesirable lights. First of all, the sciences depend on perceptions to provide empirical data (especially sight, see for

heterophenomenology, apparently, Dennett is not sufficiently impartial in this! Hence, it *seems* Dennett is driven more by the end conclusion he wishes to draw, thereby becoming insufficiently mindful to other equally legitimate alternatives that speak against his convictions. Shakey's confabulative utterances are certainly not a necessity.

instance CE 55-56).⁴¹ Yet, as it is now, we are unable to identify them as real goings-on in the brain (the way Dennett would have it, as quoted above), this suggests in turn that perceptions are themselves confabulations. And if they are illusions, how could science be real and truth possible?⁴² How could anything be real at all if this is the standard Dennett alludes to for we could hardly identify real goings-on in brain that correspond to mental phenomena most familiar to us, including those indispensable to science, e.g., logic, reasoning, mathematics and so on. Suffice it to point out that his theory would also necessitate verbal utterances between heterophenomenological subjects and experimenters counted as confabulation, not to mention interpretations that Dennett sees as crucial to his method. So, hoist by its own petard, the theory backfires as in the final analysis, it is in danger of ending up with nothing concrete, though reality is what motivates its search in the first place.

This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the case of consciousness (also touched upon earlier in Chapter 7). Dennett claims that consciousness is real.⁴³ If

Dennett's contention in which "[e]very events in the world has effects" (Westbury

⁴⁰ Assuming indeed there really is physically an apple before her.

⁴¹ Note Dennett in fact believes that "all varieties of perception – indeed all varieties of thoughts or mental activity – are accomplished in the brain by parallel, multitask processes of interpretation and elaboration of *sensory* inputs" (CE 111, emphasis added).

⁴² Let's see what importance truth holds for Dennett. "We alone can be wracked with doubt, and we alone have been provoked by that epistemic itch to seek a remedy: better truth-seeking methods....we invented measuring, and arithmetic, and maps, and writing. These communicative and recording innovations come with a built-in ideal: truth. The point of asking questions is to find true answers; the point of measuring is to measure accurately; the point of making maps is to find your way to your destination....In short, the goal of truth goes without saying, in every human culture" (Dennett 2001a: 99).

⁴³ "Consciousness...is not an intrinsic property, and not even just a dispositional property, it is a phenomenon that requires the actualization of potential" (RWE 227), and it "is not a momentary condition....but rather a matter of *actual influence* over time" (RWE 221, emphasis added).

and Dennett 2000: 12) is to be taken seriously, then by strict application of Dennett's heterophenomenological criterion, consciousness is not real, because more than anything else, it is no less harder to ground real goings-on in brain that correspond to or resemble consciousness. If real goings-on is what ultimately matter, this would most likely leave us unable to say, when we perceive something, whether we are really hallucinating⁴⁴ (due to some sort of mental disease) or actually perceiving something real, when the demarcating line is thus blurred or obliterated. There is nothing wrong to set high standards, if anything, it certainly helps root out mediocrity. But, ultimately, if the high benchmark leaves one unable to tell the difference between confabulations (hallucinating) from real perceptions, then, though Dennett may claim that his theory of heterophenomenology is the *objective science of consciousness* (DDI 356n7), if in the end it leaves us unable to say even that we are conscious, then the theory (or the demanding standard of objectivity), for what is worth, is probably too exacting and idealistic that not many things seem capable at the end of fulfilling it.

9.4 Consciousness Explained or Explained Away?

Dennett claims his theory *explains* consciousness (CE 431). In preempting as well as responding to critiques who see his account as explaining away consciousness – spuriously leaving it out - Dennett hits back: “[o]nly a theory that explained conscious events in terms of unconscious events could explain consciousness at all” (CE 454). Says Dennett: “[w]hen we learn that the only difference between

⁴⁴ “[A]ltered perceptual states which often accompany mental disorders” (Nakayama 2001: 751).

gold and silver is the number of subatomic particles in their atoms, we may feel cheated or angry – those physicists have explained something away: The goldness is gone from gold; they've left out the very silveriness of silver that we appreciate....Leaving something out is not a feature of failed explanations, but of successful explanations" (CE 454). Dennett's point is certainly well made. Having said that, his account is still far from having consciousness explained (see also Foster 1993: 30, Lockwood 1993: 65, Siewert 1993: 94, Mangan 1993: 16, Levine 1994: 112, Clark 1993: 3, Fellow and O'Hear 1993: 75, 90, Seager 1993b: 122).

It is perhaps less inept (or ill-fitting) to see his theory as concern more for providing a *plausible* account of mechanism underlying consciousness - in terms of the Multiple Drafts model – instead of explaining consciousness as such (see also Farah 1992: 209, Lloyd 1992: 216). Take life for instance (Dennett's favorite metaphor, as we shall again see later), even if one successfully provides a model that accounts for the *origin* of life (the way we account for consciousness through Dennett's model), this is still far from explaining life (or consciousness) as ubiquitous phenomena. The question 'what is life' does not thereupon become superfluous (or less relevant) because we also possess a model that accounts for the way life is *produced* or *originated*. In this regard, perhaps the key to understanding lies in our ability to give a clear elucidation of the associated properties of what we are trying to explain. Insofar as one fails to provide a definitive and cogent description, the claim of explaining consciousness is likely to remain incomplete. For, if consciousness cannot be accurately identified, we

cannot even claim to understand, not to mention explaining it.⁴⁵ Even more so at this point of development where little is known about the phenomena. This is clearly evident, for instance, in the debate if animal has conscious mind the way it is familiar to us. To a great extent, the matter is undecided (and somewhat murky) owing largely to our inability to say what consciousness entails (for we cannot even agree amongst ourselves what consciousness is),⁴⁶ even more so in the

⁴⁵ It is true Dennett identifies consciousness with *property K*. "A contentful event becomes conscious if and when it becomes part of a temporarily dominant *activity* in the cerebral cortex" (BC 134, emphasis added; Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992b: 236). But again this appears more like an account of the mechanism (or activity) underlying consciousness. If Dennett identifies properties of qualia with some attributes or traits, and not with processes that give rise to qualia, additional justifications is perhaps required for treating consciousness differently. For this dominance in cerebral activity certainly refers to process very much like the act of logical construction out of judgement, the *process* which, according to Dennett, accounts for qualia. We identify electron by some specific properties it possesses, for example its mass, charge, magnetic moments etc, but we do not define it on account of some processes or interactions that produce electron. Apart from that, Dennett likes to draw the analogy that consciousness is *constituted* by cerebral dominance (Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992b: 236, BC 136) to the way life is constituted by its corresponding analogue (Dennett 1995p, Dennett 1996d: 485). But what is life? Admittedly, life is constituted by each and every single physical processes we find in living cells. It is not something over and above this physicality. Yet, we do not define life by means of cell activities/dynamics as such. Lets see what Dennett himself has to say on this in his rebuttal of Chalmers distinction of consciousness into the hard and easy problems. "The hard question for vitalism: Imagine some vitalist who says to the molecular biologists: 'The easy problems of life include those of explaining the following phenomena: reproduction, development, growth, metabolism, self-repair, immunological self-defense... These are not all that easy, of course, and it may take another century or so to work out the fine points, but they are easy compared to the really hard problem: life itself. We can imagine something that was capable of reproduction, development, growth, metabolism, self-repair and immunological self-defense, but that wasn't, you know, alive. The residual mystery of life would be untouched by solutions to all the easy problems. In fact, when I read your accounts of life, I am left feeling like the victim of a bait-and-switch.' This imaginary vitalist just doesn't see how the solution to all the easy problems amounts to a solution to the imagined hard problem. Somehow this vitalist has got under the impression that being alive is something over and above all these subsidiary component phenomena" (Dennett 1995p: 33). Clearly, Dennett has identified life with the phenomena enlisted in the foregoing. But if one does not define life strictly on account of cell mechanisms found in the body, if the analogy worth anything, it appears similarly ill-conceived to identify consciousness as such with cell processes found in the brain (i.e., according to Dennett, the dominant activity in cerebral cortex). But, certainly, this is not to claim that Dennett is wrong. If anything, the underlying mechanistic model is certainly important, but if we cannot also at the same time account for its property, then our understanding (or any accompanying explanation thereof) could only be partial at best.

⁴⁶ Lets see what Churchland actually says with regards to defining consciousness in the course of his discussion on the salient features of consciousness seen in Chapter Six. "If consciousness is our explanatory target, let us try to identify some of its more salient features. Let us get clear on just what it is that neuroscience has to try to reconstruct. This is not a demand for an authoritative definition of consciousness. At this stage, that would be a mistake. Definitions are best framed

present context because Dennett's theory (which is supposed to explain consciousness) is at best conjecture, far from being confirmed.⁴⁷ As Dennett (QQ 520) himself observes, anything real has properties, but the properties of consciousness seem nonetheless to remain elusive even after Dennett has supposedly 'explained' consciousness (as suggested by the title of his book *Consciousness Explained*).

Meanwhile, Dennett in responding to complain that there is no fact of the matter why rivalry amongst contentful states for dominance constitutes consciousness, rebutted thus.

after we have settled on an adequate understanding of what needs defining. And that is something we won't have until we possess an adequate scientific theory of consciousness. In the meantime, however, we can roughly triangulate our target phenomenon by listing a number of its more obvious and important features" (Churchland 1995: 213). And Fodor has the following to add: "cognitive science movement has been research-in-progress for about thirty years now. In consequence, we know a little about language, a little about perception, very little about cognitive development, practically nothing about thought, and, as far as I can tell, nothing at all about consciousness. The problems about consciousness, in particular, have proved intractable in a very unsettling sort of way. We not only can't solve them, we don't even seem to be able to state them in a form that suggests a research program" (Fodor 1991: 15).

⁴⁷ Dennett himself provides caveats to his claims on resting consciousness as constituent of mental fame. "Theorists are converging from quite different quarters on a version of the global neuronal workspace model of consciousness, but there are residual confusions to be dissolved. In particular, theorists must resist the temptation to see global accessibility as the cause of consciousness...rather, it is consciousness.....A consensus may be emerging, but the seductiveness of the paths not taken is still potent, and part of my task here will be to diagnose some instances of backsliding and suggest therapeutic countermeasures. Of course those who still vehemently oppose this consensus will think it is I who needs therapy. These are difficult questions.....If we set aside our philosophical doubts (settled or not) about consciousness as global fame or clout, we can explore in a relatively undistorted way the empirical questions regarding the mechanisms and pathways" (RWE 221, 222, 226). On Dennett's openhearted ratification of Dehaene and Naccache proposal of a promising synthesis or "convergence coming from quite different quarters on a version of the global neuronal workspace model," Dehaene and Naccache in their cautious introductory note has the following to say: "[w]ithin this fresh perspective, firmly grounded in empirical research, the problem of consciousness no longer seems intractable. Yet no convincing synthesis of the recent literature is available to date. Nor do we know yet whether the elements of a solution that we currently have will suffice to solve the problem, or whether key ingredients are still missing. By grouping some of the most innovative approaches together in a single volume, this special issue aims at providing the readers with a new opportunity to see for themselves whether a synthesis is now possible" (Dehaene and Naccache 2001: 2)

A common reaction to this suggestion about human consciousness is frank bewilderment, expressed more or less as follows: 'Suppose all these strange competitive processes are simply those that win the competitions. How does that make them conscious? What happens next to them that makes it true that I know about them? For after all, it is my consciousness, as I know it from the first person point of view, that needs explaining!' That question betrays a deep confusions, it presupposes that what you are is something else, some Cartesian *res cogitans* in additions to all the brain-and-body activity. What you are, however, is this organization of all the competitive activity between a host of competences that your body has developed. You 'automatically' know about these things going on in your body, because if you did not, it would not be your body! The acts and events you can tell us about, and the reasons for them, are yours because you made them – and they made you. What you are is that agent whose life you can tell about (Dennett 1998e: 106-107; RLM 293, RWEC 227, ZH 29).

There is certainly some truth in Dennett's point that he is not "leaving consciousness out, [but is] explaining consciousness by leaving it behind. That is to say, the only way to explain consciousness is to move beyond consciousness, accounting for the effects consciousness has when it is achieved" (RWEC 229; see also Dennett 1995e: 410-411). But certainly Dennett is not *proving* (his case above) by arguing from obviousness.⁴⁸ In fact, Dennett's strategy here is quite similar to those seen in earlier discussions.

I have argued that you can *imagine* how all that *complicated* slew of activity in the brain amount to consciousness (CE 433, emphasis added; see also BC 28, 366; BS 198; Dennett 1993e: 149-150).

This principled blindness of intentional system theory to internal structures seem to invite the retort: but there has to be some explanation of the success of intentional prediction of the behavior of systems. It isn't just magic. It isn't a mere coincidence that one can generate all these *abstracta*, manipulate them via some version of practical reasoning, and come up with an action prediction that has a good chance of being true. There must be some way in which the internal processes of the system mirror the complexities of the intentional interpretation, or its success would be a miracle. Of course. This is all quite true and important. Nothing without a great deal of structural and processing complexity could conceivably realize an intentional system of any interest, and the complexity of the realization will surely bear a striking resemblance to the complexity of the instrumentalistic interpretation (IS 60).

⁴⁸ As Dennett concedes elsewhere in the discussion on consciousness, "[t]his spurious obviousness is a great obstacle to progress in understanding consciousness" (CE 434). So, obviousness *per se* is not foolproof. At least, Dennett has tried to disown it himself in the very context in which he attempts to prove his case.

As seen in the discussion on complexity (in Chapter 6), such maneuver is not without problems. Therefore, Dennett's employment of similar tactical move in the context of consciousness is not completely free from such peril. Consider, for instance, what Dennett says in defending his artificial intelligence thesis against Searle and in commenting on Chalmers's suggestion to consider taking consciousness as basic phenomena, the way we take mass, charge, and space-time as fundamental and irreducible.

'The introduction of the concept does not do any explanatory work. The evidential argument is circular' (Roberts 1995, fn8). We can see this by comparing Chalmers proposal with yet one more imaginary non-starter: cutism, the proposal that since some things are just *plain cute*, and other things aren't cute at all – *you can just see it*, however hard it is to describe or explain – we had better postulate cuteness as a fundamental property of physics alongside mass, charge and space-time....Cutism is in even worse shape than vitalism. Nobody would have taken vitalism seriously for a minute if metabolism, self-repair and the like – that their postulated fundamental life-element was hoped to account for. Once these phenomena were otherwise accounted for, vitalism fell flat, but at least it had a project. Until Chalmers gives us an *independent ground for contemplating* the drastic move of adding experience to mass, charge and space-time, his proposal is one that can be put on the back burner, way back (Dennett 1995p: 35, emphasis added).

Searle criticizes AI for not taking neurophysiology and biochemistry seriously....[His] treatment....invites us to regress to a Cartesian vantage point....Searle proclaims that somehow – and *he has nothing to say about the details* – the biochemistry of the human brain ensures that no human beings are zombies. This is reassuring, but mystifying. How does the biochemistry create such a happy effect? By a *wondrous causal power* indeed; it is the very same causal power Descartes imputed to immaterial souls, and Searle has made it no less wondrous or mysterious – or incoherent in the end – by assuring us that it is all somehow just a matter of biochemistry (IS 335-336, emphasis added).

If such is demanded of Searle and Chalmers, it is not clear why the same is not applicable to his own account of consciousness, because it seems Dennett is also appealing or invoking largely similar means in his own account.

Besides, to do justice to Chalmers and Searle, they ought to have been allowed or at least granted the privilege to appeal to their respective imaginative ingenuity as

means (valid in Dennett's terms in certain context, see chapter 5) to providing argument in support of their theories. Dennett himself has relied much on this to augment his case that software (or virtual machine) constitutes consciousness (CE 431-448). However, if this is what ultimately counts, i.e., if imagination is invariably invoked to decide the issue at the end, we would then have no concrete ground to claim Dennett's theory any better than Searle's nor Chalmers's, just as we have no way to decide whether Duchamp's ready-mades are greater piece of artwork than any of Picasso's masterpieces. There is no way to force the issue because the benchmark for doing so is dreadfully ambivalent! This is no more clearly demonstrated in the followings where Dennett chides at the misemployment of imagination.

You are certainly right to stress that the effects still in need of explanation are many, but there is a fatal – and common – mistake to avoid here: arriving at the 'conclusion' that after 'all' the effects of this sort are explained, there will be some inexplicable residue. How do some people reach this imagined conclusion? By imagining themselves to engage in a process of something like subtraction: 'Here am I, looking at the apple, and reflecting on how wonderfully red it appears. Now I subtract my reflections, my dispositions, my changes in mood, my memories, my....and I ask: 'what is left?' and I 'see' that there is still something left over: the very intrinsic redness of it all!' That is not an argument; you couldn't prove anything with such an exercise of the imagination, if only because there's really no way you can prevent the very items you take yourself to have subtracted away from somehow returning surreptitiously to fuel your sense that something is still there (Dennett 1995e: 411).

If employment of imagination is misplaced here, what makes it legitimate in Dennett's employment elsewhere is inscrutable.

9.5 Intentional Stance and Consciousness

Discussion of Dennett's theory of consciousness is incomplete without examining his idea of "first, a theory of content or intentionality – a phenomenon more fundamental than consciousness – and then, building on that foundation, a theory of consciousness" (BC 355; IS x, CE 457-458, BS 17, GR 506). Evidently, to Dennett, consciousness is founded on content (Dennett 1969: xiv-xv, IS x). However, as we are well aware, intentionality (and content) as construed from intentional stance is not ontologically motivated.⁴⁹ This mirrors Dennett's views on syntax and semantics. According to him, the brain is only a syntactic engine, it has no semantic,⁵⁰ and no less important, syntax does not determine semantic (IS 61). "The brain, as a mechanism, can respond only to the formal (not semantical)

⁴⁹ Recently, Dennett reiterates his views: "belief must be defined in terms of the circumstance under which a belief could be justifiably attributed to that organism. What is meant when it is asserted that an organism has a belief, we propose, is that its behavior can be reliably predicted by ascribing that belief to it – an act of ascription we call 'taking the intentional stance.' The suggestion is not simply that the adoption of such a definition might be a good heuristic for side-stepping the question of what a belief 'really' is, but the stronger suggestion that all there is to having a belief *p* is being a system that is efficiently (and in the strongest case, most efficiently) predictable under the assumption that it believes *p*. The suggestion is intended to carry *ontological*, rather than simply methodological weight. ... To say that *x* believes *p* is to assert that *x*'s behavior (verbal and otherwise) demonstrates a particular kind of regularity; namely, just that kind of regularity which justifies the 'projection' of *x*'s intentionality about *p*... The demand for a definition which defines belief in terms which can independent of situational contingencies is ill founded....[so] we would like to discourage the demand for a context independent of belief, and encourage the idea that the definition of a belief in any particular circumstance is equivalent to the identification of the contingencies which allow that belief to be attributable" (Westbury and Dennett 2000: 24-28).

⁵⁰ "A machine is a machine, and there is nothing about the construction or materials of any subvariety that could permit it to transcend the limit of mechanism and eke out 'real semantics' over and above its merely syntactical churning" (IS 70). As indeed, "we are each made of mindless robots and nothing else, no non-physical, non-robotic ingredients at all" (Dennett 1999f: 1; ZH 28-29, FFP 1, Dennett 1997d: 17, CE 431). "Some intuit that only the core beliefs are properly speaking beliefs at all. What makes them so sure there are core beliefs? I am as staunch realist as anyone about those core information storing elements in the brain, whatever they turn out to be, to which our intentional interpretations are anchored. I just doubt that these elements, once individuated, will be recognizable as the beliefs we purport to distinguish in folk psychology" (IS 70-71).

properties of its states" (BC 222).⁵¹ But why then does the brain work as if it is responding and giving rise to meanings and the likes, in which the greater part of our life is governed? Dennett believes he has the answer. "It cannot be designed to do an impossible task, but could be designed to approximate the impossible task, to mimic the behavior of the impossible object (the semantic engine) by capitalizing on close fortuitous correspondences between structural regularities – of the environment and of its own internal states and operations – and semantic types" (IS 61; see also pp. 69, 256n10; BC 357, 1984a: 28-30).

This point, Dennett claims in passing "forces the order of dependence of consciousness on intentionality. The appreciation of meanings – their discrimination and delectation – is central to our vision of consciousness" (BC 357). Though Dennett hints at the rationale for this order of dependence, he does not elaborate further on the idea that content must thereby become fundamental and hence ought to be ironed out first before a respectable theory of consciousness could be constructed. Since "many – perhaps most – follow tradition in favoring the opposite order: consciousness, they think, is the fundamental phenomenon, upon which all intentionality depends" (BC 356), Dennett ought to have at least provided a more rigorous defence of his views.

⁵¹ Dennett notes this as Fodor's and McCarthy's formality constraint, but he also appears to hold a version of it (see, for instance, Dennett 1984a: 28). For, according to Dennett, "meanings cannot directly cause things to happen, so they cannot directly cause themselves to correspond to any causal regularities in the world" (BC 67; also BC 228, Dennett 1983b: 382), because "meanings themselves never overrule, overpower, or so much as influence the brute mechanistic or syntactic flow of local causation in the nervous system" (BC 63).

Because if consciousness is real,⁵² whilst intentionality not,⁵³ it stands to reason, at least as far as model construction is concerned, to anchor it on something concrete and real instead of the reverse, especially when Dennett repeatedly emphasizes that his theory of intentional stance “presents the foundation for my theory of the mind” (IS 2).

This is important, for if the foundation is ill-founded, there is danger the whole edifice might disastrously crumble. One horn of the dilemma concerns how intentional stance which is merely “an *instrument* of prediction (and explanation) (MNM 923, emphasis added), in other words, “an explanatory tool, rather than as an object in need of explaining” (Westbury and Dennett 2000: 24), saddled with (almost) unfettered and libertarian intentional ascriptions (or attributions)

⁵²For instance, Dennett claims that his theory of consciousness “meets the minimal demands of realism” (BC 135), appearing thus as “real events occurring in the real time and space of the brain” (BC 135; see also RWEC 221, Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992b: 235, 236).

⁵³ “[B]ecause one has seen that there is a indeterminacy of radical translation – one will not be inclined to be a Realist about attributions of propositional attitude, and hence will not be inclined to be a Realist about psychological content (genuine or intrinsic intentionality)” (IS 345; see especially BC 361). “If we individuate states (beliefs, states of consciousness, states of communicative intentions, etc) by their content – which is the standard means of individuation in folk psychology – we end up having to postulate differences that are systematically undiscoverable by any means, *from the inside or the outside*.... We replace the division into discrete contentful states – beliefs, meta-beliefs, and so forth – with a process that serves, over time, to ensure a good fit between an entity’s internal information bearing events and the entity’s capacity to express the information in those events in speech. That is what the higher-order states were supposed (by Otto) to ensure, but they failed to *carve nature at its joints*. Indeed, they posited joints that were systematically indiscernible in nature” (CE 319, emphasis added). “If we relegate vitalist and interactionist hypotheses to the limbo of the past, desperate resorts, and proceed on the assumption that human and animal behavioral control systems are only very complicated denizens of the physical universe, it follows that the events within them, characterized extensionally in the terms of physics or physiology, should be susceptible to explanation and prediction *without any recourse to content, meaning, or intentionality*” (Dennett 1969: 78). “The ideal picture, then, is of content being ascribed to structures, events and states in the brain on the basis of a determination of origins in stimulation and eventual appropriate behavioral effects, such ascriptions being essentially a *heuristic overlay* on the extensional theory rather than intervening variables of the theory” (Dennett 1969: 80, emphasis added).

(Westbury and Dennett 2000: 24)⁵⁴ – postulations that even allows some lowly thermostat and automaton to possess intentionality - could truly ground consciousness is hard to fathom. Besides, when one compares intentional stance with that of Multiple Drafts model, there is nothing in them which suggest the former the foundation in which the later is built upon (see also Toribio 1993: 45, Baker 1994: 12), in spite of Dennett's insistence that "states of consciousness are only a proper subset of psychological or intentionality characterized states" (BS 270n).⁵⁵ The other horn of the dilemma concerns the followings:

[t]he *creation of conscious experience* is not a batch process but a continuous process. *The micro-takings have to interact.* A micro-taking, as a sort of judgement or decision, can't just be inscribed in the brain in isolation; it has to have its consequences – for guiding action and modulating further micro-judgements made 'in its light,' creating larger fragments of what we call narrative. However, it is accomplished in particular cases, the interaction of micro-takings has the effect that a modicum of coherence is maintained, with discrepant elements dropping out of contention, and without the assistance of Master Judge (BC 134, emphasis added).

If the distinction between conscious and unconscious has nothing to do with anything sophisticated like judgement, what else could it involve? (BC 348)

However, this content fixation or judgement (alluded to above) that contributes to consciousness is what Dennett believes subjects do not necessarily endorse (MNM 922). But this only compounds further the difficulty of his intent to build a theory of consciousness on content. As intentional stance is largely a predictive overlay, its denizens (beliefs, desires etc), according to Dennett, are in someway endorsed. So, as Dennett notes, "one cannot directly and simply cause or implant a belief, for a belief is essentially something that has been endorsed (by

⁵⁴"Ned Block... presents arguments supposed to show how the various possible functionalist theories of mind all slide into the sins of 'chauvinism' (improperly excluding Martians from the class of possible mind-havers) or 'liberalism' (improperly including various contraptions, human puppets, and so forth among the mind-havers). My view embraces the broadest liberalism, gladly paying the price of a few recalcitrant intuitions for the generality gained" (IS 68 n12).

⁵⁵ Baker (1994: 10) has also, in this regard, raised pertinent issues of content fixation.

commission or omission) by the agent on the basis of conformity with the rest of his beliefs" (BS 252; Westbury and Dennett 2000: 20).⁵⁶ However, if content fixation is what ultimately counts in the end to contribute to consciousness, there is cleavage in both accounts that make the construction of consciousness upon the theory of intentional stance questionable. This is reinforced by Dennett's avowal that belief is not to be equated with judgement (AP 102, 111n10).⁵⁷ Insofar as Dennett has not proposed anything that suggests something like a conciliation between this apparently opposing accounts, even if we grant that Dennett is justified to base his idea of consciousness on content, he still owes us clarification as to how exactly he wishes to relate the first half of his theory of content to its other half – the model of consciousness. As indeed, "[c]ontent is only half the battle; consciousness is the other" (BS 30).

⁵⁶ "It is my beliefs and desires that predict my behavior directly. My opinions [somewhat akin to judgement, see the following footnote] can be relied on to predict my behavior only to the degree, normally large, that my opinions and beliefs are in rational correspondence, i.e., roughly as Bayes would have them. It is just this feature of the distinction between opinion and belief that gives us, I think, the first steps of an acceptable account of those twin puzzles, self deception and akrasia or weakness of will. Animals, I submit, whatever their cognitive and conative frailties, are immune to both self deception and akrasia. Why? Because they have only beliefs, not opinions, and part of what is true when one exhibits either of these normal pathologies, self-deception or weakness of will, is that *one behaves one way while judging another*. One's behavior is consonant with one's belief 'automatically,' for that is how in the end we individuate beliefs and actions" (BS 306-307, emphasis added; see also Westbury and Dennett 2000: 20, 24). Also important for the concern at hand, Dennett asserts that opinions "are not paradigms of the sort of cognitive element to which one can assign content in the first instance" (BC 363).

⁵⁷ "Although my opting arises from and is ultimately explained by my desire, it is not a desire, but a choice, and the state it initiates is not a state of desire, but of *commitment to acquire* or something like that. This point sets the stage for de Sousa's claims, for the parallel remark to make regarding all cases of making up or *changing one's mind* is that changes of mind are a species of *judgement*, and while such judgements *arise* from beliefs and are ultimately to be explained by one's belief, such judgements themselves are not beliefs..... but acts, and these acts initiate states that are also not states of belief, but of something rather like *commitment, rather like ownership*. I trust it sounds at least faintly paradoxical to claim that when I change my mind or make up my mind, the result is not a new belief at all, but this is just what I want to maintain, and so does de Sousa. He calls such judgments 'assenting,' but is then left with no good term for the products of assent, the states one enters into as a result of such judging. I suggest that we would do quite well by ordinary usage if we called these states opinions, and hence sharply distinguished opinions

Back to the question raised earlier, ‘why is then the brain works as if it is responding and giving rise to meanings and the likes, in which the greater part of our lives is governed?’ Does Dennett have an answer? Dennett’s absolutism in the third person presumably drives him to doubt that “content or meaning or semantic value could be independent, detectable causal properties of events in the nervous system” (IS 142), which (likely) in turn becomes the motivation for his belief that syntax cannot possibly yield semantic, but merely a syntactic engine mimicking the semantic engine (BC 357). However, if syntax does not determine semantics, and if content assumes significance only insofar as there is attributions,⁵⁸ then more than the conundrum of *seeming*, the question of the hegemony and ubiquitous of intentionality and meanings in our everyday life would appear even a greater mystery. In this regard, Dennett claims, for example, “[a] semantic engine...is a mechanistic impossibility – like a perpetual motion machine, but a useful idealization in setting the specs for actual mechanisms” (BC 63).⁵⁹ But if intentionality is not real, whence then is the power of intentionality (meanings) to act as specs derived? Significantly, if it is only a “theorist’s fiction,” and “not one of the real things in the universe in addition to the atoms” (Dennett 1992c: 103),

from beliefs” (BS 303-304; GR 524), as in fact “discovering a man’s judgement still leaves the matter of belief ascription undecided” (BS 49).

⁵⁸ To the extent that even one has to adopt intentional stance to oneself in order to attribute at all: “[i]n order to attribute a belief that p, an organism must simultaneously attribute to himself (that is, act in a way that seems to him to accord with) the belief ‘I know what it means to believe that p.’ In order to adopt the intentional stance toward others, one must also adopt it toward oneself” (Westbury and Dennett 2000: 25).

⁵⁹ So, we see, syntactic engine is what ultimately counts, what actually exists that makes the difference. “Our departure point is the mind, meaning roughly the set of phenomena characterized in the everyday terms of ‘folk psychology’ as *thinking* about this and that, having *belief* about this and that, *perceiving* this and that, and so forth. Our destination is the brain, meaning roughly the

how could we in turn trust the spec it yields? Many of these points have been raised and discussed earlier (Chapter 4). However, by way of conclusion, it is worth reconsidering the point in the following context.

There are two coins in my pocket, and one of them has spent exactly ten minutes on my desk. This property is not a property causally relevant to how it will affect any entity it subsequently comes in contact with. There is no coin machine, however sophisticated, that could reject the coin by testing it for that property – though it might reject it for being radioactive or greasy or warmer than room temperature. Now if the coin had one of these properties just in virtue of having spent exactly ten minutes on my desk (the desk is radioactive, covered with grease, a combination desk and pottery kiln) the coin machine could be used to test indirectly (and of course not very reliably) for the property of having spent ten minutes on my desk. *The brain's testing of semantic properties of signals and states in the nervous system must be similarly indirect testing*, driven by merely syntactic properties of the items being discriminated – that is, by whatever structural properties the items have that are amenable to direct mechanical test. Somehow, the syntactical virtuosity of our brains permits us to be interpreted at another level as semantic engines – systems that (indirectly) discriminate the significance of the impingement on them, that understand, mean, and believe (IS 142, emphasis added).

What's perplexing is how this supposed “*fortuitous*” (IS 61) correspondence between meanings and mechanism (or the supposed pre-established harmony⁶⁰) achieved (BC 66-67), given that mental item is neither radioactive nor greasy, and is distinctly unlike any other items of the same nature that could probably serve as proxy to mentality (the way radioactivity and grease serve as surrogate for having spent ten minutes on the desk) to be monitored (detected) by such physical means. Evidently, this goes against Dennett's own contention that brain could extract semantically reliable results from syntactically driven operations because it is designed to approximate or mimic the semantic engine (IS 61, BC 63), or the

set of cerebral phenomena characterized in the *nonintentional, nonsymbolic, non-information theoretic terms* of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology” (BC 216).

⁶⁰ Seen in Chapter 2, Dennett grants that this correspondence, “a ‘pre-established harmony’ between the meanings of structures and their causal powers – could (in principle) come into existence” (BC 66), mainly through correspondence designed by natural selection, or designed by learning process [mainly through conditioning processes] (BC 66, Dennett 1984a: 28-30). Ultimately, however, Dennett argues that these design processes are essentially identical (BC 69-70).

same claim in slightly different context in which “(all *natural selection* can have produced) are systems that seem to discriminate meanings by actually discriminating things that co-vary reliably with *meanings*.”⁶¹ Evolution has designed our brains not only to do this but to evolve and follow strategies of self-improvement in this activity during individual lifetimes” (IS 63, emphasis added). There is nothing, it seems, that provides the purchase close to radioactivity or grease, for beliefs and meanings, according to Dennett, come into existence only on account of ascriptions and interpretations, yielding in turn heuristic purposes. Hence, it is perplexing given the interpretive and precarious (also to a large extent arbitrary) nature of intentionality and meanings,⁶² there exist (physical) means in which this semantic is faithfully “tracked” (Dennett 2001j: 13) (or even mimicked) by the mechanical microprocesses in the brain.⁶³

⁶¹ Admittedly, this is important assertion, unfortunately however, Dennett has not find it necessary to develop and refine it further. It is perniciously unclear what things that actually co-vary with meanings, for to Dennett, meanings (see following footnote) is downright heuristic (or instrumentalistic) and inextricably ambivalent (indeterminate), hinges mainly on interpretation (by which someone has to take up Dennett’s intentional stance) to work.

⁶² “[S]trictly speaking, ontologically speaking, there are no such things as beliefs, desires, or other intentional phenomena. But the intentional idioms are ‘practically indispensable,’ and we should see what we can do to make sense of their employment in what Quine called an ‘essentially dramatic’ idiom. Not just brute facts, then, but an element of interpretation, and dramatic interpretation at that, must be recognized in any use of the intentional vocabulary” (IS 342). Meanwhile, we see Dennett says that “[m]y theory of content is functionalist. All attributions of content are founded on an appreciation of the functional roles of the items in question” (BC 359). And note the way Dennett link up function with meaning. “Since in the beginning was not the word, there is no text which one might consult to resolve unsettled questions about function, and hence about meaning” (IS 318), since “there is no ultimate User’s Manual in which the real functions, and real meanings, of biological artifacts are officially represented. There is no more bedrock for what we might call original functionality than there is for its cognitivist scion, original intentionality. You can’t have realism about meanings without realism about functions” (IS 321). But the *summum bonum* of all these claims for the purpose at hand lies in Dennett’s avowal that “[m]other nature doesn’t commit herself explicitly and objectively to any functional attributions; all such attributions depend on the mind-set of the *intentional stance*, in which we assume optimality in order to interpret what we find. The panda’s thumb was no more really a wrist bone than it is a thumb” (IS 320, emphasis added).

⁶³ “But how could the order be there, so visible amidst the noise, if it were not the direct outline of a concrete orderly process in the background? Well, it could be there thanks to the statistical effect

It is illuminating and certainly fruitful to look at Dennett's case of the wandering two-bitser to further explore the issue. In the case of the soft-drink vending machine, "[n]ormally, when a quarter is inserted into a two-bitser, it goes into a state, call it Q, which 'means' 'I perceive/accept a genuine U.S. quarter now.'" (DDI 404). However, as Dennett contends:

[t]he only thing that makes the device a quarter-detector rather than a slug-detector or a quarter-or-slug-detector is the environment of shared intentions of the artifact's designers, builders, owners – its users in short. It is only in the context of those users and their intentions that we can single out some of the occasions of state Q as 'veridical' and others as 'mistaken.' It is only relative to that context of intentions that we could justify calling the device a two-bitser in the first place (DDI 405).

So, it then appears that in the U.S. environment, going into state 'Q' with a U.S. quarter constitutes right perception, i.e., it means what it is supposed to mean. Whilst going into similar state with a Panamanian quarter suggests otherwise. However, the reverse is true in a Panamanian environment. In this context, going into state 'Q' with a U.S. quarter is considered slug, whilst the converse is true with a Panamanian coin. So, we see that meanings or functions is indeed indeterminate, the semantic is derived from the context in which it finds itself. But though meanings vary according to circumstances, nothing in physical makeup of the machine changes. If this is the case, then the notion that brain is designed to approximate or mimic (track or co-vary reliably with) semanticity is difficult to sustain. Because, as we have seen, semanticity of the machine is altered according to context without ever needing to alter the machine

of very many concrete minutiae producing, as if by hidden hand, an approximation of the 'ideal order'" (BC 111).

(syntactically that is). In other words, the machine can be made to take up different meanings without any need of redesigning.⁶⁴

Granted, however, if as Dennett claims, derived intentionality “is the only kind of semantic there is” (IS 336), this puts to doubt Dennett’s belief that “brains are syntactic engines that can mimic the competence of semantic engines” (BC 357), because as the case of the two-bitser shows,⁶⁵ *derived intentionality* is contingent on the context in which it finds itself, which is itself ambivalent,⁶⁶ but this, as shown in the foregoing, is not something the syntactic engine co-vary with! Meanwhile, no less pertinently, even if we grant that brain could mimic semantic engine (derived intentionality and the likes), how exactly does the brain actually *extract* “semantically reliable results from syntactically driven operations” (IS 61) remains unexplained, so is the question concerning the way semantic engine discovers meanings of its inputs and discriminate them in virtue of their semanticity remain unaccounted for.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Which presumably makes the act of mimicking even more formidable. Conceivably, there is a whole lot of other functions we may want the machine to perform, and hence giving rise to still even more meanings the machine could derive from! Compare the somewhat parallel claim in Dennett’s theory. “The original reasons, and the original responses that ‘tracked’ them, were not ours, or our mammalian ancestors,’ but Nature’s. Nature appreciated these reasons without representing them” (IS 317).

⁶⁵ The two-bitser machine is conceived to support Dennett’s contention that intentionality is derived and not original.

⁶⁶ “[M]y view is that propositional attitude claims are so idealized that it is often impossible to say which approximation, if any, to use” (GR 525). Ultimately, Dennett may not have confounded anything, but then his theory would at least need to deal with issues raised below to be complete.

⁶⁷ Drekts for instance has the following complain: “I don’t want to downplay Dennett’s contribution in this area. I, in fact, learned a lot from his exciting and ground-breaking book. But one of the things I didn’t learn – and I can’t imagine Dennett (given his views on these matters) thinking I could have learned – was the way beliefs, internal states with meaning, explain behavior in virtue of what they mean. That is the grail for which I have been looking and unless I mistake the thrust of Dennett’s writings the past 20 years – including *Content and Consciousness* – this is something Dennett has made a career out of denying could be found. There are, he will be the first to insist, no semantic engines – in Boston or anywhere else” (Drekts 1991: 207).

One way in which Dennett's theory can be criticized is that he *seems* to have confounded the notion that brain could mimic the unfolding of evanescent meanings as having provided an account as to how minds discriminate, identify or even yield meanings.⁶⁸ These are, however, different point of contentions. Demonstration of the former does not explain the later. Dennett's account seems more evasive than explanatory when it comes to the crux of matter (see also Fellows and O'Hear 1993: 73, 83; Searle 1980): how the brain as semantic engine "discover what its multifarious inputs mean, to discriminate them by their significance and 'act accordingly'" (IS 61). The robust presence and the ubiquity of meanings in human life is far from being adequately accounted for, or for that matter, explained by associating it with the act of mimicking, for we must be wary that, ultimately, meaning "as discerned from the intentional stance" (BC 63, emphasis added) does not correspond to anything real in Dennett's repertoire.⁶⁹ So, there is chasm between meanings as is familiarly known in everyday life and Dennett's portrayal of them as proxy or approximating act. Dennett's account is analogous to explaining how car moves by gesturing to the correspondence

⁶⁸ "[T]here has to be some explanation of the success of intentional prediction of the behavior of systems. It isn't just magic. It isn't a mere coincidence that one can *generate all these abstracta, manipulate* them via some version of practical reasoning, and come up with an action prediction that has a good chance of being true. There must be some way in which the internal processes of the system *mirror* the complexities of the intentional interpretation, or its success would be a miracle" (IS 60, emphasis added).

⁶⁹ Given the key importance Dennett bestows syntactic engine, it is curious why meaning is not made to mimic (track) syntactic engine, because as it is, Dennett's way of putting things seem to have bestowed meaning with some inflated and mysterious power by which even real entities (syntactic engine) have to acquiesce to (by mimicking), though in reality, its existence is only ephemeral, for it is "impossible object" (IS 61). With this formulation, Dennett seems to have his priority backward. This perhaps only indirectly (and circuitously) reinforces the importance (or indispensability) of semantics because, if it is ultimately "impotent" (BC 63), Dennett could have just chosen to remain oblivious or silent, instead of granting it such privilege.

(correlation) of the driver's maneuvering of the car with those of the driving gear (steering, brakes, clutch and the likes), but leaving out explanation that actually accounts for the movement of the car. The driving, or for that matter the purported correspondence is of course important but it is hardly the concern if the issue is what is it (from the putting together of some inanimate metal pieces) that actually responsible for the transformation of the car into a locus of locomotive power. Dennett seems to have mislocated the issue.⁷⁰

9.6 Conclusion

Despite making headway in our understanding of the brain, it is not far fetch to say that the mind still appears as enigmatic and mysterious as it was thousand years back. However, to make any progress at all in our mastery of the conundrum, we need some kind of platform to serve as framework from which to launch our inquiries. In this, science is without question the orthodoxy second to none in our incessant quest for knowledge. Dennett's paradigmatic third person allegiance only testifies to this.

⁷⁰ Thus, according to Dennett, "(1) the blind trial and error of Darwinian selection creates (2) organisms whose blind trial and error behavior is subjected to selection by reinforcement, creating (3) 'learned' behaviors that generate a profusion of (4) learning opportunities from which (5) the most telling can be 'blindly' but reliably selected, creating (6) a better-focused capacity to generate (7) further candidates for not-so-blind 'consideration,' and (8) the eventual selection or choice or decision of a course of action 'based on' those considerations. Eventually the overpowering 'illusions' is created that the system is actually responding directly to meanings" (Dennett 1984a: 30). But how exactly is the act of approximating (mimicking) generated is not really discussed, neither is the potent ways meaning related to human life accounted for. This is arguably important because to be cogent, Dennett perhaps needs to answer the followings: how could something illusory *accomplish* so much?

However, that said, Dennett's thoughts are not just simple elaboration and extension of traditions. Philosophy of mind, in his hands, is transformed into a largely dogmatic science. For his views are manifestations of radical program in naturalizing the mind into the domain of the material. What Dennett has written is of course valuable, if not in actually resolving the mystery, at least in contributing to our awareness of the possibility of a Dennettian approach to the problem of mind.

Admittedly, Dennett's position, in a way, helps assuage anxieties in the labyrinth of the inscrutability of mental properties, but as shown in earlier discussion, this could only be purchased at some price. For instance, by positing the intentional stance, Dennett believes he is actually taking out intellectual loans (to act as some kind of scaffold or crutch) to be repaid many times over. However, if the analysis in earlier chapter (Chapter 3 and 4) amounts to anything, then Dennett seems to have taken out more debts than what he can ever repay, which is likely to leave him insolvent in the end. Besides, qualia also proves resistant to Dennett's bid for demolition.

However, attaching labels to the thought of a major philosopher with productive intellectual life spanning over three decades is not easy and is likely to be misleading at best.⁷¹ Quandaries aside, if we are to somehow shoehorn his position into one of the contemporary 'ism' (ideology), instrumentalism probably

comes closest. If this could be granted, then what we have derived through our discussions hitherto is not so much that instrumentalism is false, but perhaps what is demonstrated is that to make instrumentalism work (or at least Dennett's variant of instrumentalism) is harder than Dennett thought possible. We have seen through numerous analyses and discussions in this study that there are wide-gaping holes that threaten to engulf Dennett's theoretical standpoint at most of the important junctures of the theory we turn, though understandably, given the infancy status of brain research, it is only natural that one is likely to be besieged with more questions than answers in works that seek to strike new ground, Dennett's notwithstanding.

All said, perhaps what the study shows is that Dennett's philosophy testifies more to the futility of defending for a version of instrumentalism than convincing us of its tenability. Hence, if this study holds its ground, it shows that Dennettian philosophy of mind is an unattractive doctrine to ground one's inquiry of mind. In other words, unless the theory could be resuscitated, Dennett's way of doing philosophy most likely would remain a drudgery in blind alley that leads only to dead end.

⁷¹ Dennett himself has the following to say: "when people challenge me to announce my allegiance – to eliminative materialism or property dualism or realism or emergentism or even (God forbid) epiphenomenalism, or whatever – I will firmly resist the challenge" (DC 214).