

Phenomenological immanence, normativity, and semantic externalism

Steven Crowell

Published online: 15 December 2006
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2006

Abstract This paper argues that transcendental phenomenology (here represented by Edmund Husserl) can accommodate the main thesis of semantic externalism, namely, that intentional content is not simply a matter of what is ‘in the head,’ but depends on how the world is. I first introduce the semantic problem as an issue of how linguistic tokens or mental states can have ‘content’—that is, how they can set up conditions of satisfaction or be responsive to norms such that they can succeed or fail at referring. The standard representationalist view—which thinks of the problem in first-person terms—is contrasted with Brandom’s pragmatic inferentialist approach, which adopts a third-person stance. The rest of the paper defends a phenomenological version of the representationalist position (seeking to preserve its first-person stance) but offers a conception of representation that does not identify it with an entity ‘in the head.’ The standard view of Husserl as a Cartesian internalist is undermined by rejecting its fundamental assumption—that Husserl’s concept of the ‘noema’ is a mental entity—and by defending a concept of ‘phenomenological immanence’ that has a normative, rather than a psychological, structure. Finally, it is argued that phenomenological immanence cannot be identified with ‘consciousness’ in Husserl’s sense, though consciousness is a necessary condition for it.

Keywords Intentionality · Representation · Consciousness · Inferentialism · Transcendental philosophy · Edmund Husserl · Noema

In 1975 Hilary Putnam published “The Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” in which he argued that “‘meanings’ just ain’t in the *head*” (Putnam, 1975b, p. 227). In the debate that arose around this thesis in the 1980s and 1990s, the term ‘internalism’ came to be used for the thesis that Putnam criticized, while ‘externalism’ named a cluster of

S. Crowell (✉)
Philosophy Department, Rice University,
MS 14, P.O. Box 1892, Houston,
TX 77251-1892, USA
e-mail: crowell@rice.edu

alternative positions. With few exceptions, phenomenologists did not participate in this debate. There were many reasons for this, but one of them, surely, is well expressed by Murchada (2003, p. 98). “Far from being enlightening,” Murchada writes, the distinction between internalism and externalism “actually obscures the understanding of both Husserl and Heidegger.” The reason, he thinks, is clear: already in Husserl “the reduction . . . set[s] the very distinction of internalism and externalism aside.” Dan Zahavi (2004, p. 53) reaches a similar conclusion: “In my view, the phenomenological analyses of intentionality (be it Husserl’s, Heidegger’s or Merleau-Ponty’s) all entail such a fundamental rethinking of the very relation between subjectivity and world that it no longer makes much sense to designate them as either internalist or externalist.”

While I share these views, the concept of *phenomenological immanence*, which results from the reduction and is crucial to the kind of “fundamental rethinking” Zahavi invokes, remains a difficult one, and it seems to me that the debate over internalism and externalism can provide a useful framework for clarifying it. As I shall argue, what is distinctive about phenomenological immanence is that it is *normatively* structured and so contrasts sharply with the Cartesian-psychological *forum internum* of standard internalism, a conception of ‘the head’ that is shared by standard externalism. In this, phenomenological immanence bears an interesting relation to the ‘space of reasons’ articulated in Robert Brandom’s pragmatic inferentialism, which likewise tries to get beyond the assumptions of the internalism/externalism debate. But inferentialism abandons the first-person stance and denies the significance of consciousness for the theory of intentional content. From this almost behaviorist stance, however, it is impossible to recover the meaningful structure of lived experience at all, and it is therefore worth the effort to see whether the goals of inferentialism might be achieved without the loss its methodological approach entails. I shall argue that by preserving the methodological priority of the first-person stance, phenomenological immanence offers a distinct form of internalism that incorporates, by reconfiguring, externalist intuitions about the necessary connection between mind and world.

The argument shall proceed in five sections. After a brief presentation of what I understand by ‘semantic externalism’ (Sect. 1), I examine one particularly stark example of the common picture according to which Husserl is a semantic internalist in contrast to Heidegger’s externalist stance (Sect. 2). I then identify where this interpretation goes awry—namely, in its adoption of the Fregean interpretation of the noema—and explore an alternative account that begins to incorporate externalist elements (Sect. 3). But this raises the question of whether such externalism is compatible with the ‘phenomenological immanence’ to which the transcendental reduction gives rise. A look at the discussion of transcendence and immanence in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, and an interpretation of Husserl’s infamous annihilation of the world thought-experiment in *Ideas I* that renders it useless as evidence of internalism, provide the answer (Sect. 4). Finally, the importance of retaining the idea of phenomenological immanence—that is, of insisting on the methodological priority of the first-person stance—will be shown in connection with one recent critique of externalism (Sect. 5).

1 What is semantic externalism?

Syntactics concerns the structure of an utterance—that which can remain constant while its content varies—while semantics concerns its ‘meaning,’ what is ‘said.’ Con-

temporary philosophical semantics largely derives from Frege's thesis that meaning determines reference. Even Putnam shares this Fregean axiom: "meaning determines extension" (Putnam, 1975b, p. 270). But contemporary semantics divides on the question of how to think about meaning. Internalists hold that it is something like a mental representation or concept, part of the psychological make-up of the speaker. Externalists deny this: "The psychological state of the individual speaker does not determine 'what he means'" (Putnam, 1975b, p. 270). Externalists need not deny that there *is* some sort of psychological representation—or 'narrow content'—but they argue that relying on its descriptive features to determine reference encounters insuperable difficulties. For instance, everyone agrees that we can be wrong about the properties we think something has. But this is possible only if we can refer to that thing even while being wrong about its properties. By holding that our reference to a thing is determined by the descriptive content of our thoughts about it, semantic internalism seems to rule out that possibility. A second problem concerns modality: the descriptions that provide necessary and sufficient conditions for identification are not supposed to be mere matters of fact; they should apply to things in various possible circumstances. But the usual candidates for descriptive conditions—phenomenal properties such as solidity, color, etc.—fail to preserve modality: 'gold' would still pick out gold even if, by some natural change in the world, gold were no longer yellow, or solid, and so on.¹

Exploiting these and many other examples and thought-experiments, an alternative 'externalist' approach to semantics arose that distinguished this narrow or psychological notion of content or meaning from something called 'wide' content. As Putnam (1975b, p. 271) put it, traditional internalist semantics "leaves out other people and the world." On this view, narrow content provides neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for reference. Instead, the referring function of at least some terms—such as proper names and natural kind terms—is direct. Descriptions may be associated with such terms, but this is a contingent matter that has merely psychological or sociological significance. Such descriptions do not determine what I refer to when I use words. What then *does* determine reference for the externalist? Though views vary, perhaps the two most influential are the 'causal' theory, according to which reference is determined by the wide content of my intentional state, which includes being in an appropriate causal relation to what the term picks out; and the 'social' theory, according to which what determines the reference of a term is the way it is used not by me but by experts in my linguistic community.²

Semantic externalism is a position in the philosophy of language, but by an easy extension one can speak of 'semantic' externalism wherever one has intentional content—for instance, in propositional attitudes like belief and desire, and also in perception. For in every case a *meaningful* relation to the world is established.³ One can certainly debate whether this notion of meaning picks out a unitary class: are linguistic meaning, the content of my beliefs, and the 'as-structure' of my perceptions examples of a single genus? If so, can that unitary character be captured by the notion of 'conceptual content'? But for present purposes we need not decide such questions, and 'semantic externalism' shall here refer to a theory about intentional content *per se*, not merely linguistic content.

¹ For an elaboration of these and other arguments against what they call the "classical theory," see Margolis and Laurence (1999, pp. 21–23).

² For the causal theory see Kripke (1972); for the social theory see Burge (1979).

³ On this point see Segal (2000, p. 24).

Can anything more be said, in general, about this content? As already noted, semantic internalists commonly understand it as a kind of mental representation. Suppose I believe that Copenhagen is in Denmark. The state I am in in believing this is a mental state—that is, it is used in psychological explanations of my behavior. It is also, in Fodor’s terms, a representational state since it specifies “a relation and a representation such that the subject bears the one to the other” (Fodor, 1984, p. 278). Here the relation is that of believing (as opposed to imagining, hoping, wondering, etc.), and the representation is a certain way of taking Copenhagen, or Copenhagen-taken-in-a-certain-way, namely as being in Denmark. Now the debate between internalists and externalists is shaped by the internalist commitment to an understanding of representations that I will call ‘ontological.’ On Fodor’s view, for instance, a representation is a distinct *entity*, namely, that entity to which the subject is related in a mental state. How then does such an entity establish a relation to the world? John Searle, who defends a version of classic Fregean internalism, argues that it involves a set of satisfaction conditions, that is, it establishes a *normative* relation between the subject and a bit of the world such that whether the representation is as it is *supposed* to be depends on some state of the world (Searle, 1983).

It is this normative aspect that does all the work in semantic internalism, for only by its means can we explain what it is for a mental entity to refer. How then does such normativity come to belong to a mental representation? Internalists are often committed to the idea that it is *intrinsic* to mental representations: these ontological items are simply such as to have normative or semantic properties. Searle (2002, p. 79), for instance, claims that this is just one of the natural powers of the brain: “Intrinsic intentional phenomena are caused by neurophysiological processes going on in the brain and they occur in and are realized in the structure of the brain.” Thus “the ‘mind-body’ problem is no more a real problem than the ‘stomach-digestion’ problem” (Searle, 1983, p. 15). But this answer is really none at all. As John Haugeland notes, Searle has nothing to say about “*how* a physical system might have *normative* properties *intrinsically*” (Haugeland, 1998, p. 295).⁴

Thus it might seem that the concept of representation is a dead-end for a theory of intentional content, and indeed this conclusion is drawn by pragmatists such as Robert Brandom. Highlighting the fact that intentionality is a matter of someone taking the world to be a certain way, Brandom understands such ‘taking’ as the incurring of commitments in speaking, rather than as possessing some mental representation. Turning the semantic tradition on its head, Brandom shows that representational content is not primitive by reconstructing it in terms of the intrinsic normativity of inferentially regulated discursive practices (Brandom, 2000, pp. 46–47). Phenomenology shares Brandom’s anti-Cartesian motivation, but unlike Brandom it preserves the methodological priority of the first-person perspective. For this reason it cannot go all the way with pragmatic anti-representationalism, which Brandom calls ‘expressivism.’ Rather, I will argue that the phenomenological concept of immanence yields a

⁴ Segal alerts us to another problem with this view. To explain intentional content in terms of the satisfaction conditions involved in certain mental states is not to give an account of the ‘cognitive content’ of those states—i.e., the “properties that account for the role of these states in typical psychological predictions and explanations” (Segal, 2000, p. 3). Searle’s position fails here because the satisfaction conditions are not *themselves* part of the intentional content of the mental state in question—they are states of the world: “Searle explicitly denies that the thoughts themselves have these conditions as their representational contents.” Hence “we cannot identify the suggested [satisfaction] conditions with cognitive contents” (Segal, 2000, pp. 105–106). But we were trying precisely to explain how *those* contents could establish a relation of reference.

non-ontological, quasi-inferential concept of representation. Representations are not mental items or brain states but ways of taking the world that are defined in *evidential*—that is to say, intrinsically normative—terms.⁵ But before the point of such an argument can become clear, it will be necessary to confront a common misunderstanding about the phenomenological position, one that threatens to block any connection between phenomenology and externalist intuitions.

2 Phenomenology and the internalism/externalism debate

Recently the distinction between internalism and externalism has been deployed as a way to contrast Husserl's phenomenology with Heidegger's, and something like a received view seems to be emerging: Husserl is said to adopt internalism, a 'mentalistic' conception of intentionality, while Heidegger moves toward externalism.⁶ On this view Husserl remains a Cartesian, a methodological solipsist, and an ontological representationalist, while Heidegger breaks with Cartesianism, is a methodological socialist, and dispenses with representations in favor of a direct opening onto the world.

Taylor Carman, for instance, argues that Husserl is a semantic internalist who explains the "aboutness" of experience by "appeal to ideal or abstract meanings," to noemata construed as Fregean *Sinne* (Carman, 2003, p. 68). Because the abstract character of *Sinn* is here understood as *ideality*, meaning can have no real connection with the world. Thus Husserl is said to subscribe to methodological solipsism in Fodor's sense: "how the world is makes no difference to one's mental states"; further, intentional content is conceived "in abstraction from social practice and communicative discourse" (Carman, 2003, p. 56). Both of these claims are false, but they arise quite naturally from Carman's widely shared assumptions. These assumptions are best seen by considering the transcendental reduction, the methodological step that Husserl invokes in order to get the sphere of phenomenological immanence into view.

On Carman's reading the reduction consists "in methodologically turning away from everything external to consciousness and focusing instead on what is internal to it" (Carman, 2003, p. 80). Thus "the ordinary objects of our intentional attitudes drop out of sight," leading to a "rigorous distinction" between the "inner and the outer, the immanent and the transcendent"—that is, between the "ideal or abstract meanings" inhabiting consciousness and the "ordinary objects of our intentional attitudes," such as chairs, artworks, solar systems, and other people (Carman, 2003, p. 80). Curiously, however, Carman does not see internalism as a *consequence* of this reading of the reduction, but as *evidence* for it. Where Tugendhat and Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, argue that the reduction brackets "the objectivity [i.e., positedness], but not the externality or transcendence, of the world," Carman insists that this

⁵ One might argue that it would be preferable to drop the term 'representation' in cases where a theory does not posit a mental entity as mediating between mind and world—speaking perhaps instead of 'presentations,' i.e., ways in which the world presents itself to a subject. However, the concept of a 'presentation' does not, while the concept of 'representation' does, capture the central point, namely, that in the intentional contexts at issue in the debate things in the world present themselves in *meaningful* ways, *as* something. That a thing merely present itself is not enough; what we are interested in is how it can present itself in a normatively structured way. Hence I prefer to speak here of a 'non-ontological' concept of representation, since I want to deny that representation must always take place by means of an intermediary entity while retaining the idea that a thing's 'presentation' be assessable in normative terms. On my reasons for employing the term 'quasi-inferential' in explicating the kind of normativity at issue here, see footnote 15.

⁶ See Carman (2003), Keller (1999), and Rouse (2002).

misconstrues Husserl's "subjectivism, and more importantly, the *internalism*" of his view (Carman, 2003, p. 83). Evidence for this internalism is said to include Husserl's annihilation of the world thought-experiment: if consciousness "needs no thing in order to exist," surely this means that intentional content is indifferent to the way the world is, such that the "ordinary objects of our intentional attitudes" can drop out under the reduction in favor of a "domain of transcendental subjectivity as both immanent and ideal" (Carman, 2003, pp. 81–82).

The problem with Carman's argument, however, is that it flies in the face of the very motives that led Husserl to introduce the transcendental reduction. Primary among these was a desire to *include* the 'transcendent' object—the "ordinary objects of our intentional attitudes"—within the scope of phenomenological reflection. Whether Husserl succeeded in this or not, getting this part of the story right is a necessary condition for understanding phenomenology's stance toward the internalism/externalism debate, since it determines how 'inner' and 'outer' are to be understood. Carman is not alone in failing to appreciate this matter.⁷ He can, for instance, turn to Derrida for "an argument to the effect" that "the internalism that made the reduction possible . . . was arguably already present in spirit in the *Logical Investigations* of 1900–01" (Carman, 2003, p. 84). But this is wrong. Husserl *was* a methodological solipsist in Fodor's sense in the *Logical Investigations* since at the time his view of consciousness involved an unresolved *naturalistic* element. As de Boer (1978, p. 232) correctly notes, Husserl then understood the object of phenomenological reflection—namely, the "sphere of purely psychological experiences"—as an "artificial island, as it were, within a positivistic-naturalistic world" that lay beyond the reach of phenomenological method.⁸ But Husserl later embraced transcendental phenomenology precisely to overcome this naturalistic Cartesian view.⁹ Thus even if phenomenology was committed to something like standard internalism in the *Logical Investigations*, it is by no means clear that it remained so in *Ideas I*.

A further, very important, point may be drawn from the received view. Carman paints Husserl as an arch-internalist in order to set up a stark contrast with Heidegger's position, which he sees as a kind of externalism because intentionality is made to depend on the 'world' of being-in-the-world. But Carman also notes that Heidegger's externalism is 'practical,' that is, it rejects the psychological concept of the 'inner,' and so also the ontological concept of representation that is shared by all parties to the internalism/externalism debate. He quotes Heidegger, from *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, on this point: "For Dasein there is no outside, which is why it is also nonsensical to talk about an inside" (Carman, 2003, pp. 128–129). But Carman fails

⁷ See Keller (1999), Philipse (1995), Smith (2003), and Lafont (2005).

⁸ Zahavi (2004, p. 61), makes a similar point when he notes that "in *Logische Untersuchungen* Husserl is very explicit about the fact that he regards the question of whether consciousness can attain knowledge of a mind-independent reality as a metaphysical question which has no place in phenomenology."

⁹ De Boer recognizes the true situation here: "Thus we see that the famous bracketing of the 'external world,' which is often ascribed to *Ideen I*, is actually found already in the *Logische Untersuchungen*" (de Boer, 1978, p. 199). While this thesis nominally agrees with Carman's, its sense is entirely different: the *Logische Untersuchungen* presents us with "a psychological theory of knowledge" that "in a certain sense remains stuck in 'representationalism'; Husserl's method here is "reminiscent of Descartes, to whom Husserl was closer at this point than during any other phase of his development" (de Boer, 1978, p. 201). Indeed, the kind of "internalism"—psychological, naturalistic—that one finds present in the *Logical Investigations* represents a "perplexity" in Husserl's thinking, while "the transcendental *epoché* of *Ideen I* has the function of rendering this pseudo-solution superfluous" (de Boer, 1978, p. 199).

to see that deconstruction of the inner/outer dichotomy had already been attained in *Husserl's* phenomenology.

If, with Carman, we call a theory 'semantic' if it holds that intentionality is mediated by a representational entity, then neither Husserl *nor* Heidegger offered a semantic theory. As phenomenologists, however, *both* offer *non-ontological* theories of *representation* in the 'quasi-inferential' sense introduced above: the way the world and things in the world are taken in experience is, for each, a function of (as Husserl puts it) their "intentional implications" or (as Heidegger puts it) the "referential totality of significance." On Carman's view there is a major gulf between Husserl and Heidegger on this point: Husserl's "transcendental phenomenon 'world'" is "immanent to consciousness," while Heidegger's "worldliness of the world" is "outside ourselves" in the "circumstances of practical life" (Carman, 2003, p. 85). But as we shall see, everything depends on what 'immanent' means here. To the extent that the circumstances of practical life can be seen as *phenomenological* conditions of the meaningful structure of what we encounter in first-person experience, they cannot be construed naturalistically as third-person data; they must already belong to the reflectively accessible terrain of normatively integrated 'phenomena'—to a kind of 'immanence.'¹⁰ Further, if 'internalism' means that intentionality is an intrinsic property of the subject,¹¹ then Heidegger too is an internalist. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, for instance, he writes: "The intentional relation to the object does not first fall to the subject with and by means of the extantness of the object; rather, the subject is structured intentionally within itself" (Heidegger, 1982, pp. 60–61).

The real phenomenological contribution to the internalism/externalism debate thus lies in its rejection of the picture of inner and outer that governs that debate, together with the ontological conception of representation that divides the two camps—substituting for it a normative, quasi-inferential approach to meaning. But Heidegger's appeal to a kind of internalist thesis, above, indicates that the main question remains open: how are we to understand the notion of *phenomenological* immanence? A first step is to attack the basic assumption of the received view, namely, that Husserl's *noema* is a mental representation.

3 The debate over the noema

My goal here is simply to draw a couple of points from the debate over the noema—and the perceptual noema in particular—between representatives of the 'California School,' on the one hand, who generally follow Dagfinn Føllesdal's Fregean

¹⁰ In Sect. 4 I shall discuss the character of this concept of immanence in detail. At this point, however, it might already be wondered why the context of normatively integrated phenomena, or 'world,' should be identified with a kind of 'immanence' at all once we follow Husserl and Heidegger in abandoning the psychological concepts of inner and outer. The reason is two-fold. First, Husserl himself uses the term 'immanence' to speak about this context, and the aim of the present paper is to elucidate Husserl's notion. But, second, there is a methodological motivation, to the extent that the phenomenological concept is meant to block purely third-person construals of the normatively integrated space of meaning. To speak of 'immanence' here is to refuse the move to what McDowell (1994, p. 35) calls a "sideways-on understanding of our own thinking"—i.e., a view not accessible from within that thinking itself. What is necessary and sufficient for a philosophical explication of intentionality is accessible from the first-person perspective and so 'immanent' to experience in the relevant sense—which obviously does not entail that it is all 'in the head' in the psychological sense.

¹¹ Segal (2000, p. 11) and Searle (1983, p. 26).

interpretation (Føllesdal, 1969), and those of the ‘East Coast School’ influenced by a more Aristotelian reading. Specifically, I will look at the position laid out by Smith and McIntyre (1982), and that of Drummond (1990). Though each of these authors has added importantly to our understanding since these publications, we can content ourselves here with the original positions.¹²

Smith and McIntyre (1982, p. 226) recognize an externalist element in the perceptual noema, but they argue that “the ‘transcendental’ foundation of Husserl’s phenomenology . . . is incompatible with letting the object of perception, or any other part of the external world, play a role in perceptual intention.”¹³ I want to argue, in contrast, that it is *precisely* the move from the psychologistic position of the *Logical Investigations* to the transcendental position of *Ideas I* that enables a rapprochement between Husserl’s theory of intentionality and the indexical, contextual character of perception.

Smith and McIntyre (1982, pp. 211–212) rightly claim that the perceptual noema goes beyond the descriptivism of Frege’s *Sinn*, since the latter, as definite description, does not necessarily pick out one *specific* individual, though it does pick out one individual. Because they assume that Husserl’s theory is an extension of Frege’s descriptivism beyond its *de dicto* origins, however, Smith and McIntyre seek to resolve the difficulty of the missing “non-descriptive component of sense” in the perceptual noema by construing the noematic X as a “demonstrative” (Smith & McIntyre, 1982, p. 213). That is, the X is interpreted as a *kind* of linguistic sense. Nevertheless even this expedient, on their view, “really offers no solution to the problem” (Smith & McIntyre, 1982, p. 214). Why not? The sense of a demonstrative includes two moments: one unvarying (“whatever is being pointed out by the speaker”) and another indexical or contextual. But this contextual moment, they argue, cannot be captured from the standpoint of Husserl’s transcendentalism: “Husserl’s basic theory of intentionality requires” that “the ‘internal’ content of experience” determine the intentional character of perception. Otherwise, “intentionality would no longer be . . . a purely phenomenological property of consciousness” (Smith & McIntyre, 1982, p. 217). A genuine externalism can explain “what it is within the occasion of utterance in virtue of which ‘this’ refers to the relevant object” by appealing to “the speaker’s physical relation to the referent” (Smith & McIntyre, 1982, p. 217). Husserl, in contrast, can appeal only to “the speaker’s *intuition* of the referent in perception.” He can do justice to indexicality, then, only “if he takes intuition to be a partly contextual, perhaps partly causal, and not purely intentional relation.” But, they conclude, “there is no evidence of such a view in Husserl” (Smith & McIntyre, 1982, p. 217).

It is true that there is no evidence of causal externalism in Husserl, but does this mean that Husserl has no resources for dealing with the contextual elements in intentionality? Smith and McIntyre (1982, p. 221) note that Husserl does take certain contextual factors into account—for instance, the beliefs that are involved as background in any intentional act—but these are said to be merely “*immanent* contextual

¹² For a fuller treatment of the debate between the California and the East Coast schools, see Zahavi (2004).

¹³ Smith and McIntyre (1982, p. 226) go on to argue that “existential” phenomenology can avoid this problem, but they wonder whether an existential account of perception “remains purely phenomenological.” In contrast, the concept of phenomenological immanence that I am defending here would pertain equally to both existential and transcendental phenomenology—though, as I shall argue in conclusion, the concept of phenomenological immanence cannot finally be identified with consciousness.

influences” that “still remain within the bounds of phenomenology,” whereas “the transcendent circumstances of an act are a different matter entirely.” But what do ‘immanent’ and ‘transcendent’ mean here? Can the phenomenological be properly distinguished from the non-phenomenological by contrasting the *intuition* of the referent with the ‘referent itself,’ or the *beliefs* that make up the intentional context and the ‘transcendent circumstances’ themselves? This sort of flat-footed subjectivism reminds one, at best, of the *Logical Investigations*; it is the very thing that transcendental phenomenology was designed to avoid. Unless we adopt a third-person stance from the outset, the contrast between ‘what is intuited’ and the ‘thing itself’ cannot be a hard-and-fast one, since sometimes the intuition *gives* us the thing itself; sometimes beliefs are *true*.

To capture the holistic contextual character of beliefs we might be tempted to follow Robert Brandom’s suggestion that we construe them not as mental items but as commitments incurred when assertions are made as part of discursive practices. Such commitments reflect “material inferences” that connect possible assertions with one another (Brandom, 2000, pp. 52–57). If I say that Copenhagen is north of Hamburg, I am committed to the “good material inference” that Hamburg is south of Copenhagen. To understand what a person means is to make explicit the commitments entailed in her assertions through the game of giving and asking for reasons. If beliefs can be defined as what I am normatively responsible for within a specific practice, then a belief context is not, as Smith and McIntyre assume, something immanent; it is as external as you like. But it is perhaps more difficult to see how Smith and McIntyre’s contrast between ‘intuition’ and the ‘thing itself’ can be similarly recast in non-mentalistic, normative terms. Here Brandom is of no help, since his third-person stance blocks access to the normativity of perception. Perception is taken to be mere “sentience,” that is, “what we share with non-verbal animals such as cats—the capacity to be aware in the sense of being awake” (Brandom, 1994, p. 5). And this is something that is supposed to lack any genuine normative structure. For progress here we must return to phenomenology, and specifically to the East Coast interpretation of the noema.¹⁴

John Drummond rejects Smith and McIntyre’s Fregean construal of the perceptual noema as an “abstract and eternal . . . content,” a kind of representation through which reference is somehow achieved. Their attempt to construe the X as “a demonstrative pronoun” misconstrues Husserl’s texts, which “identify this X with the intended objectivity itself” (Drummond, 1990, p. 135). If the noema is not that ‘through’ which an object is intended, but the intended object itself, then noematic meaning does not need supplementation by a distinct indexical component: “That innermost moment [the X], belonging to the *Sinn* itself . . . is the intended object itself considered formally as the bearer of the properties intended in the experience. Thus the formally considered object is a moment within the noema rather than something intended through the noema” (Drummond, 1990, p. 135). The noematic *Sinn* is not “an instrumental

¹⁴ If one were able successfully to recast both belief context and perceptual context in quasi-inferential terms, one might see a way toward reconstructing the externalist’s appeal to both the causal connection between speaker and referent and the social environment or ‘linguistic division of labor’ entirely in phenomenological terms. Something like this, it seems to me, is implied in the treatment of intentionality and language in Husserl (1989). However, such a reconstruction first assumes a proper grasp of what phenomenological immanence is. A related suggestion for developing Brandom’s position—though one that holds to Brandom’s rejection of the first-person—can be found in Rouse (2002).

entity distinct from the intended object, an avenue of access . . . such that we must go through *and beyond* the Sinn to the object” (Drummond, 1990, p. 136). We go through the descriptive sense to the object, “in the sense that we *penetrate* it. The intended objectivity is contained within the noema just as it is intended . . .” (Drummond, 1990, p. 136). Thus, to think of the noema as abstract is not to conceive it as *ideal* in the manner of a universal that would need indexical supplement, but as *irreal*, that is, as “the object abstractly considered,” as known “through phenomenological reflection” but not “ontologically distinguished from the intended objectivities” (Drummond, 1990, p. 112). It is my contention that this notion of irrealty—the object as considered in phenomenological reflection—is tied to a quasi-inferential concept of representation, which is supposed to capture what it means to speak of a ‘way’ of taking the world.

Let us note only two points here. First, Drummond, like Brandom, rejects the ontological account of representation. Unlike Brandom, however, whose reconstruction of representation proceeds entirely in terms of inferential commitments and entitlements implicit in third-person discursive practices, Drummond’s phenomenological account allows us to preserve the normative character of perception itself. The perceptual noema is not a phenomenalistic entity but a node of *intentional implications*: the perceived color is an ‘adumbration of . . .’; the front side ‘implies’ the unseen back; taking it as a barn ‘entails’ a specific relation to the landscape, the barnyard, and farming practices; all these aspects ‘refer’ us to the unity of the whole, the “object formally considered,” and so on. The way the visible front side of a door ‘entails’ its hidden back side recalls Brandom’s idea of material inference, but it is *not* a function of commitments I incur in asserting or thinking *that* something is a door. Phenomenologically, these intentional implications belong to the perception itself. Hence the theory is only *quasi-inferential*.¹⁵ And because perception is thus neither mere sentient ‘awareness’ nor mere differential responsiveness to environmental conditions, but is instead disclosure of a meaningful world, objects themselves, and not just talk about them, are drawn into the normative space of reasons.¹⁶

This brings us to the second point: once we give up the ontological interpretation of representation there is no reason to see the field of phenomenology as specifically ‘subjective’ or internalist in the standard sense. As Drummond argues, noematic meaning can determine reference only because the referent is *inseparable* from that very meaning (Drummond, 1990, p. 189). So is this equivalent to Putnam’s thesis? Is Husserl an externalist? To address this question we must get clear about how a quasi-inferential

¹⁵ The kind of normativity involved here is distinctly phenomenological and calls for fuller treatment than phenomenologists have given it so far. For this reason I have chosen the slightly awkward term, ‘quasi-inferential,’ to designate it. Welton (2000, p. 346) gestures toward it when he talks of world as “a nexus of implications and entailments” that “belong to the order of meaning.” But he does not explain what these (non-logical) ‘entailments’ are. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty, Kelly (2005) has made some progress in spelling out a non-cognitivist, while still normatively structured, theory of perception, but until we have a clearer picture of how such non-logical, yet normative, connections are to be conceived the suspicion may arise that phenomenology has not really identified a new *normative* form of connection, a connection that is neither mere non-normative ‘association’ nor full-blown conceptual, inferential ‘entailment.’ To speak of ‘quasi-inferential’ here is to signal that phenomenology has to do with normative, not psychological, connections, while acknowledging that as yet the only clear conception of such normativity we have derives from the realm of the conceptual and the explicitly inferential, the language of which phenomenology then employs somewhat metaphorically.

¹⁶ This suggests a proximity between phenomenology and the position defended by McDowell (1994), but we cannot pursue this proximity—and the equally important differences that stem from the fact that for phenomenology not all content is conceptual—in the present essay.

conception of representation goes hand-in-hand with a reinterpretation of immanence and transcendence.

4 Phenomenological immanence

Even if Husserl's approach to intentionality does not introduce a mental entity to mediate between the act and its object, it is a 'representational' theory in the sense that it insists that experience has descriptive content: the world is there in some particular way or other, *as something*.¹⁷ Does the world contribute to the content, or is it the case that "how the world is makes no difference to one's mental states"? Carman, and Smith and McIntyre, attribute internalism to Husserl: because the real object is bracketed in the reduction, it can play no explanatory role in the content of my intentional acts. By 'explanation' Smith and McIntyre mean a causal account. But is causality the only way the object can make a difference to intentional content? Instead of assuming the naturalistic picture presupposed in talk of 'causal explanation' and 'mental content,' suppose we adopt the transcendental-phenomenological standpoint, with its quasi-inferential understanding of meaning. In that case, the question of whether my intentional content could be the same even if my worldly circumstances were quite different—say, if I were a brain in a vat—takes on a very different character. To see how, we must note the difference between phenomenological immanence and the picture of the mental at work in standard semantic internalism.

In *The Idea of Phenomenology*, first published in 1907, Husserl analyzes the psychological concept of the mental that he had accepted in the *Logical Investigations* and that still figures in most standard internalist positions. On this view, the mental constitutes a sphere of "genuine (*reell*) immanence" consisting of "acts" such as believing, perceiving, desiring, and so on, which have "genuine abstract parts genuinely constituting them." We need not specify what those parts are (Husserl speaks of 'act-quality' and 'act matter;' Fodor speaks of 'function' and 'representation'), since the uncontroversial point is that "the physical thing which [the act] intends or supposedly perceives or remembers is *not* to be found in the *cogitatio* itself . . . as a genuine concrete part" (Husserl, 1964, p. 27). Corresponding to this concept of 'genuine immanence' is 'genuine transcendence,' namely, that which is not a genuine part of the mental process, not part of the psychological sphere. In standard externalist theories the referent is genuinely transcendent in this sense. What makes Husserl so hard to locate within the debate, however, is that, while preserving the concept of genuine immanence and transcendence, he introduces another conceptual pair—*intentional* immanence and transcendence—which henceforth serves as the basis for his transcendental concept of intentional content (Husserl, 1964, p. 43).

This new distinction turns on the idea of *Evidenz*, the self-giving of something. *Evidenz* is not defined ontologically but by way of the phenomenological difference between something's being given 'in person' and merely being emptily 'meant' or intended. Thus, while one could imagine a theory of genuine immanence and transcendence that made no reference to experience, an evidential theory is irreducibly first-personal: self-giveness refers to modes of *presentation*.¹⁸ According to Husserl,

¹⁷ See footnote 5.

¹⁸ However, this does not commit one to any specific view about the relation of such presentation to genuine or psychological immanence. It is, of course, always possible that what presents itself as given

the concept of *Evidenz* marks off “an altogether different immanence, namely, *absolute* and *clear* givenness, *self-givenness in the absolute sense*,” together with a corresponding concept of “transcendence,” namely, what is “not evident,” something “posited” but not itself *given* (Husserl, 1964, p. 28). Because evidential, or “intentional” (Husserl, 1964, p. 41), immanence does not invoke an ontological distinction between regions—between a *forum internum* and an external world—but a normative relation between presence and absence, phenomenological immanence does not entail psychological or subjective idealism. An object that is transcendent in the ‘genuine’ sense is not reinterpreted as something genuinely immanent; yet it can now be seen as immanent in the phenomenological sense, since it can be *self-given* or evident—not merely emptily ‘posited’ but there ‘in person.’ It may not be given adequately,¹⁹ but its genuine transcendence—the fact that it is not a ‘real part’ of the mind—provides no reason to assume that its presence to consciousness is mediated by a (genuinely) immanent entity or representation. Phenomenological immanence thus makes room for something like externalist intuitions.

Consider the familiar Water/Twater example. In 1750 ‘water’ is given perceptually in person on both Earth and Twin Earth. It is thus to that extent phenomenologically immanent. But it is given with an indefinitely open (internal and external) horizon of more or less ‘emptily’ co-intended properties, and is, to that extent, phenomenologically transcendent. The term ‘water’ thus picks out, as Husserl says, a node of “teleological interconnections,”²⁰ and for me and my twin to perceive something as water will not be to possess an ideal mental content but to respond to the world *in light of* this quasi-inferentially structured pattern of presence and absence. In 1750, in contrast, neither H₂O nor XYZ are even phenomenologically transcendent—that is, neither belongs to the evidential horizon of phenomenological immanence. Yet because the water I perceive is not an inert datum but an element within a normative space of intentional implications (teleological interconnections), it adumbrates avenues along which further aspects can become given—if/then structures that indicate a course of possible empirical investigation that could eventually disclose something like molecular structure. And it is these intentional links—not my causal contact with a particular substance—that determine what I am thinking about or perceiving.

This permits a certain rapprochement between internalist and externalist intuitions. In 1750 I and my twin can be said to share narrow content in that what we are ‘given’ in phenomenological immanence, with all the intentional implications *then available*, will be the same. In Brandom’s terms, we will be entitled to the same commitments. However, because the perceptual noema involves an X, ‘the object formally considered,’ not *all possible* aspects of the object *can* be brought to givenness in 1750. When molecular theory develops, together with the relevant technology and practices, more of those aspects will be available, and I and my twin will no longer be entitled to the

Footnote 18 continued

in person will turn out not to be so, but on Husserl’s view this ‘turning out’ is relative to *Evidenz* of the same sort and thus cannot constitute a reason for global skepticism.

¹⁹ In Husserl’s terms, an object is ‘adequately’ given if, in the intuition of that object, no partial intentions remain that are not intuitively fulfilled (Husserl, 1970, p. 763). Thus, for example, no physical thing can be given adequately, since intuitive fulfillment pertains only to the side that faces us, while the hidden back side remains merely ‘emptily’ intended. At certain stages of his thinking Husserl held that reflection on ‘inner experiences’ did intuit its objects in full adequacy (Husserl, 1970, p. 763); but his deepening reflection on the temporal structure of consciousness led him to abandon that view.

²⁰ Husserl (1964, p. 46). This idea came to play in increasingly important role in Husserl’s thinking. See already “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” first published in 1911 (Husserl, 1965, pp. 90, 108, 113).

same commitments. If neither of us is a scientist, we will have to defer to experts, a deference which is itself phenomenologically entailed by the horizon that has opened up around ‘water.’ If we *are* scientists, we will be led along *different* inferential paths—I to H₂O, my twin to XYZ—and we will now have to decide whether there are two kinds of water, or whether we need a new term, or whatever. This is not because we have always been in causal contact with different substances but because Water/Twater’s modes of givenness are caught up in our different contexts of intentional implications.²¹

Such phenomenological ‘externalism’ may seem little different from mentalistic conceptions of immanence, however. Without an appeal to causality it might still seem that the notion of *Evidenz* would commit phenomenology to a subjective realm in which intentional content remains ‘in the head,’ though now in a mysteriously extended sense. Doesn’t the annihilation of the world thought-experiment in *Ideas I*, for example, clearly imply that phenomenological immanence is just standard internalism? If consciousness is “absolute being in the sense that by essential necessity immanent being *nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum*” (Husserl, 1983, p. 110), does this mean that “how the world is makes no difference to one’s mental states”? If so, there is little chance for a rapprochement between phenomenology and semantic externalism. But is it so?

Without trying to reconstruct every aspect of Husserl’s complex thought-experiment, considerable doubt can be cast on the thesis that it commits Husserl to Fodorian internalism if we attend closely to what Husserl means by the following key statement: “It thus becomes evident that while the being of consciousness . . . would indeed be necessarily modified by an annihilation of the world of physical things, its own existence would not be touched” (Husserl, 1983, p. 110).

Two things must be kept in mind in considering what Husserl is claiming here.²² The first is that Husserl does *not* equate ‘consciousness’ with *intentionality*. The internalist thesis, in contrast, is concerned exclusively with intentionality. And second, when Husserl identifies consciousness with ‘immanent being,’ he is operating with the notion of immanence developed in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, based on the normative, evidential concept of empty intentions and their potential intuitive fulfillment, not the mentalistic conception of the *Logical Investigations*. ‘Being’ is understood in

²¹ The externalist intuition consists chiefly in the idea that there is an indexical/occasional moment to intentional content, such that, as Putnam (1975a, p. 151) put it, “meaning indeed determines extension; but only because extension (fixed by *some* test or other) is, in some cases, ‘part of the meaning.’” That I am referring to water when I say “There is water on Twin Earth”—that is, that I am not referring to Twater, even when I am on Twin Earth and looking at Twater when I say this—is because the meaning of ‘water’ is linked to the substance that was picked out perceptually on Earth when the term was introduced and which was taken to *be some specific thing* (that could be tested and distinguished from other similar things). The idea of such a test, on the externalist view, is thus part of the meaning of the term, and this explains why my statement is false. Segal (2000, pp. 132–136) argues for an opposing internalist view: my concept of water is not that of a natural kind but a ‘motley.’ Thus it is not clear whether “There is water on Twin Earth” is true or false because a motley concept does not pick out any definite thing: there is certainly a watery substance on Twin Earth, and there is no fact of the matter as to whether we should call it another kind of water or give it the name of a new substance. The phenomenological approach retains the indexical and historical elements of the externalist view—and in the entailed reference to the horizon of scientific theory and practice it can also accommodate the role the externalist attributes to the test—but it rejects the naturalism that supports the strong reading of ‘water’ as a natural kind term. It thus shares one thing with Segal’s concept of a motley: it will be a matter of *decision* as to whether we come to call XYZ a kind of ‘water’ or not.

²² For further discussion of these issues see A. D. Smith’s contribution to this volume.

terms of *givenness*.²³ If this is not kept in mind, the very idea of an ‘annihilation’ of the world will be understood naturalistically, leading to irrelevant questions about causal relations between mind and world. Husserl gives the annihilation in question a very precise *phenomenological* sense: “Experience might show itself to be refractory to the demand that it carry on its positings of physical things harmoniously, that its context might lose its fixed regular organizations of adumbrations, apprehensions, and appearances—in short, that there might no longer be any world” (Husserl, 1983, p. 109). If from the standpoint of phenomenological immanence ‘world’ means the “correlate of certain multiplicities of experience distinguished by certain essential formations,” then nothing implies that “there must be some world or some physical thing or other” (Husserl, 1983, p. 109). Of course, were an ‘annihilation’ in this sense to take place, consciousness would certainly be ‘modified,’ as Husserl says. For it would no longer be consciousness of objects, no longer consciousness of the more or less seamlessly coherent context of our experiences that makes up the world. Nevertheless, even in a case of total breakdown of the rule-governed concatenations of experience there could still be ‘consciousness,’ that is, mental activity of some sort; and this claim seems at least plausible if we consider the condition of early infancy, perhaps, or serious psychosis. What Husserl denies is that there would still be *intentional content* without a world. For this reason, no conclusion about Husserl’s ‘internalism’ can be drawn from the claim that “no real being . . . is necessary to the being of consciousness itself” (Husserl, 1983, p. 110), since internalism’s sole concern is with intentional content. It might well be that real being *is* necessary for *intentionality*.²⁴

But what about the opening to externalism? How are we to imagine a link between phenomenological immanence and externalist intuitions if, from the very beginning, physical things have been defined by appeal to ‘concatenations of experience’? Could this ever yield an argument for rejecting the claim that “how the world is makes no

²³ Note, too, that these reflections—including the connection between being and givenness grounded in the argumentation of *The Idea of Phenomenology*—are offered as phenomenological descriptions that do not depend on the transcendental reduction but prepare the way for it. Thus the argument does not stand or fall with one’s stance toward the reduction. See Ricoeur (1967, pp. 16–17).

²⁴ There are, of course, texts in Husserl’s corpus that appear to oppose this reading. Consider this one: “Zum Wesen des Bewusstseins gehört zwar die Intentionalität, aber zum Wesen der Intentionalität gehört nicht die Notwendigkeit, dass irgendein transzendent Intentionales ‘wirklich existiere’ oder, was gleichwertig [ist], dass sich Realitätsintentionen des Bewusstseins einstimmig erfüllen” (Husserl, 2003, p. 79). This seems to say both that intentionality is essential to consciousness, and that no real thing is necessary for intentionality, and so to deny just the claims I am making on behalf of Husserl. In order to sort this matter out, however, one would have to consider carefully that Husserl employs the term ‘intentionality’ for several things that have little to do with the kind of ‘intentional content’ at issue in the internalism/externalism debate. For instance, he conceives the temporal structures of protention and retention that hold the stream of consciousness together even in the absence of constituted reality as a kind of ‘intentionality,’ and in that sense one could indeed not have consciousness without intentionality. That Husserl may have this dimension of temporality in mind is even suggested by a subsequent sentence, in which he writes: “Ein einzelnes monadisches Sein ist denkbar ohne konstituierte Natur. Und ‘denkbar’ sagt: Wir können die immanente Zeit willkürlich besetzen, so dass keine Natur konstituiert wäre” (Husserl, 2003, p. 79). But if we restrict ourselves to what might be called ‘act-intentionality’—that is, the kind of directedness toward objects that we find in propositional attitudes, perception, linguistic practices, and the like—then the claim at stake in my argument is that consciousness can exist without *act-intentionality*. And indeed the passage confirms this, since it argues that intentionality does not require that anything transcendent ‘exist’—which, as Husserl explains, means simply that the concatenations of experience fail to sustain the evidential implications inherent in them. This does not mean, however, that *act-intentionality* is possible without such fulfilled concatenations of experience (such ‘reality’). For more see footnotes 20 and 21. My thanks to Thane Naberhaus for pointing out this passage to me.

difference to one's mental states"? As I read it, the passage under consideration itself provides important tools for constructing such an argument.

Husserl first reminds us of the thesis of phenomenological immanence: "something transcendent is *given* by virtue of certain concatenations of experience" (Husserl, 1983, p. 110). Concatenations of experience are not constellations of sense data, however, but intentional acts that exhibit quasi-inferential relations among themselves, normative (or 'teleological') relations between confirming or disconfirming modes of givenness. Now suppose, writes Husserl, that in perceiving and thinking, and in "mutual understanding with other Egos," the subject manages to effect all these concatenations and that, in continual synthesis, "*nothing whatever* is lacking which is requisite for the appearance of a unitary world." Given all that, he asks, "is it still conceivable and not rather a countersense that the corresponding transcendent world *does not exist*" (Husserl, 1983, p. 111)? The rhetorical character of Husserl's question is clear: according to the phenomenological theory of intentional content—grounded in the normative structure of *Evidenz*-relations—it is 'countersensical' that a world presented in this way does not exist. The 'existence' (here used in the ordinary sense) of what is genuinely transcendent is not something that has no connection to phenomenological immanence; rather, it is what under certain normative conditions *shows itself in* phenomenological immanence.²⁵ Husserl's point here is that once we abandon an ontological in favor of a quasi-inferential concept of representation, we must admit that intentionality is *disclosive*. And with that, the Cartesian idea supporting standard internalism—that the world could appear exactly as it does appear while nevertheless not existing—is ruled out.²⁶

Now whether Husserl's argument is strong enough to establish this conclusion can be doubted. However, if the question is whether phenomenological immanence is

²⁵ Husserl (1983, p. 108) uses this point to argue that while there is no *formal* contradiction in the idea that there could be "a world outside ours"—i.e., a reality that was not part of the normative nexus of evidential connections through which the world of our experience is given—the idea of such a world contains a "material countersense:" "If there are any worlds, any real physical things whatever, then the experienced motivations constituting them must be *able* to extend into my experience and into that of each Ego . . ." (Husserl, 1983, p. 109). Such a world would not, then, really be 'outside'ours at all. Clearly, Husserl refuses to countenance the idea that there could be worlds, or realities, that *could not* be given through 'experienced motivations' that 'constituted'—i.e., disclosed—them. The idea of a reality that could not be given in *any* experience is entirely idle (purely 'formal'), and ultimately there are 'motivations' that can connect *all* experiences, however different, "essential possibilities for effecting mutual understanding" (Husserl, 1983, p. 108). This position simply expresses the phenomenological insight that there can be no ultimate gap between mind and world, subject and object.

²⁶ Zahavi (2004, p. 63) also makes this point: "Both Husserl and Heidegger argue that such scenarios [*sc.* of global hallucination: the evil demon, the brain in a vat] presuppose the possibility of distinguishing in principle between the world as it is understood by us and the world as it is in itself, but it is exactly this possibility and this distinction that they reject." If one were to argue that non-global hallucinations and other 'objectless presentations' show that there can be intentional contents without any 'real' being that is disclosed, one would have to do a careful phenomenology of how such hallucinations are in fact given. One of the conditions Husserl places on the disclosure of genuinely transcendent reality is, as we saw, that the harmonious concatenations of experiences in which the thing is given be fully confirmed "in mutual understanding with other Egos"—a condition normally not fulfilled by hallucinations. To preserve the externalist intuition that real being is necessary for intentionality (captured in the phenomenological claim that intentionality is non-ontologically representational, i.e., disclosive), one would have to abandon the one-to-one connection posited by causal externalism and make the more indirect argument that the content of 'deceptive' intentional states like hallucinations is finally parasitical on a general context of constituted, genuinely transcendent, reality or world.

supposed to entail the sort of internalism expressed in the thesis that “how the world is makes no difference to one’s mental states,” the evidence for a negative answer is strong. While Husserl’s reduction brackets the question of whether one can *explain* intentional content by appeal to causal chains and the microstructural properties of transcendent entities, he clearly denies that I could have the same content no matter what the world was like. For to have content, in Husserl’s sense, is to disclose the world in a certain way. And conversely, it is because the world *is* a certain way that I can disclose it thus, or ‘constitute’ it thus. If the world were different there would be different concatenations of experience, and so my mental states would also be different. In contrast to what Smith and McIntyre claim about the transcendental standpoint, then, phenomenological immanence does provide resources for accommodating the contextual and indexical aspects of intentional content.

5 Phenomenological externalism

Admittedly, many important questions remain open. It might seem, for instance, that because the quasi-inferential concept of representation is still defined in terms of *consciousness*, we are ultimately left with only an ersatz externalism. No matter how one twists it, won’t this first-person stance imply that meaning is, after all, ‘in the head’? The externalist will argue that phenomenology cannot have it both ways: unless it abandons the premise that what determines reference must be accessible to phenomenological reflection it cannot claim that intentionality is genuinely disclosive. That is, externalists deny the phenomenological premise that the subject is *intrinsically* intentional. And if the phenomenologist counters with the claim that intentionality is not, for all that, altogether independent of the world, the externalist will see here merely an unstable amalgam of incompatible points of view. There would appear to be at least a grain of truth to this objection. The annihilation of the world thought-experiment, as I have interpreted it here, shows that *consciousness* cannot be intrinsically intentional, since it shows that there can be consciousness without intentionality. If that is true, how can we recast the idea that the ‘subject’ is intrinsically intentional so as to preserve the first-person stance that defines the evidential, non-ontological concept of representation essential to the characterization of phenomenological immanence? I believe that though Husserl recognized what is at stake in this question, he nowhere developed an adequate account of what it takes, beyond mere consciousness, for something to possess intrinsic intentionality.²⁷

In conclusion, then, let me approach this issue by way of another fantasy from the literature on internalism. Internalism is often explained in terms of supervenience.²⁸ My phenomenal consciousness, or narrow content, is taken to supervene on my microphysical structure, such that my microphysical twin would have the same narrow content I do. Standard externalism shares this assumption but argues that narrow content cannot, for that very reason, be genuinely intentional. Consider, for instance, Davidson’s familiar thought-experiment (Davidson, 2001). If, through some freak concurrence of conditions, a microphysical twin of myself is created by lightning hitting a certain place in a swamp, this Swampman will have all the narrow content I

²⁷ In Crowell (2001) I argue that Heidegger’s account of the care structure, in *Being and Time*, does just that.

²⁸ See, for instance, Segal (2000, pp. 8–12).

have, including the thought: “Water is H₂O.” Swampman will have all the ‘prototypical associations’ about water that I do—that it is wet, a liquid, satisfies thirst, etc; further, he will seem to be committed (in Brandom’s sense) to everything that I am committed to, insofar as this can be discovered by making things explicit. Nevertheless, according to Davidson it is evident that Swampman cannot be thinking anything at all. This is because Swampman lacks the requisite *history* to be thinking about water. To put this in phenomenological terms, even though Swampman’s ‘concatenations of experience’—memories, current perceptions, etc.—are identical to my own (such that he has a ‘history’ but not a history), this is insufficient to make his experience genuinely intentional: he is not intentionally related to anything. Doesn’t this show that phenomenological immanence is merely ‘disclosive’ and not really disclosive?

Charles Siewert offers an argument meant to show that the externalist begs the question against the intrinsic intentionality of consciousness.²⁹ If it seems to Swampman that he is thinking, as I do, that his (my) grandmother died in 1980, what more is needed? What condition could determine the difference between *seeming* to me as if I was thinking something and really thinking something? The condition, Siewert (1998, p. 296) argues, would have to meet two criteria: first, that it could be missing from my phenomenal counterpart’s situation; and second, that it is essential to genuine thinking. But, he continues, if we initially find it difficult to think that thought could be absent from the counterpart’s circumstances (first criterion) we will have reason to doubt that the difference (the ‘condition’) meets the second criterion. On the other hand, if we think we have found a condition that meets the second criterion, then this, together with our difficulty in conceiving that thought is absent, gives us reason to doubt that the putative condition satisfies the first criterion (namely, that it *could* be missing from our phenomenal counterpart’s situation). For instance, if we imagine Swampman as really being in the condition that I am when I think that my grandmother died in 1980,³⁰ we will have difficulty understanding the claim that he is not thinking anything; thus, the condition that putatively needs to be added to give rise to genuine thought—namely, the appropriate history—will fail to meet criterion two: it will not seem to be essential. But if, on the contrary, we insist that such a history *is* essential for genuine thought, then, given our difficulty imagining that Swampman is not thinking anything, we must admit that the condition does not satisfy the first criterion: it *could not* be missing from Swampman’s situation.

Now Siewert himself seems to opt for the first horn of the dilemma: since phenomenal consciousness is intrinsically intentional, the appropriate history is not necessary. If we can specify *who* possesses the content, we have all we need to assess its possessor for truth or falsity (Siewert, 1998, pp. 303–304). In my case, the truth conditions of my thought are satisfied; in Swampman’s case, they are not. But this still leaves it puzzling how the phenomenal content came to have the status of being beholden to norms in the first place, as it must if it is seen to entail something like satisfaction

²⁹ The claim that Siewert wants to make room for by means of his argument is that “the phenomenal character of our experience is enough to make us . . . genuine non-iconic thinkers, and the conditions whose fulfillment would be enough to make it the case that what we think is true do not include any that are rightly regarded as furnishing our phenomenal features with an interpretation” (Siewert, 1998, p. 292). This last part is crucial, since if phenomenal content is understood as *noematic* meaning, it can have an externalist aspect that need not be construed as an ‘interpretation’ as this is understood in causal externalism.

³⁰ As Siewert (1998, pp. 295–296) correctly points out against Putnam, this is not equivalent to having some mysterious “feeling of understanding,” which is assuredly *not* the condition we are in when we think we are thinking something.

conditions. How, in particular, could Swampman's mental state be imagined to be something responsive to norms? On Brandom's pragmatic view, such normativity is available only to a being who has engaged in certain practices—for instance, discursive practices—and practices are not sets of mental representations or phenomenal contents, but skills that require an actual history to develop. Hence Swampman, who has learned no skills, cannot have genuine intentional content.

Brandom, then, would grasp the other horn of Siewert's dilemma: we can only imagine Swampman as having the relevant content *if* we imagine him with the proper history. Contrary to Davidson's assumption, we cannot imagine Swampman as having the content I do. I believe the phenomenologist should adopt this view as well. What Husserl's annihilation of the world thought-experiment shows is that while consciousness might supervene on microstructure, intentional *content* does not. As Brandom and existential phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty have shown, that content depends on an embodied, practical, social subject, and only *such* a subject is intrinsically intentional. Unlike Brandom, however, the existential phenomenologists hold that consciousness is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for intentionality. Though existential phenomenology insists that practical coping and embodied engagement is not a matter of explicit thematization or guidance by rules, it is not *opaque* either, not zombie-like or robotic. Nevertheless, if we are to understand the 'transcendental subject' of phenomenological immanence, we will have to go beyond 'consciousness.'

Husserl understood this point clearly, since his mature work emphasized the 'ego of habitualities,' the constitutive contribution of the lived body, transcendental intersubjectivity, and the lifeworld. However, these notions are often in tension with other commitments, such as the constitution of the lived body itself in 'transcendental consciousness' or the ultimacy of the absolute flow' of temporality.³¹ It seems to me, then, that the main lesson to be learned from seeing phenomenology in light of the internalism/externalism debate is that we need to move further, and more consistently, in the direction that Husserl was already pursuing toward an account of what the subject must be—in addition to being a conscious subject—in order to be able to be *gripped by norms* at all and so be capable of intentional content. Indeed we must face anew the challenge that Husserl himself faced: how to incorporate the insights of an 'existential' approach to the subject within the framework of a transcendental philosophy oriented toward the genuinely phenomenological concept of immanence.³²

References

- Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it explicit*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 Brandom, R. (2000). *Articulating reasons*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

³¹ For these contributions of the 'new' Husserl, see Welton (2000), Steinbock (1995) and Zahavi (2003). For some critical reservations see my reviews of Steinbock (Crowell, 1998) and Welton (Crowell, 2002).

³² A start in this direction can be found in Crowell (forthcoming). Versions of the present article were read at The Center for Subjectivity Research (Copenhagen), the annual meeting of the Husserl Circle (University College Dublin), and the University of Toronto. I would like to thank the participants at these venues for their helpful criticisms. I would also like to thank Thane Naberhaus and Daniel Price for suggestions that improved the argument in several places.

- Burge, T. (1979). Individualism and the mental. In P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, & H. K. Wettstein (Eds.), *Midwest studies in philosophy 10, studies in the philosophy of mind*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Carman, T. (2003). *Heidegger's analytic*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Crowell, S. (1998). Transcendental phenomenology and the “generation” gap. *Human Studies*, 21, 87–95.
- Crowell, S. (2001). Subjectivity: Locating the first-person in *Being and Time*. *Inquiry*, 44, 433–454.
- Crowell, S. (2002). The Cartesianism of phenomenology. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 35(4), 433–454.
- Crowell, S. (forthcoming). Conscience and reason. In S. Crowell & J. Malpas (Eds.), *Transcendental Heidegger*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Davidson, D. (2001). On knowing one's own mind. In *Subjective, intersubjective, objective* (pp. 14–38). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- de Boer, T. (1978). *The development of Husserl's thought*, tr. Theodore Plantinga. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Drummond, J. (1990). *Husserlian intentionality and non-foundational realism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Fodor, J. (1984). Methodological solipsism considered as a research strategy in cognitive psychology. In H. Dreyfus (Ed.), *Husserl, intentionality and cognitive science* (pp. 277–303). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Føllesdal, D. (1969). Husserl's notion of noema. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 66, 680–687.
- Haugeland, J. (1998). Understanding: Dennett and Searle. In *Having thought* (pp. 291–304). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1982). *The basic problems of phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1964). *The idea of phenomenology*, tr. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1965). Philosophy as rigorous science. In Q. Lauer (Ed.), *Phenomenology and the crisis of philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigations*, Vol. II, tr. J. N. Findlay. London: Routledge.
- Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, first book, tr. F. Kersten. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (1989). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, second book, tr. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (2003). *Transcendental idealism: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908–1921)*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Keller, P. (1999). *Husserl and Heidegger on human experience*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kelly, S. (2005). Seeing things in Merleau-Ponty. In T. Carman & M. B. N. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 74–110). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kripke, S. (1972). *Naming and necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lafont, C. (2005). Was Heidegger an externalist? *Inquiry*, 48(6), 507–532.
- Margolis, E., & Laurence, S. (1999). Concepts and cognitive science. In E. Margolis & S. Laurence (Eds.), *Concepts: Core readings* (pp. 3–81). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- McDowell, J. (1994). *Mind and world*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Murchada, F. O. (2003). Review of Pierre Keller. *Husserl Studies*, 19, 93–100.
- Philipse, H. (1995). Transcendental idealism. In B. Smith & D. W. Smith (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Husserl* (pp. 239–322). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, H. (1975a). Is semantics possible? In *Mind, language and reality, philosophical papers*, (Vol. 2, pp. 139–152). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, H. (1975b). The meaning of ‘meaning’. In *Mind, language and reality, philosophical papers* (Vol. 2, pp. 215–271). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1967). *Husserl: An analysis of his phenomenology*, tr. Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Rouse, J. (2002). *Why scientific practices matter: Reclaiming philosophical naturalism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Searle, J. (1983). *Intentionality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. (2002). *Consciousness and language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Segal, G. M. A. (2000). *A Slim book about narrow content*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Siewert, C. (1998). *The significance of consciousness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Smith, A. D. (2003). *Husserl and the Cartesian meditations*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, D. W., & McIntyre, R. (1982). *Husserl and intentionality*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Steinbock, A. (1995). *Home and beyond: Generative phenomenology after Husserl*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Welton, D. (2000). *The other Husserl*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Zahavi, D. (2003). *Husserl's phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zahavi, D. (2004). Husserl's noema and the internalism–externalism debate. *Inquiry*, 47, 42–66.