

The Experience of a Conscious Self

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Contrary to what a number of prominent psychologists have lately proposed, the present article argues that there is no inner conscious subject. Insofar as a mental episode may be said to have a subject, or to be had by a conscious self, it is always the self-aware human being who is its subject. The human being's experience of a conscious self, as being distinct from himself or herself, amounts to a natural dissociation produced by the human being's self-awarenesses. There is a strong tendency to distinguish anything of which one is aware from that which is aware of it. This leaves, finally, an inner subject of which one cannot be aware, but to which one has learned to make a purported reference each time one is directly aware of a mental episode.



Everything is finally outside, everything, even ourselves. Outside, in the world, among others. It is not in some hiding-place that we discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the town, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a man among men.

(Sartre, 1939/1970, p. 5)

The present article will argue, in effect, that Sartre was right when he claimed that there is no inner conscious subject (no "I"), which a number of prominent authors have lately proposed does exist. Particular attention will be devoted to the firsthand experience of a conscious self, which such authors find especially convincing. For some of them, this experience is the only basis for their proposal. Therefore, an explanation will be offered for this kind of self-awareness. Consistently, it will be argued that insofar as a mental episode may be said to have a subject, it is the human being in whom it occurs who is its subject. Moreover, the individual is its subject in a different sense than would apply to an inner agent who performs acts of consciousness.

The present article consists of five main sections, of which the first two sections are introductory. The first section ("A Concept of Consciousness") introduces the topic of an inner conscious self from the perspective of an ordinary concept of consciousness as this is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). This section also serves a second, orientational purpose. A

serious consideration of the relevant ordinary concept of consciousness as a referentially successful concept will indicate the moderate character of the present position. A great deal that a reader might think would have to be denied by someone who rejects the existence of an inner conscious self is thereby shown not to be denied. The purpose of the second main section ("Current Advocacy of an Inner Conscious Subject") is to inform about the several authors who have lately proposed the objective (i.e., not merely phenomenological) existence of an inner "I," to show wherever possible what it is that they are advocating, and thus to motivate the ensuing "anti-egological" arguments.

A Concept of Consciousness

The definition of *consciousness* that is the most relevant to the topic of the present article is the fifth entry of the six main definitions of the word provided by the OED. In this sense, the word refers to a certain totality of mental states and events (i.e., "impressions, thoughts, and feelings"), namely, a totality of them that constitutes a particular person's "conscious being." I have devoted an article to this kind of consciousness (Natsoulas, 1979) and have called it "consciousness₅" after the order of its listing in the OED (see also Natsoulas, 1978a, 1983a, 1983b). Upon putting the fifth concept of consciousness to work, three problems of particular interest emerge. The three problems together with an indication of how a (different) theorist proposed to solve each one, are now presented.

1. Which totality of mental episodes is it that makes up a person's conscious being? Armstrong (1968) answered this question by proposing that the relevant totality consists of *all* the mental episodes that have occurred or are now occurring to the single continuous physical substance that a human being is:

What, then, does constitute the unity of the group of happenings that constitute a single mind? We are back at the problem that proved Hume's downfall. Is it a matter of the resemblance holding between the members of the group, or causal relations, or memory-relations (which are perhaps a sub-species of causal relation)? As we have seen in Chapter 2, it is possible to have mental happenings which we would be prepared to say were ours yet which fulfilled none of these criteria. I do not see any way to solve the problem except to say that the group of happenings constitute a single mind because they are all states of, processes in or events in, a single *substance*. (Armstrong, 1968, pp. 336-337)

Armstrong's view equates the person's conscious being with his or her mind, and ignores the person's awareness of his or her mental episodes as a factor in the constitution of the person's conscious being.

2. What is the person's conscious being? What is it that is made up by the relevant totality? To illustrate the present concept of consciousness, the OED

includes a statement from John Locke: "If the same consciousness can be transferr'd from one thinking substance to another, it will be possible that two thinking Substances may make but one Person." Therefore, contrary to Armstrong, the continuity of one and the same substance does not explain which totality makes up a person's conscious being (cf. Dewan, 1976, pp. 194-195). For the entire substance might be replaced (hypothetically) without a change of consciousness in the present sense, and a temporally continuous thinking substance may suffer a total replacement or loss of its conscious being, thereby ceasing to be the same person, according to Locke. The person's conscious being is not simply the activity of the thinking substance that he or she is, since the person's conscious being can be hypothetically transferred. But what does it mean for the same consciousness to be transferred? Locke (1706/1975) had in mind that the recipient substance would represent as its own the same totality of mental episodes (and actions) as the donor substance represented as its own. A person's conscious being is a totality that depends both on what is recalled (or falsely recalled) and on what is acknowledged to be part of oneself. The recipient substance would become the same person as the donor substance because (a) it could recall the latter's previous experiences equally as well as the donor substance and (b) it would appropriate them to itself by means of an awareness of them like that which the donor substance has of its present mental episodes (and actions).

3. How is the person's conscious being constituted from the totality that defines it? My answer derived from both Armstrong and Locke:

The answer to the unity question may lie in treating consciousness_s as an achievement. The unity of consciousness is a matter of degree that is responsive to our own efforts. All one's mental episodes are one's own because they occur in the same organism [which is oneself]. But they are part of one's conscious being only insofar as one is directly aware of them or remembers them ("from the inside") and renders them communicable with each other. (Natsoulas, 1978a, p. 912; cf. Natsoulas, 1979)

Aside from their occurrence in a certain physical organism (i.e., Armstrong's substance), those of a person's mental episodes that make up his or her conscious being are (a) accessible to the person's direct awareness or memory of them from a first-person perspective (i.e., not as though the person had heard about or observed or inferred their occurrence "from the outside"). They must also (b) enter or be capable of entering a common arena in order for them to be part of the same consciousness; they must constitute "a system of co-conscious items" (Mackie, 1976). That is, the person must have direct access to them or remember them from the inside in relation to each other; the parts of this unified totality must "freely interact" (Fingarette, 1969). They might be taken as resembling each other, as standing in certain causal relations to each other or jointly to something else, as ordered relatively to each other with respect to time, and so on. (c) The person must also identify them with

himself or herself. Among the characteristics of the phenomena of depersonalization is one's acknowledgment of a present experience as one's own without its being felt to be part of the same totality with which one identifies (cf. Natsoulas, 1979, and below). The OED included a few lines from a poem by William Wordsworth to show the fifth sense of consciousness. These lines happen to bring out the same point with regard to past mental episodes: "Musing on them, often do I seem Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself, And of some other Being." Wordsworth was musing on certain early experiences in his life. There was no doubt in his mind that these experiences had indeed occurred to him, yet he did not find it easy to locate them in the totality that now constituted his conscious being (cf. Speer, 1970, p. 480).

The Inner Conscious Subject

In the fourth and latest example of usage that attends the OED's fifth definition of *consciousness*, an additional related dimension of conscious life is introduced. This usage refers to *an originative source* of the mental episodes that make up the person's conscious being. It would seem that consciousness was on its way to becoming the name of an inner being or agent. As much is suggested by the inclusion of *conscious personalities* as a synonym for the plural of *consciousness* in the fifth sense. The purported reference is to something more entitative and "human" than a mere totality of mental episodes, however collected and coherently organized it may be: "From our innermost consciousness, a voice is heard, clothed in native authority. . . 'I feel. I think. I will. I am.'" A person's consciousness in this entitative sense would seem to possess three important characteristics. (a) It is innermost and hidden from view or not publicly observable; (b) it is selfconsciously conscious; (c) it constitutes a unique, unified totality of mental episodes by having them. The above quoted illustration from the OED corresponds to the view that my mental episodes are mine by virtue of their belonging to the conscious being that I ultimately am. This conscious being is my inner or real self from which they issue. It is the subject or agent of consciousness. Dewey (1906) wrote of "the concreteness, the thingness" that this sense of consciousness purports to discriminate. By being described as conscious, or by being called a consciousness, a certain "personal being or agent" is discriminated. This conscious being has among its activities the various mental episodes that the OED's fifth definition mentions. Although Dewey (1906, p. 40) doubtless had in mind that the human being is himself or herself this conscious being or agent ("'Consciousness' thus marks off in general the differences between persons,—since each person has his own emotions, informations, intentions, etc."), there is involved in this sense of consciousness a thingness or concreteness that often seeks a different target than simply the human being. The fifth definition of *consciousness* contrasts with previous definitions. Consciousness

does not appear here as a state, act, or faculty. The concept of consciousness tends instead to move between (a) a personal sum of mental episodes over time or organization of them according to certain principles and (b) an "I" or self which selfconsciously feels, thinks, wills, and recognizes itself.

Current Advocacy of an Inner Conscious Subject

It comes as something of a surprise to realize how many prominent scholars have lately advocated or felt inclined toward the existence of such an "I" or self. Six such authors will be considered in this section, some more extendedly than others, but all of them with a view toward setting the stage for the discussion that will be offered later in opposition to the existence of "I."

1. In a recently published address to a conference on consciousness and the physical world, Humphrey (1980), an experimental primate psychologist with a professional interest in consciousness, seemed to imply the existence of a publicly unobservable self-aware originative source of mental episodes. Humphrey spoke of psychology's prolonged silence with respect to the problem of consciousness (as have other dissidents from the modern positivist tradition in psychology; see Natsoulas, 1981, pp. 132-133). The origins and the functions of consciousness, qua subject matter for scientific psychology, have been walled off behind a Maginot line. Humphrey described himself as marching around this line, particularly in his discussion of what he called *self-observation*. He distinguished a strong and a weak sense of self-observation. Self-observation in the weak sense refers to the processes and immediate cognitive outcomes of observing one's own body and distinguishing it from other bodies and external objects. Weak self-observation is the observation of something public about oneself, such as a piece of one's behavior or a part of one's body. Other people can observe the same things that one self-observes in the weak sense, though their means of observation do not entirely overlap with one's own relative to one's body. Moreover, what they observe about one's body can be the same characteristic of one's body that one also observes in the weak sense. What is publicly observable includes, presumably, what exists within the body, since the privacy of events within the body is a contingent and not a necessary privacy (cf. Skinner, e.g., 1969, p. 263). Many such events are now inaccessible to others but this is not permanent; it is a matter of how far technology has reached. These events are publicly observable in principle and therefore, it would seem, they are matters of weak self-observation in Humphrey's terms, insofar as they are self-observed.

Humphrey (1980) stated that other people cannot observe that which one observes in the strong sense of self-observation. Strong self-observation is "a special sort of observation to which I and I alone am privileged" (p. 61). Humphrey must have meant not only the privileged way in which such observation occurs but also certain privileged information thereby acquired,

which cannot be had by others except indirectly whatever the conditions of technological advance may someday be. When one engages in self-observation in the strong sense, according to Humphrey (1980), one becomes aware of a

conscious presence, "I," which "wills" [my] actions. The reasons are various kinds of "feeling"—"sensations," "emotions," "memories," "desires." "'I' want to eat because 'I' am hungry," "'I' intend to go to bed because 'I' am tired," "'I' refuse to move because 'I' am in pain." Moreover, experience tells me that the feelings themselves are caused by certain things which happen to my body in the outside world . . . Several sorts of happening may cause a particular feeling and . . . a particular feeling may be responsible for my willing several sorts of action. The role of a feeling in the model I develop of my own behaviour becomes, therefore, that of what psychologists called an "intervening variable," bridging the causal gap between a set of antecedent circumstances and a set of subsequent actions—between what happens to "me" and what "I" do. (pp. 61-62)

Humphrey apparently distinguished between the human being who was addressing the conference at the moment (while also engaging perhaps in strong self-observation) and the conscious presence "I" which Humphrey was aware of as that which willed his actions and had various kinds of "feeling" produced by Humphrey's bodily state and the various impingements upon his body. The concept of an "I" within was used by Humphrey to explain his behavior, and also to explain the behavior of other people by analogy. Each person was assumed to have his or her own "I" that wills and so on. Humphrey's further statements about the natural psychology that we purportedly build on the basis of our self-observations imply that this psychology has sufficient validity such that Humphrey's self-observational statements in the strong sense are by and large true. Most significant for the present purpose, the conscious presence "I" exists and is not equivalent to the human being whose "I" it is. The human being is different, for he or she is observable by other people, whereas "I" is not publicly observable in principle. It can only be known directly in a privileged way.

2. Powers (1980) recently raised the question of what "I" is, though not in these terms. His context was a control-theoretical systems approach to consciousness, but his point was nevertheless an introspective one, as much as Humphrey's. The point arose from "ordinary experience." There occurs evidently a coming and going of different contents of awareness even as one continues to be affected by the same pattern of stimulus energy: "That is what bothers me: the fact that there is always a point of view, and that it is structured. What is it that can adopt, and abandon points of view? Where do we find it in this hierarchical model of perception and control of perception?" (Powers, 1980, p. 240). Powers's inference was to something that adopts and abandons points of view, thus determining which of a number of alternative contents is experienced. Powers referred to "awareness" moving and shifting from one point of view to another. Perhaps he should have said

(to express his meaning) that a subject of awareness successively takes each point of view. Powers gave the example of a shift from being a configuration-recognizer to being a relationship-recognizer. The problem is that these modes and others are simultaneously in process because one mode depends on processing in the other mode. In this sense, we consist of all of these modes simultaneously; the system that we individually comprise has "all" points of view. Yet, there is something in us that moves from one point of view to the next, taking only one of them at a time. The neurologist Walshe (1972) analogously insisted that there must be a "who" whose job it is to translate subconscious patterns of neural impulses into conscious states.

3. Greenwald (1981) recently introduced a "self-system," by way of explaining a number of research findings pertaining to memory. But he acknowledged that none of the empirical results he discussed or the arguments he put forward justified the conclusion that such a self exists. (The same evaluation is appropriate regarding Dimond's (1980) introduction of a generative neural self-system.) Greenwald argued, however, that psychologists who would reject his postulation of an inner performing self should not ignore certain firsthand evidence: "They should feel some obligation to explain one particularly intriguing 'emergent' property of the self-system—its tendency (in the normal case) to perceive itself as unitary and real" (Greenwald, 1981, p. 232).

4. In his review of a book on divided consciousness (Hilgard, 1977), Neisser (1979) inserted a statement about the subject of consciousness. The book review is called "Is Psychology Ready for Consciousness?" and provided occasion for comment again, as in Humphrey (1980), on the science of psychology in relation to the topic of consciousness.

Everyone has the experience of a conscious self: of thinking, feeling and willing, privately, in a way that is continuous and coherent over time. Who knows what I am thinking of now, and what it means to me? I know; I am conscious of it. The study of consciousness is surely among psychology's chief responsibilities. We were equal to that responsibility in the age of Freud, James, and Külpe—and of Janet, whose concepts Hilgard seeks to revive in this book. Unfortunately, they have found few worthy successors in our own profession. (Neisser, 1979, p. 99)

By "the experience of a conscious self," Neisser no doubt meant the strong impression people form when introspecting their mental activities that their mental activities have an innermost conscious source (cf. Burt, 1961, p. 156). My thoughts, feelings, and volitions are found by me to be continuous and coherent over time; they are not isolated and lacking organization between them; they seem rather to belong to a single conscious self. I know what I am thinking now and what it means to me because I am evidently an inner subject who privately thinks as well as feels and wills. This immediate conviction has led some authors to identify consciousness with an inner self or conscious center, or with the mental actions of such an agent or subject. They feel

impelled by what they take to be firsthand evidence to ascribe their own mental episodes to a private conscious being with which they identify. Such authors make sense of what is going on not only immediately but also theoretically in terms of a subject or ego that has the respective mental episodes of which they are directly aware.

5. Duval and Wicklund (1972) posit the existence of a causal agent self which is "a psychological structure with observational manifestations [whose] functions are simply the usual functions of any organism: perception, thinking, action" (p. 33). This real entity or "object" guides the organism by means of these functions towards the satisfaction of its needs. Clearly, the causal agent self was not considered to be identical with the organism. The body was said to be "the instrument for expression of the self," and self-awareness amounts to the causal agent self's consciousness being directed upon itself as an object of awareness.

6. Another author was strongly drawn to postulate the existence of an "I" for each person on the basis of ordinary experience. Globus (1980) claimed that one's "I" is "the most persistent and prominent feature of mental life" and is "given to our direct acquaintance." But Globus's purported direct acquaintance with his "I" turned out to be acquaintance with a non-entity. He agreed with Natsoulas (1978b) that an "I" is not anything that anyone can encounter in the world: "'I' . . . is actually given to our direct acquaintance, not as an ordinary 'appearance' in the experienced world but as that which does not have worldly analytical properties" (Globus, 1980, p. 419). Although he accepted at "face value" the presentiment that there is a conscious presence "I" who perceives, knows, thinks, remembers, feels, wants, wills, and so forth, he concluded that all that there is to "I" are certain activities, the same activities that Duval and Wicklund assigned to the causal agent self. "I" thus became simply the human being's "distinction-making actions," virtually disappearing from Globus's framework in this way. But people (e.g., Humphrey, 1980, pp. 61-62) distinguish the conscious presence "I" from the mental activities that are attributed to it. Globus thus implicitly suggested that "I" is an illusion of self-awareness, in that people falsely take it to be *that which* perceives, thinks, wills, and so on. This movement illustrated by Globus's view should not be totally unexpected, because those who hold that a distinct subject of consciousness exists seldom have anything more to say about it than the mental states and events that it experiences or the actions that it produces. That the subject or inner self is self-aware is simply a matter of its having awarenesses of its activity. One is thus led to wonder, by views that take the experience of a conscious self at face value, why the human being does not qualify as the subject of mental states and events. Why do many people find obvious that Humphrey himself is not the conscious presence "I" of which he was aware in what he construed as self-observation in the strong sense?

The Unique Relation to One's Mental Episodes

The Relation of Subject

Nagel (1965) offered what amounts to an explanation for the conviction that the subject of consciousness is other than the human being. In his view, this conviction is based on a certain subjective fact, which is also (see below) an obstacle to accepting physicalism with regard to the relation of mind to body. The following purported fact is revealed to one when one makes strong self-observations in Humphrey's (1980) sense. In this way, one discovers that a special relation exists between oneself and one's mental episodes, a relation that bears on what one ultimately is:

I (and hence any "I") cannot be a mere physical object, because I possess my mental states: I am their *subject*, in a way in which no physical object can possibly be the subject of its attributes. I have a type of internality which physical things lack; so in addition to the connection which all my mental states do admittedly have with my body, they are also mine—that is, they have a particular *self* as subject, rather than merely being attributes of an object. (Nagel, 1965, p. 353)

One's mental episodes are not one's own for the reason alone that they occur to one, unless "occur to one" expresses a relation of special ownership. They are not mere attributes of that to which they belong. The sense in which they are one's own is not captured by simply ascribing them to the organism that one is. Even if we considered the mind nonphysical (as did Eccles, 1979, 1980; Popper and Eccles, 1977), mental states could not be conceived as such a mind's attributes either, according to Nagel (1965). The mind's passing from one state into another state (as any substance does) cannot be what having mental states amounts to. Mental episodes could not be mere happenings in an immaterial mind, because our relation to our mental episodes is evidently more than this relation of inclusion. Being the subject of mental episodes cannot characterize any kind of substance, whether the substance is material or immaterial (Nagel, 1965; cf. Nagel, 1979, p. 190: "The occurrence of a subjective experience is not the possession of a property by something").

Thus, the special relation that we have to our mental episodes places us, as it were, at the limit of the world. It turns out that "I cannot . . . in fact be anything in the world at all" (Nagel, 1965, p. 356). This outcome should give one pause with regard to whether one has properly interpreted our special relation to our mental episodes. Nagel's understanding of the relation is such that we end up not in the world at all (where we in fact are). This radically exoteric characterization of "I" may be just another way of coming to see that "I" does not exist. "I" is not in the world because it is not as it has been described. Perhaps, instead, we stand to our mental episodes in a relation that requires them to be transient, occurrent parts of us (of a special kind; see the

final section). Must a mental state have a self as subject? Could not the nature or function of mental states and events, and not their relation to a subject, explain their special status? Nagel's unique relation may amount to the human being's having a unique kind of episode occur in him or her and the implications of this uniqueness. Let us therefore consider the purported relation to a subject somewhat further.

Bieri (1982) was sympathetic with Nagel's analysis. He referred to the relation of subject when he expressed as follows the "subjective character" of mental states:

Mental states are not just *there*. They are not just *at hand*. They are not simply *presented* in front of us Changes of mental state do not just *happen*. In other words, mental states and events are not just simply *contained* in the world. We want to say that *more* is the case than this. For this "more" that is the case, we have the formulation: Mental states and events are something *for* somebody. (p. 80)

A physicalist would prefer to say that they are states and events of somebody, since they take place in a person's brain. In this sense, their subject is the person whose states and events they are, but this sense lacks reference to their being *for* him or her. This sense may be compatible with the physicalist drive for a third-person objective formulation, but it does not touch on the subjective character of mental states, as Bieri meant it. For example, digestive processes, among other bodily occurrences, also belong to a person; they, too, are processes of somebody. Yet one is not their subject, even when one is aware of one or more of their characteristics in a direct perceptual way. One is no more their subject than one is the subject of the external states of affairs that one may be currently perceiving. One's digestive processes do not have a subjective character; they are not something for somebody.

But what is this distinctive relation of our having mental states and events? Clearly, it is not the fact that we are aware of them when they occur in us and that we appropriate them in the process; we also do this in making self-observations in Humphrey's (1980) weak sense, when we recognize in an internal way, for example, our digestive processes as our own. It might be suggested that our access to our mental episodes is what is distinctive, this access being nonperceptual. However, Bieri (1982) contended that this is not the essential factor that gives to our mental episodes their subjective character. There is something it is like to be a bat, although the bat may be unable to introspect and have any idea of what it is like to be a bat (cf. Nagel, 1974). According to Bieri, animals that lack the conceptual means to appropriate their mental states by ascribing them to themselves nevertheless have their mental states in a distinctive manner no less than we do. They, too, are the subjects of their mental states; that is, their mental states are something for them as well. In Bieri's view, one need not be aware of one's mental states as having a subjective character in order to stand to these states in the relation of

being their subject. Engaging in what Humphrey called strong self-observation is perhaps necessary to conceive of the subjective character of one's mental states and events. But the mental states and occurrences that constitute my being absorbed in some external occurrence have no less a subjective character by their taking place unselfconsciously. Bieri (1982) claimed that all mental episodes have a subjective character.

An Obstacle to Physicalism

The characterization of subjective character as equivalent to any mental episode's being something for somebody is vague, yet rather profound implications have been drawn from it. Both Nagel (1965) and Bieri (1982) saw it as an obstacle to accepting physicalism with regard to the relation of the mental to the physical; it would also be, by implication, troublesome for objective psychology (cf. Natsoulas, 1978b). Aldrich (1978-1979) expressed this view as follows: "Under the 'objective' treatment that scientifically oriented physicalism requires and sponsors, favoring the extensional language of physical science, the 'subjective natures' of conscious beings must be ontologically eliminated as mere appearance" (p. 498). Subjectivity has to be eliminated by physicalism because the relevant way of having mental episodes cannot be described in extensional language. But the being-for-somebody of mental states and events was held by Nagel (1974) and Bieri (1982) to be one of their essential dimensions. These authors protested that to eliminate the inner perspective or point of view from our description of the human being would mean excluding mental states and events themselves (cf. Gunderson, 1974, p. 188). The elimination of the subjective perspective renders inadequate any such (objective) attempt to treat of consciousness:

It is difficult to understand what could be meant by the *objective* character of an experience, apart from the particular point of view from which its subject apprehends it [experiences it?]. After all, what would be left of what it was like to be a bat if one removed the viewpoint of the bat? . . . Certainly it *appears* unlikely that we will get closer to the real nature of human experience by leaving behind the particularity of our human point of view and striving for a description in terms accessible to beings that could not imagine what it was like to be us . . . Any shift to greater objectivity—that is, less attachment to the specific viewpoint—does not take us nearer to the real nature of the phenomenon: it takes us farther away from it. (Nagel, 1974, pp. 443-445)

But, finally, Nagel (1974) did not strongly conclude (from the subjective fact of point of view) that we are, therefore, something over and above our living intact bodies with all their physical attributes. He called instead for the development of an "objective phenomenology" which would enable us to explain to a person who is blind, and has been blind from birth, what it is like to see. In this way, we might come eventually to make sense of the presently obscure idea of the objective nature of our experiences; we might then be able to address their physical basis.

Two Problems of Subjectivity

Nagel (1974) stated that such an objective phenomenology would perforce leave something out, but it is not clear whether he fully realized what this would be, from the perspective of his own analysis. He ran two problems of subjectivity together (cf. Gunderson, 1970, p. 279; Hiley, 1978). One of these is the subjective character of mental states and events, which previously Nagel (1965) and later Bieri (1982) had managed to indicate. The other problem is the objective description of phenomenal qualities and patterns (see Nagel, 1979, p. 188). The idea of an objective phenomenology pertains to only the second problem. From Nagel's own perspective, the first problem would seem to be the prior one. This problem is not how experiences are for the individual who has them (e.g., what is it like to be a bat? what is it like to see green or red?) but *what is involved* in one's relation of having them (cf. Sperry's, 1976, p. 174, reference to the "intimately involved relation" of the first-person perspective). I believe that Williams (1978) had this same distinction in mind (and was critical of the prospects for an objective phenomenology) when he wrote:

But in taking the content of A's experience, and putting it into the world as a thing we can conceive of as there, we are in effect trying to abstract from *how it is for A*, the *how it is* and leave it as a fact on its own, which however has the mysterious property that it is available only to A, and can only be known directly to A, though it can be conceived of, guessed at, and so on by others. (p. 295)

The problem is what is entailed by the relation of being the subject of one's mental episodes. The problem is not the privacy of the mental. Nagel (1974) himself argued that phenomenological facts are "quite objective" in the sense that one person can say what the quality of another person's experience is. He or she can do this depending on the sameness or similarity of their experiences (Nagel, 1979, p. 207).

The Relational Interpretation of Awareness

Perhaps the subjective character of mental states and events can be stated in the following way, which may help to specify exactly what that "mysterious property" was thought to be. It should be noted first that the following statement is not intended as any sort of agreement with the authors who have felt that one's relation to one's mental states and events is incompatible with the physicalist thesis that "a person with all his psychological attributes is nothing over and above his body, together with all its physical attributes" (Nagel, 1965, p. 339). Rather, the intention here is to bring out what that property is supposed to be that creates the problem. The statements of the next paragraph are not endorsed, except as expressing an interesting though finally erroneous idea concerning the subjectivity of our mental episodes.

The key aspect of this understanding seems to reside in a certain notion of what it is for anyone to experience something or to be aware of something. I shall concentrate on awareness because experience is somewhat less widely held to require a subject of consciousness. For example: "The having of a raw feel is truly nonconceptual, and 'pure experience' involves neither subject or object . . . [but] intrinsic to all cognition is a subject of conceptual activity (the 'I' in esoteric traditions) who has awarenesses (both of and as an object in consciousness)" (Weimer, 1976, pp. 11-12).

Someone is always (correctly or incorrectly) aware of something whenever an awareness occurs. A subject is thus introduced, and not merely for purposes of identification (Jones, 1967, p. 8). Awareness is held to be always relational between that of which the subject is aware and the subject who is aware of it. Many psychologists agree that "the frank acceptance of this double hypothesis makes it far easier for the psychologist to describe and discuss the observable phenomena of mental life" (Burt, 1968, p. 67). But this hypothesis raises natural questions concerning the nature of the relation called awareness and of the things that are so related. The relation is not a symmetrical one to say the least:

And if, with most epistemologists, we regard consciousness, in the sense of active awareness, as essentially a two-term relation, then we must assume, not only a cognitive field to serve as the object of the relation, but also something very like a pure ego to serve as the subject—a witness of the field, in short, what Sherrington describes as "an 'I' that counts itself a cause." The same subject not only perceives; it also apparently wills. (Burt, 1968, p. 67; cf. Burt, 1961, 1962; Burt and Thomas, 1971)

The relational interpretation of awareness holds that in being aware, the person who is aware does not merely have a certain mental episode occur in him or her. Such an occurrence has an "inside" (a content) whereby it gives, to a subject, a perspective or point of view on something. Awareness would seem to be in this view analogous to a telescope. It is as though one looked through awareness at the world (including what is purely imaginary) and could look through only one awareness at a time, or at only one situation at a time. One thus *has* the awareness, rather than *being* the awareness that one has (see Bergmann, next paragraph). Because of the nature of the access that the subject has by means of the contents of awareness to states of affairs in the world, body, and mind, the subject of an awareness is something more than a whole of which the awareness is a part. This was the relational interpretation.

Bergmann (1960) also saw awareness (e.g., seeing) as something mental and distinct from "what, if anything, is aware" and from that of which it is an awareness. But he opposed the idea that awarenesses are relations and the idea that the pronoun *I* refers to "something like a pure ego" when we say "I see . . ." (or the like). Bergmann's view is mentioned here by way of contrast; his view shows that one might theoretically introduce awareness as something other than a species of relation (cf. Natsoulas, 1982b). Bergmann (1960, 1964)

made a case for an awareness's being a particular in the same sense as the occurrence of a tone is said to be a particular. And its being of or about something else is a matter of its exemplifying a certain nonrelational character. "But now a critic might insist that when somebody knows or sees something there is indeed a transaction between what is known or seen and the knower or seer. Quite so. Only, this transaction is properly spoken of as the scientists speak about it, that is, in principle, behavioristically" (Bergmann, 1960, p. 24). And not by introducing an inner conscious subject who is aware. Instead, Bergmann occasionally wrote of a person's momentarily "being" the awareness that he or she has; he wrote of the particular awareness that at the moment Bergmann "is." This form of expression will prove useful later in the present article when an alternative is proposed to the egological view of the subjective character of one's mental states and events.

The Human Being's Eccentric Positionality

How should objective psychology respond to the obstinate impression which people so often form to the effect that their mental episodes are not merely transient, occurrent parts of their mind or body but belong to a distinct conscious self that thinks, remembers, chooses, and so on? Is this impression based on a truly unique relation of subjectivity which requires the introduction into psychological theory of an "I" or subject who is not the human being? Let us turn next to Plessner's (1961/1970; Dallmayr, 1981; Grene, 1968) concept of the human being's essential "eccentric positionality," in an effort to develop a suitable response to the problem of the subject.

Helmuth Plessner's Account

Let us begin with the human being's "eccentric position" relative to one's body. The human being's biological nature thrusts upon one a double role, according to Plessner (1961/1970), with which one must come to terms: (a) The human being is a living body, whatever one's opinion may be about what one ultimately is; (b) one also "has" this same body that one is. But the human being is not alone among the animals to fit this dual description, yet only the human being possesses "eccentric positionality." That is, only the human being must come to terms with the double role of both being and having a living body:

The fact of an animal's being a body does not cut it off from its having one. It does indeed live in this separation—no movement, no leap (which an appraisal of distance must precede) would be possible without it. The animal too must put its body into action, employ it according to the given situation; otherwise, it does not reach its goal. But the switch from having to being, which the animal constantly performs, does not in turn present itself to him. Nor, consequently, does it present any difficulty to him. (Plessner, 1961/1970, pp. 37-38)

Plessner was addressing the nature of human existence and how this differs from animal existence. It serves no present purpose to enter into his controversial claims about essential differences between human beings and other animals. What is relevant here is a certain aspect of Plessner's conception of human existence, whether or not it turns out that other animals share in that aspect.

The point expressed above about the "having" of a body can be expressed without reference to consciousness. *Having a body* refers to a certain principle of organization whereby there is a central controlling part and more peripheral parts that are controlled by the central part. The animal is able to engage in behavior due to its sensorimotor organization. The relation of center to periphery is what "we are referring to when we speak of living things as *subjects having* such and such properties and parts" (Grene, 1968, p. 90). Not that the core part is the subject; in this view, the animal is the subject by virtue of how it is organized as a unit.

In the case of the human being, being a subject having a body has more to it than being organized with a core that controls bodily parts. The human being is an "eccentric" kind of subject. Plessner (1961/1970) wrote of the "brokenness of man's relation to his body" (p. 32). One stands to one's body—which is oneself, one stands to oneself therefore—in a relation by which one makes use of one's body—which is oneself, one makes use of oneself therefore—for the achievement of one's purpose. One uses one's body and some of its parts as instruments, experiencing oneself as an object. We have indicated in these last few sentences the sense of the human being's having an eccentric position relative to one's body.

Simply to seek certain ends, thereby producing movements of one's limbs and the like, is not to exhibit eccentric positionality. Animals also seek ends, yet they merely "live in" their activities and expressivities; they do not go further, as we do. Animals may distinguish themselves from their environments and respond to their bodies differently from how they respond to other things, but they do not use their bodies selfconsciously for the achievement of their purposes (Plessner, 1961/1970). And it is with the latter kind of self-awareness that a reference to the "I" or inner self appears on the scene. There occurs "a singular withdrawal . . . which makes it possible for man to say 'I' to himself" (Plessner, 1961/1970, p. 41). Eccentric positionality is somehow dissociative; by postulating an "I," man "finds a relation to" the fact of his having a body as a thing to use.

Divisive Self-awareness

There is something about such self-awareness that is divisive rather than unifying; we become dissociated from our body, according to Plessner, in becoming aware of the uses to which we are putting it; we control our body by

means of our intentions, and we seem to ourselves not to be that which we control. We become identified instead with something that we take to be in control, that which has the intentions that our bodies obey. But the process of self-awarenesses may not stop there in its divisiveness. Grene (1968) suggested that eccentric positionality gives rise to a radical uncertainty concerning whether or not the intentions are one's own (i.e., belong to one's "I"). She wrote of "the inevitability . . . of that strange but central fact . . . that, for all my actions, even the most considered or the most self-consciously responsible of them, I never really know whether it is I who performs them or something in me that is not 'really' I" (p. 206). Therefore, the inner self that eccentric positionality leads one to introduce, in order to bring order to important reflexive awarenesses concerning one's use of the body to achieve one's purposes, does not seem, after all, a good postulation. Apparently, however, we are not led to the abandonment of "I," because we come to postulate "I" not merely from an eccentric position relative to our body. There is a more general tendency for self-awareness to be divisive.

For example, we may intensely want a certain state of affairs to develop; or we may deliberately think some thoughts, as opposed to their spontaneously coming to us or forcing themselves upon us (Wollheim, 1969, pp. 240-241); yet our self-awareness of desire or thought can produce a distinction from ourselves.

An experience, no matter how internal, is always presented to the subject as an experience to him; as something over against himself; as something put forth from himself. To use a metaphor, the subject lives in his own logical space which is separate from the logical space of any particular experience. (Evans, 1970, p. 26)

What we are aware of tends to "break off." We tend to distinguish however intimate a part of us from that which is aware of this part of ourselves. An uncaught and uncatchable "who" that does the apprehending seems to us implicit in the awareness we are now having even when what we are apprehending is some part of our mental life. I have previously commented on this tendency as follows:

Constantly receding, qua scrutinizer, from any attempt at self-scrutiny, I am driven to the obstinate impression that "I" stand just beyond it all, at the limit (which is more like an extensionless center), a spectator "having" experiences through "my" body. And I report about the world with nearly nothing to say about that which I feel myself ultimately to be, a point source of awareness, to which in weak moments, I take *everything* to belong ("the world is my world") in a sense that is out of this world. (Natsoulas, 1978b, p. 271)

We do not take ourselves to be the living body that we are nor even to be the experiences that we have. And, therefore, we have to create a something else to be (i.e., the real or inner self or "I") that corresponds to that which is left and is the subject both of our body and of our mental life. At the solipsist

extreme, the ultimate reality becomes that which is always there yet cannot be caught. Less real than "I," all else becomes its perceivable products, a world that it constitutes from moment to moment. At the naive realist extreme, one is dwarfed by all those things that have sufficient substance to be caught by awareness. One is merely a receiver of impressions at the limit of a world that is there and whose constituents have among them an equal status as real.

The divisiveness of self-awareness has been characterized here as a tendency, which means that its manifestations are dependent on other factors and may take different forms. We shall conclude this section with three brief discussions that derive from the clinical psychological literature in order to illustrate abnormal degrees of this divisiveness.

1. Reed (1972) discussed a number of anomalies in the experience of a conscious self, among these a dissociative reaction called "ego-splitting." The anomalous experience of ego-splitting is the impression of observing oneself as though one were not the person observed. Grene (1968) wrote in a way that partially describes such experiences. But she was not describing ego-splitting; she was attempting to describe a general condition of human existence. The human being's eccentric positionality was said to entail that "I am both irrevocably myself, not you, and universally an I as such, an I in general" (p. 106). She explained that the human being is essentially detached from locality; insofar as one is a self, one is everywhere and nowhere. The same kind of experience of a conscious self must also be responsible for Nagel's (1979) "sense of incredulity that one should be anyone in particular, a specific individual of a specific species existing at a particular time and place in the universe" (p. 206). Also, Gunderson (1970) similarly wrote, following Schopenhauer, of our "sense of non-locality" as subjects of consciousness. This becomes very intrusive in the experience of ego-splitting. One becomes completely identified with the reflexive point of view. One is "outside oneself" and not a participant in the mental or physical activities of the person who one is. The experience of a conscious self is, in such cases, the experience of a self that is cut off from its source; it has become a purely passive spectator.

2. Landis (1964) repeatedly returned in his book on the varieties of psychopathological experience to an inner human-like entity of which the person is aware. Landis called this inner entity "the EDITOR process." This process seems to the person to be a kind of inner agent like the "I" mentioned above. However, the EDITOR process specializes in performing certain (editorial) functions on the stream of consciousness. The relevant references to the EDITOR process in Landis's book are those in which the person's mental condition is such that this ego can only stand by and watch the person's mental life hurl uncontrollably by. Landis included in his chapter on the phenomena of depersonalization a relevant excerpt from a surgeon's account of the anxiety neurosis that he developed while on military duty (*Lancet*, Editors of, 1952, pp. 85-86). After three sleepless nights, the surgeon's depersonalization had reached acute proportions: "A fundamental separation

seemed to have taken place from the world that other people inhabited. After that I continued to live, talk, and act, but I felt like a walking ghost. I *was* in limbo. Everything seemed to happen at one remove" (quoted by Landis, 1964, p. 369). In characterizing the human being's eccentric positionality, Plessner and Grene made reference to an analogous double separation. We are at a distance from the physical world, and again from ourselves: "We are still animals, but animals at a double distance from our bodies. We have not only an inner life distinct from, though not separable from, our physical existence; we stand over against both [of] these, holding them apart from each other and yet together" (Grene, 1968, p. 105).

3. Federn (1952) similarly described depersonalization, and as "the subjective experience of a disruption of one's ego" (p. 243). One's new experience of a conscious self differs strikingly from what this experience was before the "disruption" occurred. In this present condition, the patient develops the strong, unshakeable conviction of not being able to think, breathe, stand, walk, move his or her hands, love or hate anyone, and so on (Federn, 1952, p. 255; cf. Schilder, 1923/1953). This conviction is not literally true; the point is that "I" cannot do or experience these things. (Recall Grene's uncertainty as to whether she was responsible for her actions, as opposed to something within her that was not really she.) The patient's daily activities proceed as though on their own initiative, as though it is not the patient (or that which the patient identifies with) that does them. Yet these activities do proceed, and they often proceed quite normally. And the patient may be cognizant of this state of affairs and unable to offer an explanation for experiencing the conscious self as impotent and unmoved. We may conjecture that in such patients the "I" itself has been split off, or every other part of them has been split off from their "I." For these patients complain that even thinking and feeling do not go on in them; even these most intimate activities are no longer felt to be truly their own. No longer does their very mind belong to them, that is, to their "I" with which they continue to identify themselves. Their "I" (and therefore they themselves) has become merely a point source of certain awarenesses. "I" is no longer in a special relation to the patient's mental episodes and body, no longer is "I" their possessor and subject. These patients' experience of a conscious self can be described in Wittgenstein's terms for the metaphysical subject (which he sought to discredit): "not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather . . . the limit of the world—not part of it" (Wittgenstein, 1921/1961, p. 58).

A Response from the Perspective of Objective Psychology

I believe that the use of the pronoun *I* to refer to an entity with which one identifies, but which is not the human being who one in fact is, is a failed

attempt at reference. The use of *I* for this purpose is a failed attempt at reference not only in the abnormal cases mentioned (where *I* would refer to a point source of awareness) but also in the philosophical case discussed by Wittgenstein and the normal human condition that Plessner sought to characterize. This is not a new idea; a number of authors have suggested, for example, that what people refer to when they say "I think" might better be captured by "It thinks in me," since *me* is less susceptible to displaced reference. Yet, there is important truth in the idea that we enter into relations with ourselves of the sort Plessner emphasized. It is surely true that we are selfconsciously conscious subjects: Do we not use our limbs to locomote to where we knowingly anticipate that we shall arrive? Do we not deliberately put our perceptual systems to work in order that we might have awarenesses of certain aspects of the environment or of our bodies? And do we not make use of our awarenesses to find our way around in the world? But our ability deliberately to produce changes of and in ourselves does not mean that we are anything more than this intact living body with its various abilities, including the ability to be self-aware. We *have* our bodies in Plessner's sense, and we *have* our mental life whereby we may know our body and the world; but we no less *are* our respective mental life and body for having them to use. Their immediate usefulness to us does not distinguish us from them. Our eccentric positionality relative to our bodies and to our mental episodes is a cognitive fact about us and not a fact about what we ultimately are. To be a self or to have a self introduces no new entity, since it is we ourselves who are the selves (cf. Grene, 1968, p. 104).

Why Do Things Fall Out as They Do?

If the present view is correct, we must wonder why things fall out as they do. What is the source of the normal dissociation that yields us an illusory "I"? Perhaps everyone has, at some time, the immediate impression of not being identical with his or her mental episodes or body. Why do we not, instead, find ourselves immediately intimate and warm, as James (1890) would say? Why do we not become and stay self-identified with what we actually are? According to Plessner, our awareness of having a body that we use to achieve our purposes results in a "coming to terms" that assumes an "I" with a special relation to our body. Namely, we identify, like some of the abnormal patients mentioned, with a point of view on ourselves. But why could we not be self-aware and yet not dissociated, as Plessner held that animals are? Could it be the objectifying function of human awareness (of which some other animals might also be capable) that is responsible for our strong tendency toward self-estrangement?

Plessner (1961/1970) held that we "have" our own experiences (rather than simply being our experiences) only when we go beyond their occurren-

ces in us to an awareness of them as distinct occurrences that may or may not be of use to us. I believe this is also what Aldrich (1978-1979) meant by the following statement:

But the bat is nothing but a percipient. It is, in extension, nothing but a natural body. This changes the logic of the question of "what it is like to be x." The question is answered by the syntactical marker "field of *perceptual* representation" alone, which fixes the logic of the account of its experience and behavior. If it could tell us how things look to it, it would not be a bat. To suppose that it nevertheless has an inscrutable "inner life" is to indulge in what Wittgenstein would call raw image-mongering. (p. 510)

The bat is a percipient, has experiences; therefore, it has a point of view. But it is not (*pace* Bieri, 1982) the subject of its experiences. What it is like to be a bat is answered entirely in terms of the experiences it has, and does not include its standing over against these experiences. The bat's relation to its experiences consists entirely in the fact that its behavior is modified and guided by them, though not by knowledge of them. Our experiences guide our behaviors as well. Among the effects of our experiences is their causing us to be attracted or repelled by something that is stimulating our senses. As in the bat, such effects can occur in us, too, without our being aware of the experiences that cause them. For them to have such effects, we need not make a distinction between what appears and what is the case. We may be no more the subject of an experience that we have than the "blind-sighted" person is the subject of his or her nonconscious visual perceptions (Natsoulas, 1982a; see below). But we may also seek certain experiences for a purpose that we have in mind; we may recognize them as now occurring when the kind sought are finally produced in us; and we may use the information provided by the experiences for the achievement of the purpose that caused us to seek to have them. Plessner's thing-object distinction is directly relevant to the point I am making. Our mental states and events can be either of these to us; that is, they can be "things" to which we respond or "objects" of a conceptual objectifying consciousness. This corresponds to the contrast that we have drawn between ourselves and the bat, and also within ourselves when differently related to our own mental life.

Grene (1968) wrote of there being a more "radical distancing" between human beings and the world than the "hiatus" between an organism and that to which it responds. Given the mere hiatus, differentiation occurs; the organism exhibits an ability to discriminate, and it responds to itself differently from how it responds to other things. In the more radical distancing, however, there is involved "the sense of negativity," which is not necessarily present when the organism differentiates in its behavior between "me" and "not-me." The organism that has not gone beyond the latter differentiation "does not yet *have* a self, to which in turn it can stand in reflective awareness" (Grene, 1968, p. 99). The sense of negativity was proposed as the key to both

having a self and being aware of objects, as opposed to merely experiencing things and responding. Negativity was contrasted with animal-immersion; we transcend the latter by means of our capacity to think in terms of what is hypothetical and possible:

To know that p , I must reject the possible match of the denial-thought ($\text{not-}p$) and reality, I must know that $\text{not-}p$ might have been true but is in fact false; and animal-immersion is marked by the absence of this knowledge. For example, a dog's knowing it is to be fed does not involve its knowing it is false [that] it is not to be fed. (O'Shaughnessy, 1972, p. 38)

The properties of objects (as opposed to things that we merely respond to) extend beyond those properties that we are here and now experiencing. With only a small change in the conditions of perception, objects may not appear as they are now appearing to us, and how they appear can be used as evidence for how they actually are. Our ability to consider alternatives to what we seem to experience makes it possible for us to overcome an unquestioning absorption in the present apparent state of things.

In making deliberate use of our experiences, we become aware of them of course. We are not then absorbed in them or in the environment that produces them. Experiences *as things* cause us to respond to them, as in the above examples of being attracted or repelled by a state of affairs as a consequence of our experience of it. Experiences *as objects*, in contrast, are brought under a description, by their subject, and are located thereby in a conceptual scheme relative to other experiences, some of which might have occurred here and now but did not. From self-awareness of my mental states and episodes, I learn which of them did not occur as well as which ones did occur. I realize that the series of experiences that at this moment I am having could have been other than what the series is with only a small change of internal or external conditions. Also, error in self-awareness of mental states and events may occur, because a mental state or event and our firsthand awareness of it are two and not just one occurrence (cf. Natsoulas, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1978c). One of these may occur without the other, and a mental state or event may occur without there occurring an awareness of it that is veridical; the awareness may misclassify or misdescribe the mental state or event of which it is an awareness. (A discussion of the reliability of introspection and arguments in favor of the present view can be found in Aune, 1967.) The relevant point is not merely that self-awareness of this kind can be false just as our perceptual awarenesses sometimes are; the point is that we know that they can be, and sometimes we dwell on our experiences or cause them to be repeated to make sure that we have properly grasped them.

But is not one's awareness of self different in regard to possible error, and in the related regard of possible alternative experiences? Could anyone else be having the particular experience I am having right now? Although one can

realize that one's present experience could be different from what it in fact is, can we say the same thing about the one who is experiencing it? The point is not whether someone else could have the same experience. The point is whether this moment of consciousness could have another possessor, just as it might consist of a different mental state or event. Discovery and error in regard to whom the subject of an experience is do not seem possible on the part of the person whose experience it is. Many people would argue that one's direct awareness of a mental episode always includes the awareness that one has it. While the "alienation of mental episodes" may cast some doubt on this view (Natsoulas, 1979, and above, on dissociation phenomena), the exceptions are felt to be so rare and abnormal that they do not hinder drawing the following conclusion from one's immunity to error through misidentification of the subject of one's mental episodes. This immunity gives some people reason to argue for a distinct "I" who is the subject. One argument proceeds from the fact that I can be mistaken about who I am, due to amnesia. But I can never be mistaken that I am the one having the present experience. The "I" of which I am aware as experiencing a certain series of mental states and events must be, therefore, other than the human being occupying at this moment the swivel chair in room 179 Young Hall on the Davis campus of the University of California. I can be variously mistaken about this human being, even with regard to his identity. We encounter "I" as we do nothing else; we encounter it in our own case with a certainty about its presence that cannot be matched by an awareness of anything else. It is a unique certainty suitable to a self-conscious subject's knowledge of its own existence.

Self-Awareness of Mental Episodes

The present view is that a distinct "I" is not needed to explain our unique certainty, though this felt certainty may help to explain the illusion of "I." Shoemaker's (1968) following statement suggests an alternative explanation: "There is an important and central class of psychological predicates . . . each of which can be known to be instantiated in such a way that knowing it to be instantiated in that way is equivalent to knowing it to be instantiated in oneself" (p. 565). There is always a reference to oneself built into any instance of awareness of this self-directed kind. It is in the (learned) nature of this kind of awareness that it not only takes a certain mental episode to occur but also appropriates it to oneself. The content varies among one's direct (i.e., so-called introspective) awarenesses—except for the referring component that always makes reference to oneself. The referring component is extraordinarily consistent; we have not learned to ascribe in direct access different mental episodes to different subjects. (In Natsoulas, 1979, these statements are qualified. For the present purpose, they are stated absolutely, since what needs an account here is the usual feeling of certainty, which leads to the belief in "I.") The purported reference to a distinct self or ego is carried by a purely

conceptual element of the respective self-awareness. Anscombe (1975) called such self-awarenesses "I-thoughts," and she described them consistently with the present view:

These I-thoughts are examples of reflective consciousness of states, actions, motions, etc., not of an object I mean by "I," but of this body. These I-thoughts (allow me to pause and think some!) . . . are unmediated conceptions (knowledge or belief, true or false) of states, motions, etc., of this object here No problem of the continuity or reidentification of "the I" can arise. There is no such thing. There is E.A., who, like other humans, has such thoughts as these. And who probably learned to have them through learning to say what she had done, was doing, etc.—an amazing feat of imitation. (p. 62)

It is not as though "I" makes any kind of appearance, which might count as evidence against Anscombe's rejection of the "I" (cf. Sartre, 1936-1937/1972, p. 49-54). The person thinks with strong conviction that an inner conscious subject is present. But this is a result of how the person has learned to report about himself or herself, and also a result of the particular concept of "I" at work. For the latter concept includes there being an inner self or agent whose presence can be introspectively detected.

Wittgenstein (Moore, 1955) also held that to use the pronoun *I* to characterize "primary experience" is to use a grammatical pseudosubject. This use, he said, is analogous to the use of *it* in such statements as "It is raining." One reason given for this view was the empirical absence of "I" when one introspects one's mental episodes (cf. Lashley, 1958, p. 3). Wittgenstein (1930/1975) stated, "The experience of feeling pain is not that a person 'I' has something. I distinguish an intensity, a location, etc. in the pain, but not an owner" (p. 94). *I* in this use was said to be equivalent to the word *conscious*: "The whole field of this experience is described in this [ordinary] language by expressions in the form 'I have . . .'" (Wittgenstein, 1930/1975, p. 95). There is a second reason for the view that *I* in "the use as subject" does not denote a subject (Wittgenstein, 1933-1935/1965): If it did, there would be room for picking out the wrong subject. This use of the pronoun does not in fact refer to anyone, as *I* do when I say that I have a broken arm. In the latter instance, I could be mistaken; I might have just revived after a collision and seen a broken arm at my side. In contrast, one cannot know that someone is suffering from pain and mistakenly believe that it is oneself or not oneself: "The difficulty in finding a form of reference to what is expressed by 'I' at the neighborless level is that I am enclosed within something that has nothing outside it to which it could be opposed and characterized through this opposition" (Jones, 1967, p. 9).

Conclusion: The Subject of Consciousness

The objection might be put forward that there must have been someone who found the pain intense and so on. Wittgenstein may not have been able to

observe the possessor of the pain, but was there not an "I" who tried? Surely, it makes no sense to say that an experience occurred consciously if there was no one who experienced it, no subject of that instance of consciousness. A view of direct access to mental episodes such as the one expressed in the following quoted sentence must be using the final phrase of the sentence to refer to an "I." It only purports to get by with the mere addition of I-thoughts.

In sum, to have a direct [i.e., so-called introspective] awareness is to undergo a thought that is an occurrent believing [Sellars, 1976] to the effect that such and such is happening, or has just happened, in one's mind or brain, when *what this thought intends* determines noninferentially, and in no sensory way, one's having it. (Natsoulas, 1978c, p. 144)

No, the final phrase does not refer to a subject other than the human being in whom the mental occurrence takes place. Three examples that were given immediately after this sentence also might be erroneously interpreted as making a reference to "I." The examples were "(a) my being directly aware that I am afraid, (b) my direct awareness of having the thought that it is raining in London at the moment, and (c) the direct awareness that it now visually appears to me there is a yellow pencil on my desk" (Natsoulas, 1978c, pp. 144-145). *My* and *me* are used here to refer to the human being that I am, and not to anything else that better deserves them.

With this non-egological proposal in mind, let us look more closely at our visual perceptions. A human being's awareness of his or her own perceptions allows for the information provided by the latter to be put to deliberate use. The human being is the subject of his or her perceptions insofar as this information is "available to the system as a whole and can therefore figure, more or less directly, in the system's pattern of responses Those responses that are determined, not only by the incoming stimulus information, but also by the needs, purposes, and desires of the system as a whole" (Dretske, 1978, p. 115). Direct self-awareness of one's visual contents as such is of the sort that can issue in noninferential reports that one is seeing something about something. Such reports are part of that pattern of responses that belongs to the system as a whole. They result from a desire to conform to instructions that ask one to report on the cognitive outcomes of the activity of one's visual system. I have elsewhere suggested that the nonconscious visual perceptions of "blind-sight" (e.g., Perenin and Jeannerod, 1975; Pöppel, Held, and Frost, 1973; Weiskrantz, Warrington, Sanders, and Marshall, 1974; Zihl, 1980) have a different status relative to the human being in whose nervous system they occur (Natsoulas, 1982a). The blind-sighted person is surely less the subject of his or her nonconscious visual perceptions than he or she is the subject of the conscious ones. The conscious ones produce direct awarenesses of themselves and may be reported. Whereas the blind-sighted person's nonconscious visual perceptions make it possible for the person correctly to guess the location of a visual stimulus, these perceptions do not

enter directly into the voluntary behavior of the person. They influence this behavior in a contrived way through his or her making forced-choice responses and not by means of a direct awareness of their occurrence (see Natsoulas, 1982a, pp. 85-87).

Dissatisfaction with the present anti-egological view might be expressed in still another way: A critic (e.g., Bieri, 1982) might compare mental states and events with those bodily occurrences in us of which no one claims that we are the subject. The critic might propose that a subjective consciousness must be introduced to distinguish our relation to our mental occurrences from our relation to, for example, our digestive processes. The claim would be that we are not, in part, our mental occurrences in the same way that we are, in part, our digestive processes. Either we *are* our mental occurrences and *have* our digestive processes in an external way of possession, or we *are* our digestive processes and "*have*" our mental occurrences in an internal way of subjectivity. I should say we are, in part, both of these; both mental episodes and digestive processes are occurrent constituents of us. The problematical difference between them is that for mental occurrences to go on in me is for many of them to give me a point of view; they make me aware. Awarenesses no less go on in me than digestive processes do; they are, no less, physiological occurrences in my body; but awarenesses have an "inside," a content, whereas digestive processes do not. (Cf. Wimsatt's, 1976, statement that only some physical systems have both a psychological inside and a physical inside.) Some people will say that all of nature has an inside, that all of nature has content as well as participating in a structure of relationships. But these individuals are applying a different concept of content, unless they are panpsychists. The relevant concept of content here is cognitive content. We have no point of view on anything insofar as we are only our digestive processes and the like, as in a coma. But there exist in us, as part of us, ways in which the world appears and can be known when we have awarenesses. Whereas, the present view is physicalist, it does not "flatten out" the person by "annihilating his perceptual field . . . including what he is conscious of" (Aldrich, 1978-1979, p. 505). There is no question that we have a point of view on perceptual objects. They look, sound, etc., in some way to us; they appear to us; they are qualitatively present to us by virtue of the perceptual process that, in part, we are. The claim that all awarenesses are physiological occurrences in our bodies does not deny that someone has a viewpoint on the world. What is denied is that the subject is something else.

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