

The Conflict Between Naturalism and Phenomenology

Chapter 1

Introduction

Naturalists and Phenomenologists¹ have contrasting conceptions of philosophy and its purpose. The naturalist takes philosophy to be a discipline that is continuous with the natural sciences, while phenomenology defines itself by its opposition to such a view of philosophy. Merleau-Ponty tells us, in answering the question what is phenomenology:

‘Husserl’s first directive to phenomenology, in its early stages, to be a ‘descriptive psychology’, or to return to the ‘things themselves’, is from the start a *foreswearing of science*. I am not *the outcome* of the meeting point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive of myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation...’ (1962, p.viii, *my emphases*)

From the phenomenologist’s perspective then, any attempt to build a naturalistic account of the mind based on phenomenological description will appear misconceived from the outset. By the end of my thesis I will have argued that it is the phenomenologist’s misgivings about naturalism that are misconceived. The phenomenologist’s anti-naturalist stance rests on a mistaken understanding of naturalism. I will show that in reality it is possible for a naturalist philosopher to accept many of the insights phenomenology has to offer. First we must get clear on how the phenomenologist argues against naturalism. This will be my aim in this chapter and the next.

¹ In this chapter and throughout the thesis I will sometimes take the traditions of naturalism and phenomenology to be represented by two characters, “the naturalist” and “the phenomenologist”, who will speak on behalf of their respective traditions. Where there is a point of disagreement within either of these camps I will make reference to specific texts and thinkers, but when there are themes upon which all phenomenologists or all naturalists are agreed, I will use these two characters to give expression to these themes.

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This chapter will explore the naturalist and the phenomenologist's differing conceptions of philosophy. The principle difference between these two traditions concerns the relation each takes philosophy to stand in to science. Phenomenologists think that science occupies a subordinate position in relation to philosophy. They ask how scientific knowledge is possible, and set about identifying the conditions of the possibility of knowledge of the natural world. Naturalists for their part, take the task of philosophy to be to demonstrate how our thinking about some philosophical question can be made to cohere with the theories of the sciences. It is in this light that Ruth Millikan (1998) tells us:

‘As a naturalist, I must understand my own self and mind as well as those of others to be part of nature. Thought, including my own thought, must be discovered in nature, rather than helping to establish nature.’ (*ibid* p.65)

We can see already, just from these brief comments, that naturalists and phenomenologists approach philosophy in very different ways. The prospects for securing any kind of common ground look decidedly bleak.

In section 1 and 2 I will sketch what I take to be the key commitments of the naturalist with respect to metaphysics and epistemology, the key areas in which naturalism comes into conflict with phenomenology. Having sketched the commitments of the naturalist I will then consider how Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, challenged naturalism. First I will describe his philosophical method. We will see how the practice of this method leads Husserl to propose the radical metaphysical thesis that the world we experience is an accomplishment of certain conscious processes. I will propose two readings of this thesis, one of which is idealist and the other of which is metaphysically neutral. The chapter will close by considering

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Husserl's argument against naturalism. I will argue that Husserl's challenge to naturalism rests on a commitment to idealism. Husserl takes his descriptions of conscious experience to entail idealism. If he is right, phenomenology and naturalism are almost certainly in irreconcilable conflict.

In Chapter 2 we shall see that existential phenomenologists reject Husserl's idealism. Unfortunately this will not clear the way for a naturalised phenomenology of the kind I wish to develop. There we shall see that existential phenomenologists advance a similar argument against naturalism to Husserl, the only difference being that they reject his commitment to idealism. Thus it would seem that the conflict between phenomenology and naturalism may be independent of the issue of idealism after all.

1. What is Naturalism?

Naturalists agree with Wilfred Sellars that "Science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not." (Sellars 1963, p173) Sellars is making the point here that there is no position outside of science from which we can answer ontological questions, questions about what there is. We shall see in the next section how naturalists extend this conclusion to cover epistemology: naturalistic epistemologists argue that there is no place outside of science from which to account for the possibility of our knowledge.

A naturalistic account of some property or entity will seek to locate that property or entity in nature. This it will do by explaining how that property or entity relates to the other properties or entities that the sciences of the day appeal to in their various theories.

Consider the difficult case of colour. There seems to be two kinds of properties that we refer to in our discourse about colour. First, there are the properties we refer to in

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describing our colour experiences when we say, for instance, what coloured things look like. In addition, there are the properties that are appealed to by science. Commonsense tells us one story about what it is for a thing to be coloured: a thing is coloured when it look a certain way to viewers like us. Science tells us another story about what it is for a thing to be coloured. It may tell us, for instance, that a thing has a particular colour, in part, because it has a surface spectral reflectance property such that it reflects light of a certain frequency.² We have at the outset, two theories of colour; a naturalist must demonstrate how these two theories can be made to cohere.

The naturalist can achieve this task in one of three ways. S/he could argue either for (1) elimination; (2) peaceful coexistence, or (3) assimilation. I will consider each of these possibilities in turn.

In the nineteenth century it was widely supposed that no mechanistic explanation of life was to be had. Instead, philosophers and scientists posited the existence of a life force that animated living things, an *élan vital*. Nowadays, life is explained by mechanisms that bring about reproduction, adaptation and so on. With the advances in biology the theories of the past have been replaced by theories which render unnecessary the appeal to an animating life force. Might something analogous happen for our commonsense theories like our ordinary understanding of colour? Could it be that the theories of a future science of colour vision completely replace our commonsense theory

² Of course this cannot be the whole story, for the way coloured things look remains constant even with large changes in illumination. Green things for instance reflect a high percentage of middle-wave light and a low percentage of long-wave and short-wave light. Yet an object can continue to look green even though it is reflecting a higher percentage of long-wave and short-wave light than medium-wave light. What colour the object seems to have depends on the scene or the background against which the object appears. It is also true that two objects can seem to have different colours even though they are reflecting light of the same frequency. Again this happens because the colour we see something to have depends on the surroundings in which it is placed. See Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991, ch.8, 160-5 for further discussion.

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of colour? It is this possibility of science revealing some category of commonsense to be explanatorily redundant that I have given the name “elimination”.³

Our commonsense theory of colour performs a very different function from the theories of the colour scientist. We use our commonsense theory to talk about how objects look to us. While perhaps it is possible that we could give up our ordinary ways of talking in favour of those of the colour scientist, it is hard to see what explanatory advantages would accrue from such a change. When the theory of vital forces gave way to a mechanistic theory of life, talk of vital forces became explanatorily redundant. There was no longer any need for our explanations of life to appeal to such a concept. It is hard to conceive of something similar happening for the terms we employ in describing the ways coloured things look to us. How could a mature colour science make our ordinary ways of talking about colour redundant?

Setting aside the case of colour, it is the exception rather than the norm for science to come up with a theory that renders a previous theory wholly redundant. Sometimes, when an old theory T_1 is replaced by a new theory T_2 , it is possible to deduce T_1 from the conjunction of T_2 and bridging principles connecting the terms of T_1 with those of T_2 .⁴ There are however many cases from the history of science where such a deduction isn't possible because the pair of theories are not consistent.⁵ Moreover, even when we can deduce one theory from another, the result isn't necessarily that one theory is superceded by another.

Smith (1992: 30-1) suggests that while fluid mechanics, for instance, can be deduced from a molecular theory of matter taken in conjunction with Newton's Laws and Thermodynamics, the latter theories do not make fluid mechanics redundant. For the

³ The leading proponents of this form of naturalism are the Churchlands. See, for example, Churchland (1988).

⁴ See Nagel (1961, ch.11) for an account of reductive explanation along these lines.

⁵ This point was originally made by Feyerabend (1962).

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latter theories do not have the problem solving power of fluid dynamics. Complex fluid systems exhibit interesting regular but non-periodic behaviour. The more basic or fundamental theories from which the principles of fluid dynamics are deducible tell us about the microstructures of fluids. They do not account for the kinds of macroscopic behaviour that we learn about from fluid mechanics.

I conclude then, that elimination is only appropriate in those rare cases when one scientific theory supercedes or makes redundant another, as was the case with explanations of life that appeal to an *élan vital*. This doesn't seem to be the case for our colour concepts.⁶ Thus we are still in need of some means of characterising the relation between our commonsense conception of colour and the conception of colour we get from science. Let us turn then to the second possibility which I labeled peaceful coexistence.

The naturalist who seeks the peaceful coexistence of commonsense and science pursues a strategy which is the polar opposite of elimination. Rather than seeking to displace commonsense in favour of science, the proponent of peaceful existence argues that the theories of commonsense are not in tension with those of science. Both, s/he claims, supply equally good descriptions of reality. When we say things are 'really' coloured this statement should be understood as being made from the standpoint of commonsense, and when we say that colour is 'really' a surface reflectance property, the

⁶ Thompson (2000) argues that we can only account for the distinction between unique or primary colours and binary colours by reference to our experience of colour. He begins by noting that our experiences of colours form a quality space ordered along three dimensions: hue, saturation and lightness. A structural feature of this quality space is that it contains what he calls 'psychological primaries' – the unique hues red, green and yellow. He follows Austen Clark (1993) in defining these hues as qualities whose mixture can match every sensed quality in the space but each of which cannot be matched by combination of the others. This is to say that a psychological primary can be matched only by itself. Thompson goes on to argue that the relations among colour properties in virtue of which they form a colour space cannot be explained in terms of surface spectral reflectance properties. Thus Thompson has supplied another argument for the claim I have just made that we cannot eliminate ordinary talk of colours in favour of the concepts our physical theory of colour supply.

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resulting claim is made from a scientific standpoint. If we relativise our claims to the standpoints from which they are made, the conflict between science and commonsense no longer generates a contradiction. The conflict will become something with which we can learn to live. This naturalistic strategy takes both science and common sense to act as guides to what there is. This is possible because commonsense and science operate from distinct standpoints. Here is Strawson describing the proposal:

‘Looking at photographs in journals of popular science of patches of human skin, vastly magnified, we say, ‘How fantastically uneven and ridgy it really is.’ We study a sample of blood through a microscope and say, ‘It’s mostly colourless.’ But skin can still be smooth and blood be red; for in another context we shift our standard back. Such shifts do not convict us of volatility or condemn us to internal conflict. The appearance of both volatility and conflict vanishes when we acknowledge the relativity of our ‘reallys.’ (Strawson, 1979/1988: 110)

This strategy for securing peaceful coexistence fails when our commonsense and scientific theories both make appeal to distinct properties as the *cause* of some event. Commonsense might tell us that what caused a bull to charge at was its seeing my red scarf. While science might tell us that what caused the bull to charge was the firing of neurons in a certain part of the animal’s brain. If we disallow causal overdetermination – if we do not allow a single event to have multiple causes – we must admit that we have here a case of competing causal explanations. Furthermore, if we concede that every event has some prior physical cause (or has the chance of its occurrence determined by some prior physical cause) it looks like we are obliged to say that all the causal work is already carried out by the property which figures in our scientific explanation.⁷ When

⁷ Kim has developed this worry at length. See for instance Kim (1993).

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the causal explanations our commonsense theory pretends to supply compete with those of science, it seems that commonsense must give way to science.

Let us agree that commonsense and science operate from distinct theoretical standpoints. This won't help us to reconcile the claims of commonsense with those of science when both purport to supply causal explanations of the same event. As soon as we are presented with two competing causal explanations we will be back with the question with which we started. We will be faced once again with the task of explaining how both our commonsense explanation and our scientific explanation can be true. I conclude then that peaceful coexistence isn't an option for the naturalist. This leaves us with assimilation.

Naturalisation by assimilation comes in two forms: reductionist and anti-reductionist. What they share in common is an ontological claim to the effect that science is our guide to what there is. A naturalistic theory achieves assimilation by showing that the properties and entities a commonsense theory quantifies over are either identical with, or, supervene on, the properties and entities described by the natural sciences. Anti-reductionists endorse the supervenience claim in one form or another. Reductionists endorse the identity claim, though they will do so in a way that enables them to acknowledge the possibility of a property being multiply realised, as we shall see.

Anti-reductionism originally arose as a reaction against the idea of a unified science as it is presented in Oppenheim and Putnam (1958). What anti-reductionists like Fodor (1974) were reacting against is the idea of physics supplying the basic laws for all the other sciences. Fodor advanced instead a view of nature according to which nature can be carved up in lots of different ways. Each science is relatively autonomous of other sciences, having its own conceptual apparatus, laws and explanations. In particular Fodor argued that what he called the "special sciences" couldn't be reduced to physics.

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There are special sciences, Fodor tells us, ‘because of the way the world is put together: not all natural kinds (not all the classes of things of things about which there are important, counterfactual, supporting generalisations to make) are or correspond to, physical natural kinds.’ (Fodor, 1974/2001: 134)

Now it may be that Fodor is right when he says there is no predicate of physics lawfully coextensive with the predicate ‘is-a-monetary exchange’. Hence it may be true that there is no reduction of Gresham’s law (an example of Fodor’s) to physics. Still we might want to know why the events that fall under the laws of the special sciences happen also, token by token, to fall under physical laws. We want to explain why the events that are describable by the special sciences are token identical with physical events. Fodor’s argument for the autonomy of the special sciences relies on acts of monetary exchange or feelings of pain being realised by a heterogeneous class of physical states. No doubt this is true. Still we want to know how the explanations of some event we find in the special sciences and the explanation of that event proposed by physics can both be true.

This becomes still more urgent if we suppose that the physical world is causally closed, so that every event described by the special sciences has the probability of its occurrence fixed by some physical cause. Given the causal closure of the physical world, if we don’t explain why the relation of token identity holds between the physical event and the event of my feeling pain epiphenomenalism will beckon. We will have to say that it is not my instantiating pain that explains my dropping the red-hot poker, but my being in a brain state B which is token identical with my experience of pain. The anti-reductionist needs some explanation in the terms of the lower level sciences as to why

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my instantiation of pain was the cause of my behaviour. Otherwise s/he will be unable to defeat the threat posed by epiphenomenalism.⁸

Jaegwon Kim (1998, ch.4) has proposed a reductionist route out of the problem I have just described. The problem, to recap, is to accommodate the kind of multiple realizability which is a feature of the events described by the special sciences whilst avoiding falling foul of epiphenomenalism. Kim proposes that we solve the problem as follows: first we give a functional specification of some higher-level property M and then we identify a physical property P which satisfies this specification. Consider the psychological property, being in pain. We can specify what it is for a creature to experience pain by identifying this experience with a type of state that stands in a causal relation to certain kinds of stimuli, and that typically brings about certain kinds of behaviour. We thereby identify our psychological property M (the property of experiencing pain) with a second-order property: the property of having a property that plays a causal role R. Next we look for a property that fits our causal specification: we look for properties or mechanisms which might play this causal role. Let us call the property in question a “realiser”: it is a realiser insofar as it *realises* or *instantiates* the causal powers in terms of which we have defined our mental property M. We can say that a property P is a realiser for pain experiences when it plays the causal role in terms of which we specify what it is to be in pain. I shall call an explanation which proceeds in the way just described an “ontological reduction”.

Now clearly there is plenty of room in this account for the property we identify as the realiser of causal role M to vary across and within individuals. Thus there is nothing in Kim’s proposal which flouts the requirement that M be multiply realised. Nor is this

⁸ There is an alternative open to the anti-reductionist, he could embrace ontological emergence. That is to say, he could deny that all physical effects are entirely determined by their physical causes, and thus deny the causal closure of physics. For a discussion see Crane (2001: §18). This seems to me an attractive move but to attempt its defence here would take me to far away from my main concerns in this chapter.

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account obviously vulnerable to epiphenomenalism. An ontological reduction tells us that *M* is located in nature by being individuated by causal powers which belong to *P*, *M*'s realiser. Since *M* is nothing over and above *P* whatever causal powers belong to *P* will also belong to *M*. I am assuming here that *M* inherits all of its causal powers from its realiser. Kim (1993 & 1998: 54) labels this assumption the causal inheritance principle. The causal inheritance principle says:

“If a second-order property *F* is realised on any given occasion by a first-order property *H* (that is if *F* is instantiated on a given occasion in virtue of the fact that one of its realisers *H*, is instantiated on that occasion), then the causal powers of this particular instance of *F* are identical with (or are a subset of) the causal powers of *H* (or of this instance of *H*).” (Kim, 1998: 54)

Any theory which rejected the causal inheritance principle would have to accept the possibility of second-order properties having causal powers which are not identical to those of its realisers or vice versa. It seems plausible to me to say that the first-order property couldn't have any causal powers that didn't also belong to the second-order property it is realising.⁹ If this is right then my experience of pain is no less causally efficacious than its realiser, since my pain and its realiser share all the same causal powers. Thus Kim seems to have found a way out of the difficulty the anti-reductionist ran into. I want to briefly raise a different worry one might have about Kim's account of realisation which will be relevant to the final position I argue for at the end of the thesis.¹⁰

⁹ Perhaps a second-order property could have some causal powers it didn't inherit from its first-order property. To assess this possibility would require some discussion of the possibility of ontological emergence, see footnote 8, but unfortunately this goes beyond my remit in this current chapter.

¹⁰ The worry derives from Wilson (2004: ch.5 & 6)

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It is tempting to think of the realisers of my psychological states as microphysical properties of me. On this understanding the naturalist pursuing assimilation is committed to identifying neurophysiological properties sufficient for the functionally specified psychological properties which they realise. Now it seems to me that the naturalist ought to be cautious before s/he lends her endorsement to such an assumption. Surely the nature of a psychological property's realiser should be left as an open empirical question. Some psychological properties may be realised by neurophysiological properties of individuals. Others may extend into the world.

There are two related principles we should bear in mind when thinking about the realisers of our physical states. The first is Andy Clark's 007 Principle. It says:

'In general, evolved creatures will neither store nor process information in costly ways when they can use the structure of their environment and their operations upon it as a convenient stand-in for the information-processing operations concerned. That is, know only as much information as you need to get the job done.' (Clark, 1989: 64)

The second principle is Mark Rowlands' Barking Dog Principle'

'If it is necessary for an organism to be able to perform an adaptive task *T*, then it is selectively disadvantageous for the organism to develop internal mechanisms sufficient for the performance of *T* when it is possible for the organism to perform *T* by way of a combination of internal mechanisms and manipulation of the external environment.' (Rowlands, 2003: 166)

Both these principles suggest that the environment may be used to carry out information processing tasks. I suggest then that we need a notion of realisation which registers this possibility.

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I will follow Wilson (2004: ch.5) in making a distinction between three kinds of realisation. The first two are borrowed from Shoemaker (1981). Shoemaker distinguishes between core realisers and total realisers. Suppose that c-fibers are indeed the physical realisers of pain. Shoemaker points out that this cannot be the whole story. C-fibers produce pain only in conjunction with other parts of the central nervous system which are also activated when the subject is in pain. C-fiber stimulation can be at best what Shoemaker calls the “core realiser” of pain. Shoemaker takes the “total realiser” of pain to be the nociceptive system – the various nociceptors distributed about the body, and the other parts of the brain that are involved in sensing pain. Generally we can say the total realiser will include all of the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for a system to embed a core realiser. Now it is the total realiser which is sufficient for being in pain; the core realiser isn't, even though one couldn't be in pain without it. All of the parts of a total realiser which are not its core realiser I shall follow Wilson in calling “non-core parts”.

Given the 007 and Barking Dog principles, a naturalist ought to say the following about the realisers of our psychological properties. S/he ought to allow for the possibility that the non-core parts of a total realiser may extend into the world. This is to say that the non-core parts of a total realiser may contribute to producing or sustaining a psychological property P even though these non-core parts are not located within the individual to whom P belongs.

With this proviso registered, I tentatively endorse Kim's strategy of assimilation by ontological reduction. A naturalist pursuing assimilation must show how a pre-scientific or commonsense theory fits with the theories of the science by first identifying the properties which are appealed to by commonsense with second-order properties. It will then set about showing how this second-order property finds realisation in some

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physical conditions which may extend into the world. In the next section I will briefly consider how a naturalist would approach problems in epistemology, before taking up the phenomenologist's argument against naturalism.

2. Naturalised Epistemology

Traditionally, epistemology has been conceived of as a normative inquiry. Among the central questions an epistemologist asks is when a belief should be accepted as true. This is not simply a factual question: a question about when *in fact* beliefs are accepted as true. It is a question that asks about what we *ought* to do if we are to believe only what is true. There are standards of epistemic responsibility we employ in deciding the answer to this question: standards which tell us what it is reasonable to believe and which of our beliefs it would be irresponsible to accept as true. Thus, when Descartes asks which of his beliefs he can know to be true, he is asking which of his beliefs it would be reasonable for him to continue to accept as true. At least initially, what he discovers is that they are all equally subject to doubt, and thus it would be irresponsible of him, at this stage in his enquiry, to accept any of them.

Naturalistic epistemology seeks to answer the question of when it is reasonable for us to believe a proposition in non-normative or descriptive terms¹¹. Any theory that appeals to evaluative or normative notions like "adequate evidence", or "sufficient grounds" or "good reasons" will fail to meet this condition.

Some versions of naturalistic epistemology seek to give up altogether on epistemology conceived of as a normative enterprise. Quine (1969) exemplifies this attitude.¹² There are less radical conceptions of naturalised epistemology that do not

¹¹ See for instance Goldman (1976/2000: 340).

¹² For Quine, naturalistic epistemology is to work from within psychology. Quine's naturalistic epistemologist asks how we can form representations and theories about the world starting from observations that radically underdetermine the final result. It is to psychology that we must look for an

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require us to give up altogether on the task of explaining when it is reasonable to hold a belief. Most versions of externalist epistemology for instance are naturalistic in spirit, and also accept that our sensory experiences can act as reasons for our beliefs.¹³

Generally, an externalist epistemology will hold that a belief's justification depends (wholly, or partly, depending on the strength of the view) on the process by which the belief was acquired. Whether or not a belief is justified is, for the most part, a matter beyond the ken of the believer. A belief's justificatory status is dependent on the processes by which it was formed. Thus Goldman (1986), for instance, has given a detailed account of justified belief as belief that is generated by a reliable belief-forming process. While Armstrong holds that a belief is justified when a law-like connection holds between the state of affairs in which a subject believes that p and the state of affairs that makes p true, such that given that a subject believes that p , it must be the case that p .¹⁴ On both these views, our explanation of when a belief is justified is one that is not framed in normative or evaluative terms. Appeal is instead made to the processes that caused the belief, or to the law-like connection that holds between a representational

answer to this question: it is psychology that can identify the processes by means of which we transform our observations into theories. Quine's epistemologist is concerned only with the causal relations between sensory input and cognitive output. S/he doesn't worry whether our observations give us *good evidence* for our theories. This is a normative question involving us as it does in the evaluation of the support our evidence gives us for a theory. Quine's recommendation seems to be that philosophers should no longer concern themselves with questions of this kind. See for instance Quine 1969/2000: 297. Epistemology should become a purely descriptive science.

It is an open question whether a project that ceases to be concerned with justification is still a project in epistemology. See Kim 1988/2000 for a persuasive argument to this effect. However, to enter into this worry would take us beyond my current concern, which is to sketch the commitments of a naturalistic epistemology.

¹³ Peacocke 1986, ch.9 develops an externalist view which does not seek to explain the justificatory role our psychological states play in non-normative terms, but nevertheless allows that whether a belief counts as justified may be something of which the believer is ignorant. McDowell 1995/2000 argues that hybrid externalist positions like Peacocke's are unsatisfactory, because they make the attainment of knowledge a matter of luck. Two thinkers can be in possession of identical reasons for their beliefs, and one of these thinkers succeed in knowing while the other fails to do so. This can happen because on the hybrid account of knowledge whether a belief is true or not is taken to be something external to the reasons one has which support one's beliefs. McDowell's solution is, very roughly, to develop an externalist view of justification which denies that truth is external to the possession of a reason.

¹⁴ See Armstrong (1973: 166).

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state and the state of affairs that makes this state true. In both cases the result is an account of justification (a normative notion) framed in non-normative or descriptive terms.

For the naturalist then, the task of explaining how we get knowledge of the external world is placed squarely in the domain of psychology and cognitive science. For the phenomenologist, to locate philosophical problems about knowledge within the domain of science begs some important questions. The phenomenologist would object that we cannot appeal to psychology to explain how our knowledge of the external world is possible. For to do so, is to already assume that psychology can give us knowledge. We cannot assume that knowledge is possible in order to explain how knowledge is possible without succumbing to the charge of circularity in our reasoning.

‘If certain riddles are, generally speaking, inherent in principle to natural science, then it is self-evident that the solution of these riddles according to premises and conclusions in principle transcends natural science. To expect from natural science itself the solution of any one of the problems inherent in it as such...or even merely to suppose that it could contribute to the solution of such a problem any premise whatsoever, is to be involved in a vicious circle.’ (Husserl, 1911/1981: 172)

Where Husserl talks of “riddles” we can take him to mean “problems concerning how thought and experience of an objective world is possible”. These are problems that he thinks will be brought to our attention the moment we begin to reflect on our knowledge in a philosophical manner. The problem of knowledge is inherent in any enterprise that purports to supply us with knowledge, and science is undoubtedly among those enterprises. Science could give us a solution to the problem of how knowledge is possible only by assuming the very thing that is in question.

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This is a difficulty that did not escape Quine's notice, and unsurprisingly he isn't particularly moved by it. He suggests that one would only be bothered by a circularity of this kind, if one aspired to set scientific knowledge on firm foundations.¹⁵ But Quine suggests that no one should believe in such a project anymore. Hence, we have nothing to fear from the circularity that attends any attempt to explain the possibility of knowledge by appealing to scientific theories which themselves pretend to be knowledge.¹⁶

Let us set aside naturalism for now, and consider in more detail why Husserl might have thought that knowledge presents a problem that naturalism cannot solve without moving in a circle.

3. Husserl's Philosophical Project

Husserl's phenomenology has as its goal, the description of various conditions that are necessary and sufficient for an objective world to be experienced and thought about by us. His phenomenology locates these conditions within a subject's consciousness. We shall see that Husserl rejects naturalism because it fails to recognise the constitutive role he thinks consciousness plays in giving us perceptual experiences of an objective reality.

When phenomenologists assign a constitutive role to consciousness they are making a *transcendental* claim. Here is Kant defining a 'transcendental' form of enquiry in his *Prolegomena*:

¹⁵ Interestingly enough, the essay in which Husserl makes this charge of circularity against naturalism is one in which he argues for such a foundationalist project. See Husserl (1911/1981). So it would seem that Quine's response is quite to the point. I will develop a different line of attack on the phenomenologist's behalf in what remains of the chapter, which, if I am right stands behind Husserl's comment here anyway. This line of argument does not require us to buy into Husserl's foundationalist epistemology. Later phenomenologists were to reject such a project, though we will see they continued to argue against naturalism.

¹⁶ See Quine, 1969/2000: 294.

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‘...the word “transcendental” ... does not signify something passing beyond all experience but something that indeed precedes it a priori, but that is intended simply to make cognition of experience possible’. (Kant, 1977: 373n)

Phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy. Its method is a priori; its goal is to identify the conditions that make our thought and experience of objects possible.¹⁷ Already we see an important difference between the phenomenologist’s project and that of the naturalist. The naturalist is concerned with demonstrating that empirical answers can be returned to what s/he takes to be, empirical questions. The phenomenologist thinks there are questions that arise *prior* to any merely empirical question. These are questions concerning the conditions that must be in place if we are to have any experience of an objective world at all.

It is of course far from obvious that the naturalist has to accept the validity of the kinds of question phenomenology poses. Thus, part of my goal in the remainder of this chapter and the next will be to motivate the questions which phenomenology raises as ones with which the naturalist must engage.

Husserl’s phenomenology begins with the setting aside of all beliefs whose truth we ordinarily take for granted. Husserl aspired to transform philosophy into a science whose claims, like the claims of the scientist, were absolutely grounded in evidence and universally accepted. The philosopher is to take nothing for granted; s/he is to ‘put out of action’¹⁸ all truths that are unquestioningly accepted, including the truths of sciences.

¹⁷ One important difference between phenomenology and Kant’s transcendental project is that the conditions constitutive of all possible experience that the phenomenologist identifies are not purely formal conditions. Kant’s transcendental enquiry proceeds on the basis of elaborate transcendental arguments. A transcendental argument begins by identifying some feature of our thought or experience which is completely beyond doubt, and then proceeds to argue that certain conditions must be satisfied if our thought or experience is to possess this feature. Phenomenologists do not engage in transcendental arguments. Instead they offer descriptions of our conscious experience as it is experienced by us. What these descriptions uncover are ways in which our experience must be structured or organised if we are to experience the kinds of objects we do.

¹⁸ Husserl (1932/1973: 48)

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Many of the propositions whose truth we ordinarily take for granted will not satisfy this requirement – they will not be absolutely grounded in evidence. Some of the propositions we believe will have been accepted by us as true because this is the most natural attitude to take towards them. This is the case for many propositions that specify the contents of our sensory experience or of our memories. Other propositions we believe, will have been accepted at some point in the past on the basis of testimony. These propositions will often be ones whose truth we have accepted on trust without attempting to verify their truth for ourselves. If phenomenology is to be a science, as Husserl believed it must be, the phenomenologist must begin by setting aside all propositions whose truth he has not established for himself. He must accept no propositions as true that he has not discovered to be absolutely grounded in evidence.

A proposition is absolutely grounded in evidence, Husserl thinks, when it is self-evident, which is to say that its falsity is unthinkable. Descartes' *cogito* is an example of such a proposition. If one tries to think the negation of the proposition 'I am thinking' one finds oneself trying to think something contradictory. We shall see in due course that Husserl thinks many other propositions qualify as what we might call *cogito-thoughts*. The first methodological demand that Husserl makes is that the phenomenologist is to refrain from making any claim that does not have the status of a *cogito-thought*. He is to accept only those propositions which are such that if we try to conceive of their falsity we find ourselves trying to think something that is obviously false.

No merely empirical proposition will satisfy this condition. For, no empirical proposition will be such that we cannot coherently conceive of its being false. We can, for instance, conceive of everything within consciousness staying the same but the world

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we experience proving to be nothing but “an illusion, a coherent dream”.¹⁹ The contents of my experiences leave open the possibility that the object I seem to experience at any given moment might not exist. Consider a visual experience I undergo of an apple. I can imagine God destroying the apple I am seeing while maintaining the activity in my brain so that it continues to appear to me that I am looking at this apple. If this is conceivable for one of my experiences, it is surely conceivable for every experience I have. Thus, I can imagine for each and every experience I have that the object of my experience doesn’t exist, and God just makes it seem to me as if this object exists.²⁰

Husserl calls the process of setting aside those of our beliefs whose truth can be doubted, “the phenomenological epoché”. The aim of the epoché is to effect a change in our attitude to reality. Ordinarily when I encounter an object in experience, the books in front of me, the computer keyboard, the tables and chairs distributed about this room, I take these objects to exist. Husserl will say I “posit” their existence, by which he means I take a positive stand on the question of the existence of the things my experiences present to me. I take my experiences at face value unless I have a reason to do otherwise. The phenomenological epoché begins by my deliberately not taking a stand on the question of a thing’s existence. This I do by attempting to doubt its existence. “Attempting to doubt” is not at all the same attitude as “actually doubting”; instead it is a matter of neither accepting nor denying, but remaining completely neutral on this issue of a things existence. The result is that we take no position on the issue of a thing’s

¹⁹ Husserl (1932/1973: §8)

²⁰ J.J. Valberg uses this possibility to illustrate the argument from illusion in his (1992). It should be noted that this is not the kind of sceptical argument Husserl could employ, exploiting as it does the relation of dependence that holds between our experiences and their underlying neurobiology. It is part of Husserl’s philosophical method, as we shall see, to make no use of any empirical truth and that includes claims about the relation between mind and brain of the kind that the above argument rests upon. Husserl does however make passing use of the argument from illusion in his (1913/1982: §46).

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existence but instead put out of action, exclude or bracket the act of positing that would otherwise form a part of our experience.

Reality isn't excluded from the phenomenologist's study upon carrying out the epoché. It continues to form a part of the phenomenologist's inquiry but only as a correlate of our conscious thoughts and experiences. In effect the change that has taken place having performed the epoché is that we are no longer concerned with the *objects* of our thoughts and experiences considered as elements of the natural world. Instead our concern has shifted to the *contents* of our own conscious mind. We are to consider what our own conscious mind must be like if it is to give us experiences and thoughts which present us with an objective reality. We would have to say that reality was excluded following the performance of the epoché if we held that the contents of our minds didn't depend in any way on the existence of any element of the natural or social world. There is however nothing in the idea of the epoché which requires Husserl to endorse such a claim.²¹

Having performed the epoché and set aside our belief in the natural world, Husserl thinks that we will discover the role our own consciousness plays in constituting the reality we experience. We discover that the reality we ordinarily experience is a prodigious achievement of each of our conscious minds. Husserl thinks that by careful reflecting on our conscious experiences and thoughts the phenomenological philosopher can help bring this achievement to light. What grounds if any does Husserl have for claiming that the objective reality we experience is an accomplishment of our conscious minds?

²¹ For a reading of Husserl which takes him to endorse methodological solipsism, the view that intentional content doesn't depend on any relation to the world, see Dreyfus (1982). For arguments against such a reading of Husserl see Zahavi (2004). I shall discuss this issue in more detail in chapter 4.

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On one natural reading of this claim Husserl is expounding a strong form of idealism. Many of the statements Husserl makes suggest he thinks a physical thing is nothing over and above the *sense* we have of it.²² Husserl accepts that physical objects have an existence which transcends consciousness. We have a sense of physical things as sets of actual and potential points of view that we have taken up in the past, and could take up in the future. Husserl will often say things which suggest he thinks this is all there is to a physical thing's existence:

‘...the whole spatiotemporal world...is according to its sense, a merely intentional being...It is a being posited by consciousness in its experiences...beyond that it is nothing.’ (Husserl, 1913/1982: §49)

I will discuss Husserl's idealism in more detail in the next section when we consider his critique of naturalism. If Husserl is committed to idealism we shall see that his version of phenomenology and naturalism are in irreconcilable conflict.

There is however another way of understanding what the Husserlian phenomenologist is trying to do that is quite neutral on the issue of idealism. According to this understanding the Husserlian phenomenologist describes how we achieve a *sense* or *understanding* of an objective reality while appealing to nothing but the contents of consciousness. On this understanding of Husserl, he holds that consciousness contains conditions both necessary and sufficient for a subject to have a sense of an objective reality.²³ It doesn't follow that what it is for a physical thing to exist is nothing over and above the sense we have of that thing's existence. Metaphysical questions of this kind

²² See for instance his (1913/1982: §47-55). Also see A.D. Smith (2003: ch.4) for a reading of Husserl which stresses, and indeed defends, Husserl's argument for idealism.

²³ It should be emphasised that there is no requirement that the understanding originates from a particular subject. It is quite consistent with this conception of phenomenology to insist that this understanding can be achieved only by a community of subjects. See Husserl (1932/1973) Meditation V for such an account.

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can safely be left to one side by the phenomenologist. Consider the following quote from Husserl which can be given an idealist reading, but can also be read along the lines just sketched:

‘The world that exists for me, that always has and always will exist for me, the only world that ever can exist for me...derives its whole sense and its existential status, which it has for me, from me myself...’ (Husserl 1931/1973, 65)

An idealist reading of this passage would construe it as claiming that physical objects have an existence which derives entirely from a conscious subject. On this reading Husserl is claiming that a conscious subject literally *produces* the objects of his experience. Without conscious subjects the objects we experience wouldn’t exist.

The alternative reading I am presenting interprets Husserl’s locution “the world that exists for me” as meaning “the world as it is *understood* by me”. Taken in this way Husserl is claiming that the *understanding* he has of the world derives from himself and his own consciousness.²⁴

What is it to have an “understanding” of reality and what does it mean to say that this understanding derives from a subject’s consciousness? To understand x, I suggest, is to make sense of x. One can make sense of x only if x means something for us. We cannot for instance make sense of a sentence in a foreign language we do not speak: because we do not understand the language the sentence won’t mean anything to us. To have an understanding of reality, reality must mean something for a subject.

²⁴ This makes Husserl sound like he endorses individualism: the view that there is no necessary connection between a person’s being in a particular mental state and that person standing in a relation to her physical and social environment. To attribute such a view to Husserl is to overlook the many places in which he insists on the role that other subjects play in giving us a sense of objective reality. For some discussion of this point see Zahavi (1999: ch.’s 9-11). Also see Husserl’s currently untranslated lectures on intersubjectivity published in 1973 as Volume 13-15 of his collected works.

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In what sense can reality be said to “mean” something for a subject? We sometimes use “meaning” when we are talking about things of “value” as for instance we talk about our friends or our careers as meaning something to us. Certainly we can find the things around us of value and in this sense imbue them with meaning. However this is not the only sense in which “meaning” is used when we say reality has “meaning for” a subject. An object can also be said to have “meaning for” a subject when the *thoughts* or *experiences* which are about this object have meaning for him.

Our thoughts and experiences are bearers of meaning. They get their meaning from whatever it is they purport to refer to. I shall say that a thought or experience has a “meaning for” a subject when the subject *knows* what it is that her thoughts and experiences represent. The meaning a thought or experience has for a subject derives from the distinctive kind of knowledge a subject has of what this thought or experience represents.

Any account of what it is for a subject to have knowledge of this kind must answer at least two questions. First it must tell us how it is that a subject’s thoughts and experiences can have representational content. Second it must tell us under what conditions a subject can be said to have knowledge of what her thoughts and experiences are about.

Husserl, I am suggesting, may be understood as claiming that both questions could be answered by putting in brackets or disregarding our empirical beliefs and studying our various conscious mental state just as they present themselves to us. He thought that phenomenology could identify the conditions necessary and sufficient for an experience or thought to possess a representational content without making reference to any relation a subject stands in to the natural world. Husserl held that our conscious mental states have their intentionality *intrinsically*. A mental state has what I am calling “intrinsic

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intentionality” if there is no relation to the natural world, causal or otherwise, that this mental state depends upon for its intentional directedness. It is this discovery that consciousness is intrinsically intentional which I shall take to be the central claim of Husserl’s phenomenology.

I began this section by attributing to the phenomenologist the view that consciousness “constitutes” its objects. I shall understand “constitution” to be the process by which a subject enters into an intentional relation with an object. The objects which Husserl took consciousness to constitute are, I suggest, what we would now call “intentional objects”.

Brentano introduced the idea of an intentional object to capture the sense in which an object exists in the mind when it is thought about or experienced.²⁵ Husserl rejected Brentano’s understanding of “intentional object” as an object that has a peculiar kind of mental inexistence. He claimed instead that the objects we think about or experience exist in the objective world, or at least that this is what we ordinarily suppose until we are shown otherwise. He nevertheless retains a notion of an intentional object. In the Fifth of his *Logical Investigations* he calls an intentional object, “the object as it is intended”, which he contrasts with the “object which is intended”.²⁶ It is the object as it is intended which, his phenomenology claims, the conscious subject constitutes. Husserl needn’t say the same about the object-which-is-intended. Since this object is bracketed he need make no claim about its metaphysical status.

I have introduced the idea of an intentional object to explain what it is Husserl’s phenomenology studies, having put in brackets all propositions relating to the natural world. I am claiming that what the Husserlian phenomenologist studies is the process by

²⁵ See Brentano (1995: 77-100).

²⁶ Husserl (1913/1970: Vol.2, V, §17)

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which an intentional object is constituted for a subject. I will take the goal of phenomenology to be the description of the conditions which must be satisfied if conscious mental states are to be intrinsically intentional. When the phenomenologist talks of consciousness as *constituting* its “objects” I take this to mean that consciousness contains the conditions that are necessary and sufficient for consciousness to be intentionally directed towards an object. Husserl’s phenomenology studies the process by which consciousness constitutes its intentional objects whilst bracketing or disregarding the objects of our thoughts and experience.

Thus we see there is a reading of Husserl’s phenomenology that allows for the phenomenologist to remain neutral on the question of idealism. If the phenomenologist’s descriptions of our conscious mental life *did* entail idealism, phenomenology would undoubtedly be in conflict with naturalism. However, the account of Husserl’s phenomenology just sketched doesn’t require us to take a stand on the question of idealism one way or another. Thus it remains possible that despite what Husserl says his account of the mind needn’t be taken to be in opposition with naturalism.

I shall argue in the final section that Husserl’s argument against naturalism rests on a commitment to idealism. We have just seen that his phenomenological project can be prized apart from any commitment to idealism. Thus there would seem to be some scope for separating Husserl’s anti-naturalism from his phenomenological project. If I am right, there is nothing in his phenomenological project that requires one to endorse idealism. If a Husserlian phenomenologist can remain neutral on the question of idealism, s/he should also be able to remain neutral on the question of naturalism. A position of neutrality is all I need for my project of building a naturalistic account of mind based on insights from phenomenology to get off the ground.

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4. Husserl's Argument against Naturalism

I shall attribute to Husserl a supervenience thesis which reverses the relation of dependence the naturalist takes to hold between our minds and the elements of which the natural world is composed. By reversing this relation of dependence Husserl will argue there is something naturalistic explanations must always take for granted. The naturalist will be accused of taking for granted the role that the conscious subjects plays in constituting, and thereby giving us experiences of the natural world.

The naturalist, as we saw earlier, takes natural science to tell us which properties and entities belong to the natural world. Let us call a property to which an appeal is made by science, a "natural property". I take the naturalist to be committed to the following supervenience thesis:

Naturalism's Supervenience Thesis (NST): Any world which is a duplicate of our own with respect to its natural properties is a duplicate simpliciter of our world.

NST entails the supervenience of psychological properties on natural properties. In particular it follows that once a world's natural properties have been fixed all of its intentional properties will also be fixed. NST predicts that it ought to be possible to give an account of intentional properties in terms of natural properties. It is this prediction that Husserl's argument against naturalism will try to challenge.

Husserl holds that the entities and properties which science describes exist only in relation to us. We constitute these entities and properties through certain of our intentionally directed mental states. Husserl will claim that the entities and properties with which our scientific theories populate the natural world depend for their existence on us, and our intentionally directed mental states. I shall take Husserl to hold the following supervenience thesis:

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Husserl's Supervenience Thesis (HST): Any world which is a duplicate of our own with respect to its intentional properties will be a duplicate of our own world simpliciter.

Husserl argument against naturalism is, in essence, that we cannot use the theories of the natural sciences to explain the intentional directedness of our conscious mental states. For HST tells us that the properties and entities the theories of the natural sciences identify depend for their existence on conscious subjects.

An analogy might help to get clearer on Husserl's point.²⁷ Suppose there is a God and that God created the universe with all of its laws of nature. Science couldn't explain God's existence by appeal to the laws of nature it has discovered. It is God that explains the existence of these laws of nature and not vice versa. Husserl wants to say something analogous about consciousness. We cannot appeal to the elements of which the natural world is composed to account for the existence of consciousness. It is consciousness and the intentional mental states of which it is composed that explain the existence of the natural world for us and not other the other way round.

Couldn't a naturalist agree with Husserl that intentional objects depend on consciousness for their existence because consciousness is intrinsically intentional, but nevertheless insist that intentional properties supervene on natural properties and not vice versa?²⁸ Why say that the relation of dependence between intentional and natural properties holds in the direction Husserl supposes?

²⁷ Denis Walsh suggested this helpful analogy to me.

²⁸ In later chapters I will develop a position along these lines. Searle (1992) can also be understood as defending the position described here.

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I can find two possible lines of argument in Husserl in support of HST. Both turn out to rely on a strong form of idealism, one way or another. In his *Ideas 1* Husserl tells us that:

‘Reality is not something absolute which becomes tied secondarily to something else; rather in the absolute sense, it is nothing at all...it has the essentiality of something which, of necessity, is only intentional, only an object of consciousness.’ (Husserl, 1913/1982: 93-4)

Here Husserl seems to be saying that the natural world only exists in relation to conscious subjects. Apart from its relation to conscious subjects the natural world is, as he puts it, “nothing at all” (*op. cit.*). Husserl’s supervenience thesis (HST) follows very naturally from this strong form of idealism. If natural properties have no existence except insofar as they are made the objects of consciousness, of course we will have to say that natural properties supervene on intentional properties.

If Husserl could show that such a claim is entailed by his phenomenological descriptions this would indeed spell trouble for the naturalist. If conscious subjects bring the natural world into existence they cannot themselves be a part of a natural world anymore than God could be part of the natural world if God is credited with the creation of the natural world. I have suggested that there is a way of reading Husserl’s phenomenological project which allows the phenomenologist to remain neutral on the question of idealism. There is some evidence that Husserl thought otherwise, but whether he was right to do so, at the very least remains an open-question.

Husserl has a second argument available to him against naturalism. Here I am drawing on the passage quoted at end of my §3 from his (1911) lecture in which Husserl claims that naturalistic explanations are guilty of some kind of circularity. As he puts it: ‘To

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expect from natural science itself the solution of any one of the problems inherent in it as such...is to be involved in a vicious circle' (*op. cit.*).

I have been developing a reading of Husserl's argument according to which the naturalist might be charged with taking for granted certain conditions originating with the conscious subject, which explain how a subject can have a sense of an objective reality. Thus construed, Husserl's worry would seem to be that the naturalist cannot explain the sense we have of an objective reality, since our sense of an objective reality is something s/he must take for granted. His thought seems to be that the naturalist cannot account for that which her explanations presuppose.

This line of argument depends on two claims:

- (1) Naturalism must presuppose the sense we have of an objective reality.
- (2) The presuppositions of naturalism cannot be explained by naturalism.

Let us consider (1) first. Naturalists say that science is our guide to what there is and what there is not. S/he assumes that there is a world that is there anyway which is available for study by science. Husserl says we have a sense of an objective reality only because our thoughts and experiences are intrinsically intentional. The world the scientist describes is available to us only because our thoughts and experiences have intrinsic intentionality. Insofar as the naturalist presupposes that there is a world there anyway that is available for scientific study, Husserl thinks she must also presuppose the conditions which make it possible for our thoughts and experiences to achieve a relation to such a world.

None of this would be particularly damaging to the naturalist unless an argument can be made for the second claim. It must be shown that the naturalist cannot account for the conditions in virtue of which our thoughts and experience can exhibit intrinsic

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intentionality. Otherwise the naturalist can appeal to NST and claim that all of the intentional properties at a world are fixed by its natural properties.

Though the following argument does not appear explicitly in Husserl's writings, it nevertheless goes some way towards motivating the second claim which Husserl needs for his argument against naturalism to go through:

(P1) The intentional directedness of consciousness explains how a natural property can be made the object of a thought or experience.

(P2) The intentional directedness of consciousness is explained by a set of conditions (C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n) which make it possible for consciousness to exhibit intrinsic intentionality.

(P3) Explanation is asymmetric: if A explains B, B cannot explain A²⁹.

(CON) The natural properties which we make the objects of our thoughts and experience cannot be used to explain the set of conditions (C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n) which make it possible for consciousness to exhibit intrinsic intentionality.

I have introduced (P3) as a way of making sense of (2), the claim that naturalism cannot explain what it must presuppose. This move depends for its success on the relevant presuppositions themselves playing an explanatory role. In this case the relevant presuppositions are the set of conditions which make it possible for our conscious mental states to exhibit intentionality. The presupposed conditions explain how it is

²⁹ Consider by way of illustration, the familiar example of Jones' death by poisoning used by Achinstein (1983) in his discussion of Hempel's deductive nomological model of explanation (pp.168 & 170-1). Jones' eating a pound of arsenic explains his dieing within twenty four hours, but his dieing within twenty four hours doesn't explain his eating a pound of arsenic.

Perhaps Jones' wanting to die explains his eating the arsenic, but even granting this possibility the point that explanation is asymmetric stands: Jones' wanting to die and his actual death are two very different events, and thus two very different causes.

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possible for a mental state to have intentionality intrinsically. In particular they explain how the natural properties which the scientist identifies can be made the object of our thoughts and experiences.

Suppose that there is a set of conditions (C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n) which explain how natural properties can be made the object of our thoughts and experiences. Husserl wants to say that we cannot appeal to the natural properties we make the objects of our thoughts and experiences to explain the set of conditions (C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n). I have suggested that the reason we cannot do so is because explanation is asymmetric.

Does this argument establish the truth of HST? We have been looking for an argument that will establish that the complete set of intentional properties will fix the natural properties at a world, rather than vice versa. What Husserl needs, if the above line of argument is to secure HST for him, is the claim that there is no property which is not in some way dependent upon an intentional property. He needs to establish the falsity of what he calls “transcendental realism”: the view that entities exist “in themselves” completely independently of becoming, or being able to become, the object of a conscious thought or experience. However, any argument Husserl could supply against transcendental realism would be an argument for some form of idealism. It would be an argument for the conclusion that there is *no* entity that exists in itself completely independently of becoming, or being able to become, the object of a conscious thought or experience. This is idealism. So once again we find Husserl’s argument against naturalism depending on his making a case for idealism.

I have considered just two possible arguments against naturalism which I have been able to find in Husserl’s writings. No doubt there are others, but any argument Husserl can make against naturalism would require him to defend HST over NST. I cannot see a way for Husserl to do this which doesn’t in some way rely on idealism. I have argued

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that the phenomenological project can be pursued without taking a stand on the question of idealism. If I am right the phenomenologist needn't take a stand on the question of naturalism either. For any argument the phenomenologist can make against idealism would require them to defend HST. But an argument for HST would require the phenomenologist to also argue for idealism, something which I have claimed goes beyond the remit of phenomenology.

Later phenomenologists like Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty rejected Husserl's idealism without giving up on his phenomenological project. Unfortunately for me, these philosophers were also opposed to naturalism. Eventually I will argue that the problem phenomenology raises for naturalism can help us to understand a problem naturalists have discovered for themselves, a problem that has come to be called the "explanatory gap".³⁰ We will see that the explanatory gap is located just where phenomenology attacks naturalism. I shall argue that if the gap in the naturalistic account of mind is to be bridged it will only be by showing how a naturalist can assimilate the descriptions phenomenologists offer of consciousness. Until we have found a response to the existential phenomenologist's argument against naturalism, the path won't have been cleared for such a naturalistic account of mind.

I shall finish by briefly summarising the argument of this chapter. I have characterised phenomenology as concerned with describing the conditions in virtue of which our conscious thoughts and experiences exhibit intentional directedness. We have seen Husserl argue that these conditions originate from the conscious subject. The conscious subject is assigned responsibility for constituting the sense we have of an objective reality. I have argued that Husserl's argument against naturalism depends on endorsing idealism, the view that the natural world is in some sense dependent on us for

³⁰ See chapter 3.

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its existence. We have also seen that the phenomenologist need take no stand on the truth or otherwise of idealism. I have argued on this basis that the phenomenologist need take no stand on the truth or otherwise of naturalism.

In the next chapter we will see how existential phenomenology mounts an argument against naturalism that is independent of any commitment to idealism. In chapter 3 I will connect this argument with a problem that naturalists have identified for themselves – the problem of the explanatory gap. There I will argue that a solution to the explanatory gap turns on making room for the descriptions of consciousness phenomenology supplies.