

Navigating to the Inside
First Person Science Perspectives on Consciousness and Psi

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Abstract

The fundamental aim of this paper is to explore three important areas of research: First, the ways in which a first-person science may be conceived of within anthropological and experimental research mainly using existential-phenomenological approaches. Second, how an existential-phenomenological approach may illuminate some of the key aspects of mediumship with respect to state of consciousness and state of being change as well as questions concerning the place of agency and ownership in human experience and behavior. Third, an exploration of the ways in which first-person ‘data’ may be presented in relation to the consciousness-psi relationship. The overall analysis moves from the ‘exterior’ to the ‘interior’ of human life-worlds, to the phenomenology of doing first-person science.

Introduction

One of the most exciting developments in research on consciousness in recent years has been the development of the notion of a first-person science. But, while its evident promise is explored, it is increasingly a hotly contested notion within philosophy, neuroscience, psychology and other disciplines. While there are keenly fought engagements over whether there can, actually, be a first-person science of any kind and, if that were to be the case, what methodologies would it embrace or require to be identified as a science, one of the peculiarities of this agonistic saga is that it *rarely* takes a look at some of the most fundamental questions about *being* a researcher-scientist and *doing* research. While there is a significant history of interest in the sociology, psychology and philosophy of science, there is very little which engages the processes inherent in the *lived experience* of persons involved science and research.

Recent work in consciousness, especially the correlation of experience with brain ‘events’ or ‘dynamics’, which has been labeled ‘neurophenomenology’ (Dennett, 2001; Thompson, 2007) focuses on the very specific ways in which a first-person science might be developed contra-distinction to second- and third-person approaches where the latter is that which defines most of scientific endeavor revolving about systematic observation and measurement of phenomena of interest ... the methodologies, instrumentation and theorizing of empirical science. Much of the case for a first-person science, as a genuine contributor to all knowledge and not just to the subject of consciousness, has flowed from phenomenological philosophy in its various forms ... for example, the phenomenology of perception, embodiment, lived experience constitutive of a social world. There have been some striking and useful perspectives and tools which have emerged from this work, especially that of Thompson (2007) and Hulbert and Schwitzgebel (2007). But, at the same time, there are some crucial deficits.

The deficit aspect of current first-person investigations reminds me of the movement from classical physics to quantum physics where the homogenized observer-scientist of the classical model, made secondary to the logic of investigation and instrumentation, gave way to the re-introduction of the observer and the process of observation: observer, consciousness, observation and the object became fused in a radical departure from a ‘mindless’ empiricism. Strangely, while the argument about the validity and relevance of such a construction of the foundations of science has raged for over nearly a century now, a ‘deficit’ is still there and it takes a specific form: Science and research is done by *persons* installed in social and cultural worlds through which science is articulated. Persons are part of an intersubjective order which defines social and cultural phenomena ... and, in this sense, research is never performed by monads to be analysed and understood discretely.

These latter considerations take us directly to some of the more important developments in the social sciences, psychiatry and psychotherapy which emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s and which reflect long-standing European fascination with differences, and possible rapprochement, between the ‘hard’ sciences and the sciences of history, sociology and anthropology. In brief, can there be a meeting which is meaningful and productive in theory-building about the world, between sciences which *cancel the perspective of lived experience* in a rationality which links reason, observation, explanation and prediction and those which focus on the primacy of lived experience, the domains of meaning and action and *understanding (Verstehen)* which comprises the axis of the everyday world and which is constitutive of a *lived world (Lebenswelt)*? The question is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is, ‘Can there be a first-person science?’ which entails the question, ‘Where are persons, social actors, and subjective experience in such a science and, indeed, within third-person science?’

We can frame a line of enquiry around these issues which is relevant to our topic by pointing out that from Max Weber to Alfred Schutz and Harold Garfinkel, from Edmund Husserl to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, there is a thread out of which a useful approach to first-person science can be constructed. This thread is picked up and articulated by Nagel in his provocative paper, 'What is it like to be a bat?' (1974) which grounds the first-person debates in the extrapolated question, 'What is it like to *be* a researcher *doing* research in a specific domain? While there are psychological, sociological, historical and philosophical, as well as biographical studies of how science is done, there is very little on what it means to address the previous questions from *within* the perspective of a person experiencing and acting within the lived world of science and research.

For anthropologists, these sorts of questions are essential to the business of doing ethnographies. But, of course, the same debates as those which inhabit the 'hard' sciences are to be found in social and cultural research and most evident in question surrounding the conditions under which one enters, understands and interprets other cultures ... other than one's own. The idea of the *participant observer* is a standard way of summarizing the complex of factors which concern anthropological and sociological fieldwork: there is a sense of balancing reflexive observation and cultural immersion through a sustained distance, deposited in suspensions of belief about cultural contents (beliefs, values, perceptions, feelings and explanations for actions, for example) in order to generate acceptable data and theoretical positions written as ethnography. In this 'balance' there is the family relationships with the dynamics of psychotherapy, where empathy is required as a tool and interpersonal axis through which effective relationships are established and maintained, despite any fundamental differences in world-views and behavior which may obtain between therapist and client. These elements of relationships, and being able to grasp other minds, other worlds, other ways of being, are stretched as accomplishments in situations where cultures are radically different from that of the researcher and where the world of the client is radically different from that of the therapist, as in dealing with schizophrenia.

A preliminary question which arises here is this: How far is one able to extend one's involvement with another culture or another person who is a client in order to generate what may be a more comprehensive view of the 'data' of cultural membership or psychiatric disorder experience? Just what the 'data' might look like takes us back to perspectives which flow from Searle's seminal paper.

The axis of mutuality in cultural enquiry and clinical practice, the creation of a reciprocity of perspectives revolves around the phenomenological dimension of *strangeness and familiarity* which has been so beautifully explore by Alfred Schutz in his idealizations of 'The Stranger' and the 'Homecomer' (1962). At this point, we can begin to extend the possibilities for 'data' which

arise from a rather particular kind of involvement with those who are ‘subjects’ in research projects. Schutz’s work derived principally from Max Weber’s work which was directed at creating a sociology of social action which was founded in the concept of ‘understanding’ (*Verstehen*) both as a tool for research and as the focus on what social or cultural members do as meaningful action. He introduced the idea that rationality, as the code for intelligibility of action, could be cast in a broader framework than instrumental reason, for both researchers and subjects, including traditional, value and emotional rationality. However, Weber was interested in establishing ways in which research could be informed by techniques which grasped the essential features of certain kinds of social action and generated sets of hypotheses about actual social dynamics. The fundamental tool which he created was that of *idealizations* which were constructs which abstracted the patterns of social action in specific domains. The most famous of his idealizations was that of bureaucracy. In this way, following closely on the work of interpretive history and philosophy, he was able to ask some important questions (often missed by his critics): specifically, ‘How faithful is this rendition of everyday social action in a particular society to that which is experienced and understood by cultural members?’ In this straightforward way, Weber introduced the concept of *adequacy*. It translates into a sharp requirement: social science constructs or theories about everyday action need to be understandable by social-cultural members, otherwise, they are, as Husserl (1962) reminds us, distant abstractions which may not capture the elements of the *Lebenswelt* at all; they may actually obscure it.

I will not pursue in any detail Weber’s ruminations about the conditions of adequacy which were largely tied to economic models current in Germany at the time (Eberle, 2010); rather, it is more important to focus on Schutz’s work and where it may lead in the quest for a first-person science. Returning to his idealizations, and especially ‘The Stranger’, Schutz encapsulates the social phenomenology of familiarity and strangeness and its correlation with questions about belonging, social and cultural membership, identity, boundary states (self-other, inside-outside, me-not me, and so on). He creates the idealization in these terms ...

Each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way
That a human act performed within the life-world by an individual actor in the way
indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as
well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretations of daily life.
Compliance with this postulate warrants the consistency of the constructs of the
social scientist with the constructs of common-sense experience of the social reality.
(Schutz, 1962: 44)

But, in order to develop those scientific constructs which are faithful to the reality of which they are ostensibly 'about' there is a further requirement of adequacy which must be met and this is spelled out by Garfinkel (1967) in his postulations of ethnomethodology. Specifically, scientific research which grasps what membership in a lived world is like is an accomplishment which depends upon the acquisition of certain life skills ... the nuances of language, the discerning of meaning, the production of typical and acceptable acts, the establishment of a viable identity, and the exemplification of what it means to be recognized as a competent social-cultural member. In other words, 'What is it like to be a cultural member?' or, 'How does one pass as a cultural member?' Garfinkel's counterpoint idealization in this is 'The Cultural Dope' who does not pass as a cultural member in their own culture, which condition limits their ability to pass as a cultural member in any other culture since what is to be suspended in order for that to occur is not well known, not competently lived out. The relevance of Schutz's Stranger and Homecomer in this context is clear ... what does it require to move from the outside to the inside of a society or culture? Also, what exactly *is* the inside? This is where phenomenology, existential phenomenology and introspection conflate to provide some insights. In short, participant observation and empathic clinical detachment may be inadequate and a more profound *immersion* may be required.

Immersion requires more than and different from conventional ideas about learning roles in situ or acquiring and performing pre-scripted roles in research projects. *It involves moving into the interior of the lived world as an embodied experience.* While this will certainly involve all the practical behavioral competencies, one of the key features which grounds the life-world experiences in any culture, which is the axis and source of intersubjective life, is its *ontology*. So, a first-person science of culturally framed phenomena requires not only using the tools of the phenomenological reduction and its variant, the ethnographic reduction, but it also demands suspending disbelief, insofar as that is possible, and being in the cultural life-world looking into it, living out its *natural attitude* (Husserl 1962), its taken-for-granted notions of the 'real', expectable and typical, and looking out into the life-world from which one becomes distant socially, existentially and epistemologically.

It is of considerable importance here that we ask the obvious questions: 'What would the data of such enquiries look like?' and, 'Are there any exemplars of such data?' It is quite fascinating that in some of the leading work on first-person science, the observation is made that the whole issue of how to do first-person science and what it might look like as a form of reporting in the end is so complex and daunting that we may be best directed to the work of novelists (Schutz, forthcoming; Varela and Shear (2002) ; Thompson(2007) ... for example, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Frank Herbert's *Dune* or Haruki Murakami's *After Dark* ... who seem able to dwell vividly in the worlds of their characters, in their embodied presence and experience. Herbert's work is

particularly interesting since he takes a step away from the purely effected ‘stream of consciousness’ of Joyce and settles on an interior view of state of consciousness change in a cultural idiom and presenting what we would call *psi* in these terms. However, the novelist’s methodology is something which remains unspecified in first-person research despite its obvious appeal and we await a fuller treatment of its possible contributions.

But, this brief excursus reinforces the requirement for a closer look at some of the phenomena which are central to the anthropology of consciousness and *psi*. In our recent re-working of our monograph, *Altered States of Consciousness and Psi* (2009), Ed Kelly and I repeated our assertion that the whole project which maps states of consciousness emerging out of distal factors (social-cultural-environmental) and proximal factors (situational-immediate-triggering) will be greatly enriched by thorough-going phenomenological investigations of mediumship, shamanism and other expressions which embody state change and correlated *psi*.

The following treatment of mediumship focuses in the first instance on developing a phenomenological profile. It then moves to consideration of the postulate of adequacy as a prime feature of first-person scientific investigation and, in particular, explores the ways in which first-person ‘data’ may be proffered.

Mediumship: Some Phenomenological Perspectives¹

Conducting a phenomenological analysis of mediumship is, of course, an enormous task which requires much more than can be encompassed within this paper. However, it will serve the project of exploring ways in which a first-person science of consciousness may be constructed if a definite focus is chosen, offering a benchmark from which other research may flow. Much of the material I will refer to is concerned with anthropological research on mediumship, shamanism and the development and application of transpersonal psychotherapy which have all been part of professional and academic career. At the core of this corpus of work is the steady assembly of a phenomenological approach to these domains, cross-culturally and in an interdisciplinary framework, so that some constant features of mediumship may be identified.

With respect to phenomenological analysis, which I suggest is the ideal starting point for a first-person science investigation, there are several phases:

¹ This section on mediumship, pp 6-12, is a modified form of a treatment in ‘Mediumship and Psychotherapy’—a chapter in Rock (2013).

1. Establishing the phenomenological characteristics of mediumship as a domain for investigation. This is as much informed by an existential-phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty 1965, for example) as it is by a social-phenomenological (Schutz 1962) approach.
2. From this starting point, specific features of mediumship and the general area of the relationship between consciousness and psi phenomena may be selected and opened to phenomenological enquiry.
3. This step-wise form of address will also allow the delineation of some of the salient problems in first-person science of consciousness construction ... some current questions and controversies.
4. Finally, a preliminary description of how a first-person science investigation of mediumship might be undertaken is presented.

Recently, Michael Grosso (see Grosso, 2010, pp. 225-246) issued a timely reminder that mediumship offers us an opportunity to investigate the ways in which human beings are extraordinarily creative in the construction of the contents of their consciousness and especially regarding the ways in which they forge identity, agency and actions. Grosso puts aside the question of whether the identities and information produced in classical and recent studies of mediumship and its current incarnation, channeling, are the result of some kind of commerce with other worlds which involve, for example, spirits, gods or ancestors. Emily Kelly (2010) has likewise drawn attention to the fact that, while Spiritualists have defined mediumship in terms of communication of various kinds with discarnate entities, there is also a strong point of view which suggests that mediums draw upon some supernormal process, but that the nature of that process is the source of some disagreement.

In the last 40 years, an enormous number of cross-cultural studies of mediumship from cultural, social, psychiatric and psychological perspectives (Bourguignon, 1973, 1976; Rock 2013) has emerged. However, the ontological status of the mediumistic phenomena, especially culturally defined spirits or other entities and forces which reside beyond the everyday ranges of experience for cultural members, remains moot. Some anthropologists (for example, Hunter, 2011; Turner, 1998) have taken a step toward resolving this matter by immersing themselves in mediumistic and healing practices, abandoning the conventional position of participant observer. There are some obvious difficulties relating to this procedure, especially with respect to the conditions under which one might genuinely be considered to be a cultural member, while the matter of just how well the experiential content, flow and dynamics of individuals who make this step articulate with typical and reproducible features of meaning and action in cultural terms are articulated. Some of these issues are currently being aired in the recently established journal, *Paranthropology*. But the better

point of entry to mediumistic research, as it relates to our current task, is through the human 'multiplicity' and associated creative potentials (Crabtree, 1985; Grosso, 2010).

One of Crabtree's primary interests was Multiple Personality Disorder, now called Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), as well as possession. And herein lies one of the principal areas of contention: just what is it that mediumship is expressing? Is it a form of partial or complete possession by already existing alternate, internal personalities or identities with their own imprimatur, communicative and expressive style, social, cognitive and behavioral features; or due to the intrusion or influence of some discarnate entity upon the medium's psychological and embodied states? Or both? The former is substantially associated with a history which has assigned mediumship to various categories of psychopathology such as hysteria, multiple personality/DID, and more recently, to a range of dissociative disorders which are presented in DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and its related handbooks of 'unusual' disorders, some of which are correlated with culturally-specific disorders.

The introduction of 'dissociation' and 'dissociative disorders' clouds the issue somewhat since there is a substantial history of dispute over the nature of dissociation, although it is clear that it does revolve around control centres outside of those central to everyday focal awareness coming into play (Kelly, forthcoming), and there are further matters to be dealt with in this context; for example, the notion of identity and agency. To illustrate: If one describes being 'out of the body' in 'near death experiences' (NDE's) or 'out-of-body' experiences (OBE's), as in those associated with severe trauma, an important question is; 'Just which body is one out of? And a second question is; 'Who is it that is out of the body and, perhaps, having an NDE?' These questions are essential to conducting a phenomenological enquiry into mediumistic phenomena. These questions can be translated into fundamental aspects of the embodied consciousness of human beings. In other words, what general relevance do these questions and perspectives have for the understanding of consciousness in everyday life, across human populations and for a first-person science's possible contribution in this arena?

In the first place, the issue of which body is the framework for description may be described in terms of Merleau-Ponty's (1965) views of embodiment as a crucial existential aspect of all human life:

. . . there is in man, superimposed upon actual space with its self-identical points, a 'virtual space' in which the spatial values that a point would receive (for any of our corporeal coordinates) are also recognized. A system of correspondences is established between our

spatial situation and that of others. The insertion of our factual situation as a particular case within the system of possible situations begins as soon as we designate a point in space with finger. For this pointing gesture, which animals do not understand, supposes that we are already in virtual space . . . at the end of the line prolonging our finger in a centrifugal and cultural space. (Merleau-Ponty, 1965, p. 7)

There are some associated notions and derivatives from this picture. Merleau-Ponty establishes this fascinating description out of the separation of the presence of the body in the world in two forms: the *en soi*, in itself, or physical-biological ‘object’ and the *pour soi*, for itself, as embodiment through which we reach out and constitute the life world. This ‘reaching out’ takes place in the form of the *intentional arc* which is exemplified in this pointing, and also, more crucially, in the way in which we project ourselves into the world(s) which we inhabit and which we ‘haunt’. The metaphor of haunting is used very specifically to direct attention to the ways in which human beings navigate through and thereby constitute social and cultural worlds, domains of typical experience, actions, and actors as well as the expectable sphere of one’s everyday life and therewith how this might be transcended or disrupted.

One form of rupture which we could examine concerns situations where we are disabled by injury or illness so that what we can usually reach and engage—the world we routinely haunt—is inaccessible. In these limitations, our agency is sometimes altered. We may describe our behavior in terms such as ‘I am not my usual self’ or ‘It was the illness speaking’. In addictions, expressions may include, ‘It was not me; the drugs took over’ or, in the case of explanations of actions which are psychoanalytically informed, ‘I was not conscious of doing those things; It was my Shadow, my hidden demons’. In these cases a common denominator is the description of experience and behavior as ‘not of or from me’. Agency, the authorship of acts, is not attributed by an actor to themselves as they ordinarily understand themselves. Moreover, this change in agency may also be attributed to actors by observers.

One of the more significant implications following from the discussion of the intentional arc revolves around the circumstances of its disruption. On the one hand, we can easily see in what ways the integrity of world constitution being interrupted in some ways can shape the experience of self, world and self in the world as in the cases of illness, injury or disability. On the other hand, the ‘disruption’ can be construed as a form of *de-automatization* in the sense that Deikman (1973) originally formulated it. His aim was to show how states of consciousness can be changed by a number of methods (breath-control, fasting, pain, drugs, and so on), moving a person to another state which may then become stabilized or *automatized*. But, from the point of view of Merleau-Ponty, this is not just a change in consciousness as perception, emotion, cognition and associated

behavior; rather, it is a change in the way in which self, body and world are changed so that ‘state of consciousness’ becomes ‘state of being’ (in a world). This is important since it changes the focus from mental constructs of consciousness and intrapsychic dynamics to modes of existence and domains in which existence resides. This is an *ontological shift*, at least.

Clearly, embodied consciousness in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, and related notions of agency, are important in determining what precisely is going on in socially recognized forms of mediumship. And this, then, raises a further important aspect of mediumship: It is clearly the case that mediums have important social and cultural functions to fulfill in many societies. They may be diviners, healers, mediators with the dead and other beings belonging in ‘spirit’ worlds as well as dispensers of wise counsel (Maraldi, Machado, & Zangari, 2010), all of which may be originated and mediated by an everyday state of consciousness or in a socially defined ‘trance’. However, as in shamanism, there may be a spectrum of ways in which these roles are executed. As previously noted, the performances may be in a range of ‘states’ (keeping in mind the previously noted existential-phenomenological analysis surrounding ‘states’ and ‘state changes’) and may also include inspired, creative activities such as dance, art, musical composition and drama. There seems to be little doubt that many nineteenth-century mediums had a considerable investment in their acting skills with some exhibiting an impressive array of personae and their correlated ability to engage and ‘seduce’ audiences and sitters in séances into the Spiritualist belief system (Moore, 1977; Nelson, 1969).

Culturally, traditional and emergent forms of mediumship, such as those of the mid- to late-nineteenth century Western societies, have an acting component in them. Indeed, acting in itself needs to be brought into the picture in relation to its relevance for understanding just what is going on in the overall phenomenology of mediumship. Putting aside DID and other forms of ‘disorders’ for the moment, we can look at acting not only as a form of creative expression in human life, but also as a way of being immersed in invented personae, imagined experiential domains and mythopoeic realms. There are, quite obviously, degrees to which one can be immersed in an acting role and its constructed identity so that one is at a distance from one’s conventional, non-acting role and identity. There are distances and differences which describe the phenomenal properties of acting as a device for communication, entertainment and the creation of aesthetic worlds, as Grosso (2010) points out. These distances and differences are to do with matters of agency (my routine authorship of acts as opposed to those which I perform in acting) as well as ownership (the actions I am performing and the ideas, beliefs and values I express are not mine, but those of an ‘other’—in a play, ownership may be ascribed to the author ultimately).

As in shamanism, a medium may warily navigate the sphere of acting as an intentional undertaking and, perhaps, on the one hand, for the purposes of influence and persuasion and on the other hand, surrendering agency to another which may belong to various ontological domains. It is

also worth pointing out that, as in shamanic practices, acting may be used as a tool for creating atmospheres which then facilitate state change, identity change associated with a range of ascribed and believed in sources of agency, and ‘mediumistic behaviors’.

From this overview of some of the phenomenological factors in mediumship, a consolidation of viewpoint can be established—Mediumship is a phenomenon which occurs in all societies. Its forms of expression and phenomenological composition have the following properties:

1. Socially, it has several ‘faces’ which include the social-dramatic or acting aspect which may be undertaken for purposes of influencing cultural members or for exemplifying fundamental cultural beliefs and values. Acting may include the ability to create scenarios which are appealing and convincing to cultural members and which may serve as a display of cultural knowledge, wisdom and creative abilities of the medium. Acting may be performed with varying degrees of distance from the usual personality and embodiment of the medium and, indeed, the medium’s performance may be evaluated in terms of the degree to which the medium has provided a satisfying and ‘valid’ performance in these terms. Acting may be a precursor for or an actual induction technique for a change in state of consciousness and agency, becoming an ‘other’ (spirit, ancestor, alternate personality).
2. Mediumship in all forms of its appearance involves a change in the range and content marked out by the intentional arc. The medium comes to haunt the world in another way with respect to the ‘other’ they become. This may involve a transformation of the body as object as in cases where there are perceptible changes in bodily comportment; for example, stiff, relaxed, animated, somnolent. Also, and more important, mediumship involves the generation of a different domain which is haunted; this is the domain of the intentional arc as defining the haunted world, the world of possibilities of belonging, navigating in and making sense of. In the case of the ‘other’ being defined as an alternate personality, as in DID, or an external agent such as a spirit, then agency becomes a coextensive transformation of *en soi* and *pour soi* such that there is an automatic and perhaps automatized (settled pattern) distance and difference between everyday embodiment, identity and agency and that of the medium. The distance and difference may be expressed in terms of changes in physiology, including neurophysiology, personae, behavioral and physical gestalt and, most important, *the experience of the person becoming and then being mediumistic*. In addition, the distance and difference can be described phenomenologically as a rupture in the intentional arc which constitutes the lifeworld of which we are a part and, as a result, changes the domains which are haunted and capable of being

haunted, inhabited and habitable, actual and possible... to extend points made about this process previously.

3. State change, variously referred to as (for example) 'trance', 'deep trance', 'possession', 'inspiration', and 'mental mediumship', may best be described as changes in 'states of being' (SOB's) rather than changes in states of consciousness (ASC's). This follows directly from the previous discussion on embodiment and 'haunting'. These are all notions of 'being in worlds', not just changes in, for example, mental states, perception, body image, or identity (Locke, 1999).
4. Mediumship in the above terms is a phenomenon which is about an existential shift through social, sociocultural, bodily and experiential worlds in which the transformations which occur, by any degree whatsoever, can also result in the extension of ordinary human capabilities into areas referred to as paranormal or spiritual. This may also include the possibility that individuals who are defined as mediums, DID or with some other identity/agency change may experience these conditions as a result of psychobiological, sociocultural or paranormal factors, separately or in combination. And, for those who are described as having disorders relating to agency change (DID, schizophrenia), the creative aspects of SOB change may be a form of therapy. Indeed, returning to the opening stanzas of this chapter, mediumship may serve as both an autonomous expression of human creative potentials as well as a healing force for some types of suffering, dysfunction or just plain unhappiness and lack of fulfillment.

Having mapped out some of the phenomenological features of mediumship, from existential-phenomenological and social-phenomenological perspectives, which may be useful in enriching consciousness and psi research, I would like to move to another form of phenomenology, that which comprises the 'interior' relative to the 'exterior' of consciousness understood as that which is the grounds of possibility of experience in all of its forms. In stating my focus in this way, I am being faithful to the positions and legacies of both William James (1890/2007) and Edmund Husserl (1962;1970): both assert that the appropriate trajectory of enquiry into the nature of consciousness is through attention to experience as a radical empiricism (James) and as the antidote to idealizing, abstracting science which marginalises subjectivity (Husserl).

The Mobius Strip of First-Person Data

It is no coincidence that Lacan (2002) used the Mobius Strip as a device for addressing the complexities of his psychodynamic modeling since the Strip has some paradoxical features as a topology which seems to be intuitively two-sided, yet is demonstrably one-sided. Moreover, if one pinches the Strip at the centre of the figure 8-like intersection, one may gain a sense of a movement along the surface moving from an open to a concealed appearance, much as experience can be focal and subtended by other forms at the same time. If one makes a number of Strips and joins them all at the intersection, then there is an expansion of the complexity of movement which has the appearance of outside-inside, centre-periphery. In brief, it looks rather like a model of the self as an embedded hermeneutic within consciousness, within the spectrum of experience of ourselves and others. Moreover, if one imagines moving along the surface of the Strip looking outward, there is a sense of inside-outside vistas deriving from a constancy in perspective which derives from the fact of being one-sided ... a simulation of the 'I' in Husserlian terms as in I (Noesis) ↔ Noema.

But the Strip, even though it is limited as are all such models of aspects of consciousness, does point out the very interesting and important question which we must ask in research: 'When are we actually on the inside or outside of something we are researching?' In asking this question, there is the simple caveat that the answer will depend upon the ontology, epistemology and acts of consciousness (Husserl 1962) which we start with, transform and engage. Phenomenology demands that we always include the perspective or position from which we experience anything at all so that the data. As in Husserl's classical noesis-noema correlation (act of consciousness/observation – that which is observed), the data is the correlation, not just what is observed. And, experience is always in some world, as an expression of embodied consciousness, as an agent. So, the changing and static forms in all of the latter and the attendant correlations are the data. Mediumship involves these kinds of shifts as noted in relation to the existential-phenomenological modification of Deikman's concepts about state change ... and the shifts would seem to be just as important as the stable conditions. Regarding psi: *What expressions of psi phenomena can be extricated from both stable and transition states of being?*

At this stage of the investigation, it will serve the enterprise better in terms of clarification of what 'data' can mean in first-person science, if we go to some approaches and examples of research into mediumship and related phenomena.

1. What is it like to become and be a medium?

Gaining an ‘insider’s perspective on mediumship can certainly flow from cinematic and novelistic materials. However, they are, perhaps, best regarded in a strictly research context as providers of guidelines for enquiry. What is required to ground this kind of address to the ‘data’ as described earlier is to extrapolate from the Nagel and Garfinkel reasoning and to suggest that the production of ‘data’ (which I shall address as an *existential grammar* below) should proceed from ‘immersion’ in the process of becoming and being a medium, rather than being an observer in the second- and third-person modalities. Of course, there is no absolute escape from distance and difference as they come into play with respect to the experience of becoming and being a medium, reporting it as research data or findings. First-hand experience will always be reported as ‘that which happened or took place’, an account, in a time-line and within memory. This is the *hermeneutic qualification* regarding phenomenological enquiry: specifically, all descriptions or reporting of experience are interpretations in the end since, in both linguistic and dynamic terms, what is pointed at, indicated or described is a matter of disclosure which arises out of that which is automatically hidden (language, the descriptive methodology itself, and temporality). This is not necessarily, I believe, a well warranted source of criticism of phenomenological method in the end, since phenomenological reduction entails embracing these aspects of the process of creating anything that becomes identified as ‘data’.

The most important requirement in this is to make sure that the substance and modalities of reporting are subject to a phenomenological, reductive protocol which unpacks *positionality, and acts of consciousness through which ‘objects’ are built up, throughout the reporting and as a whole event*. In Merleau-Ponty’s terms, this means unpacking the intentional arc as it emerges *from* embodied consciousness and, at the same time constitutes it in a world, and in terms which describe both its seamless and its ‘ruptured’ expressions.

One aim of this intensive form of is to create idealizations of the experience of becoming and being a medium, as Schutz and Garfinkel have done, except here the interiority of this process is the primary focus and not the social context in which mediumship is played out along the spectrum of possibilities from acting to ‘possession trance’ forms. My own work in this area, beginning in 1974 (Locke) has been characterized largely as trying to establish a reporting of interiority which flowed from my own second- and third-person observations of mediums while adding the first-person perspective from immersion in mediumship through learning how to be a medium in a range of settings ... séance groups, Spiritualist churches, private encounters and instruction.

And the format in which this work was reported, in its final form, was to 'triangulate' three fundamental axes of data:

- a. Descriptions of what happens as a person displays the process of learning to be a medium and being a medium, their reporting of the interior of that process ... and what they thought, felt, sensed, the full spectrum of sensory-perceptual, cognitive and symbolic experiences which may be partially expressed at the time of mediumistic performance or recovered later in interview or self-reports.
- b. Perspectives derived from research on the psychobiology and neurophysiology of 'state change' ... for example, correlating arousal states (ergotropic – trophotropic; specific activation sites in relationship such as thalamus, pre-frontal cortex, parietal lobe, for example) with observations of bodily changes and behavior, including utterances, and the experience of the 'subject'. This area of data gathering has to do with what has become identified as *neural correlates of consciousness* (NCC's) and represents one face of the experience-brain relationship which has become identified as *neurophenomenology* (Varela
- c. Idealizations which, in contradistinction to those afforded by Weber, Schutz and Garfinkel, are expressions of 'what it is like to be' a medium from the interior, with the capacity of being a witness to one's own experience included as part of the data (as a form of positionality). The idealizations do not, and cannot, represent or point to the whole of the experiences had by a 'typical' medium; rather, they represent moments in the experience of mediumship which are pivotal (hypotheses) in its unfolding as a recognized form. In these terms, idealizations are the result of the phenomenological reduction, suspension of the natural attitude (a priori ideas about what mediums are or what they do or what they experience deriving from one's own culture of origin) *and* the eidetic reduction which may follow from the initial phenomenological enquiry and which is concerned with identifying invariant features of phenomena ... in this case, mediumship. They are, in a sense, typifications or grouped categorizations of experiential responses from the reports of a range of subjects in a range of settings.

To exemplify this form of 'data', I shall set out the components in a brief slice of the life of a student medium being instructed by a teacher, in a contracted form since a full presentation is outside the scope of this paper:

- a. Observations of student and teacher (3rd person data): The student, a young woman, sits on a wooden, straight-backed chair in a darkened room in the presence of experienced instructors in the art of mediumship. The principal instructor tells the student to relax and slow her breathing and to simply notice everything which happens and not to make any judgement whatsoever about what is happening (her experience) but, rather, to let her guide come to her ('Guide' in this context is understood to be a spirit being which can invest itself in the body, and displace the personality/mind of the medium, and also to facilitate the entry and exit of other spirit beings into the medium's body). The student takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly, according to prior instructions, and visibly settles into the chair, her breathing slowing, right hand beginning to twitch slightly, eyes moving rapidly, now slumping slightly forward and, after about 5 minutes, beginning to mutter sounds which are unintelligible to the observer. The principal teacher says, 'Let yourself go. Your control is close (situationally defined clairvoyance) and you need to feel settled enough to let him enter into you and guide you. You will notice yourself changing and going deeper' Silence, all breathing slowly.
- b. Observations of physiological changes (3rd person data): The student *appears* (this qualification is necessary if no measurements of NCC's is taking place) to have entered into a trophotropic relaxed/deeply relaxed state with some facilitation by the instructor. Muscle tone is decreased, posture loses its rigidity, breathing slows and evidence of increased 'mental' imagery appears ... rapid eye movements. In the meditative 'band' of trophotropic states, there is often a change in boundary states (self-other, self-environment, body boundaries, for example) which may ultimately be associated with loss of sense of self as in mystical experience (Kelly and Locke, 2009) or loss of self in the sense of the appearance of another personality, identity or 'presence' in the medium (Locke, 1974). Some substantial analysis of mediumship with continuous EEG recording was undertaken at the Duke University Experiential Laboratory, 1976-80 (Kelly 1981) in which continual, rapid multivariate analyses of phase shifts in the spectrum of EEG frequencies indicated clear patterns associated with each 'personality' or 'other' appearing in the mediumship episode. This technique, using more sophisticated EEG recording has been taken forward by NIMH in relation to DID.

c. Idealization 1: Student:

Student report (1st person data)

The chair is a bit hard on my butt and I am beginning to feel uncomfortable ... trying to get my arms and body in the right position as I have been told ... arms resting on my lap, palms of my hand upward to be open to the guides ... taking a deep breath and breathing slowly, waiting, waiting. My eyes are closed and the room is dark but I'm seeing some lights and colours flickering before me. I'm trying not to make any judgements about this and my aching butt, but I'm wondering whether these are signs of the guide coming close. Relaxed, breathing slowly. Can hear the instructor telling me to let go, but I'm not sure whether he is really talking to me or not. I remember the rule they taught me ... 'When I can control myself and the guides can control themselves, then the guides can control me ...' I'm trying to let go, but

Idealization of 'surrender to otherness'

I hear you speaking to me and using the term 'you' but do you mean 'you' as in the ordinary way in which you address me when we are not being mediums? Or perhaps you are speaking to me, using 'you' as an address which indicates the presence of me (as I am ordinarily present) and the spirit guide? Is it the ordinary 'you' who is speaking to me or is it some spirit guide I am hearing through you? As I am reflecting on this, I muse upon whether the 'I' of 'I am musing' is really me or some other being, a spirit being. Perhaps my body slumping and the flickering visuals as well as the tingling which has developed in my arms signal the imminent arrival of my guide.

Later, after lesson 9: I relax and let the guide come. The guide is close because I feel the tingling in my arms, like electrical sensations or pins and needles, and see the flickering in my eyelids and then I am feeling the presence of the guide filling me up like a gentle warmth spreading through my body and mind and I ... am ... giving ... control to ... him

Later: All I have to do is sit still and imagine the lights and pins and needles and I am gone ... the guide takes (me) over

Note 1: The changes in the student's experience pass from the map of the transition into mediumistic 'trance' to the use of the indicators of the transition (sensory-perceptual) as inductions for the transition ... state of being change.

Note 2: The phenomenological aspect of this sort of reflection and exchange, intersecting with social and psychological points of view), can be construed in terms of the G.H. Mead I-Me construction of the social self, but it can be stretched to include I-Am-Me configurations which loop internal representations of identity and agency, subjectively, and social presentations of self and agency such as those which appear in Goffman's work and my own recent work on Visionary Practice in shamanism and transpersonal psychotherapy (Locke, 2011b)

Idealization 2: The Instructor

As I am sitting here, breathing gently, I feel the presence of my guide ... not taking me over, but shaping what I say and do. My body relaxes into this presence and I feel her (the guide) close to me (outside of me) and directing me occasionally (inside of me). I can see the student's guide close to her, just to the upper right side of her head, waiting to enter. I speak to the guide, telling them to wait until the student is very relaxed and receptive. The guide acquiesces and waits I am me as I usually am (Jim) and I am also Ah Chee (my Chinese guide).

The data: This is presented in two ways:

A. The materials from a,b,c are arranged in parallel with clear indications of positionality ... who observes, writes, analyses, reports at what time and in what circumstances. The 'triangle' makes up the data with those specifications which also incorporates indicators of ontological status of experience reported (especially wrt psi as subjective, social and scientific constructs) so that in reading the material as a whole, there is a spiraling into the arena of subjective experience and out to the social and social-scientific.

There are two elements in 'c':

- a. The student and instructor self-reports (untutored ... without phenomenological expertise);
- b. The idealizations.

So, the total presentation of data is as follows:

- The experience of the subject and the instructor approaching, engaging and then disengaging from mediumistic activity (Question: to what extent is engagement/disengagement independent of formal mediumistic performances?). What is it like to be a medium in situ?
- The experience of the researcher throughout ... approaching mediumistic performance, observing directly, and following up. What is it like to be a researcher of mediumship in situ?
- Reports of the subject post-factum ... self-report or interview (2nd person data).
- Reports of the researcher post-factum ... self-report, pro forma, or interview (2nd person data).
- Neurophysiological and other biophysical data, NO (3rd person data).
- Neurophenomenology: 1st person and 3rd person data (NO) correlated.

But, here is the interesting part. Varela, Thompson and Varela and Shear as well as Chalmers have all suggested that there is a need for improved ways of expressing first-person data and that we might draw some inspiration from novelists, as mentioned previously. However, there is also a need for better formalizations which, of necessity, would have to be phenomenologically generated and, in terms of the requirements of phenomenology, must be translatable into experiential formats which are adequate (empirically adequate).

Imagine this:

There is a line from t_0 to t_n which describes the experience of a person who is a research subject. Understandably, we cannot assume that it should appear as a continuous, uniformly expressed line given the variegation of human experience which we are addressing ... 'flow' does not solve the problem either, since it has certain in-built assumptions.

Emerging intentionally (in the conventional, not phenomenological sense) from this:

- a. Subject's expression of their experience in phenomenological terms ... focusing on the noesis-noema hermeneutic correlation, attending to how experience is 'constituted', 'built up'.
- b. Researcher's expression of their experience of being a researcher, paralleling 'a'.
- c. Observations of a 3rd person kind: NO
- d. A series of idealizations which are successively refined to describe, in essence (eidetic reduction in phenomenology), what it is like to become and be a medium.
- e. The whole process, moving dynamically through chronological time, is comprised of spiral movements to 1st person then out to 2nd and 3rd person data so that the whole of 'reporting', the whole of data and outcome of the investigation is this spiraling movement.
- f. More imaginings: To what extent does this process correlate with or match the experience of addressing the acquisition of a skill-knowledge set where we approach the task of acquiring it from the outside, as it were, so that we need to 'get hold of', 'understand', 'grasp' and 'express' the set adequately. The set may seem to be over, and sometimes against us (as in learning to ride a bike and falling off) until there is a *critical change* ... different from the *incremental changes* we have been making. We make a shift to being 'on the inside of the set': **we embody it!** The distance from performance is overcome or cancelled and the overt details of the performance which an observer may recognize are now distant. What is it like to have this set is lived, unquestioned, automatized and immediately accessible.

B. Performing as a medium. Providing a culturally relevant, socially competent performance as a medium, passing as a medium in any or all of the phenomenal modalities of mediumship described above.

2. Myth and symbol in healing:

The previously described way of addressing the business of researching mediumship could also be extended to some of the fascinating aspects of shamanic and mediumistic healing which are mapped out in Levi-Strauss's rather famous analysis of shamanic healing in Cuna society. Without going into all of the details of his rendition of the healing myth and how it is implemented in a ritual, the power of his work lies in the suggestion that the social performance of a myth (ritual), already known by the recipient of the healing, enters into a relationship of homologous interactions at the social-symbolic (myth-ritual), psychological (patient) and physiological (patient). Changes in the first cascades into changes of a constructive kind ... a healing outcome (reduction of pain, stress, mental chaos and inhibited childbirth, in this case).

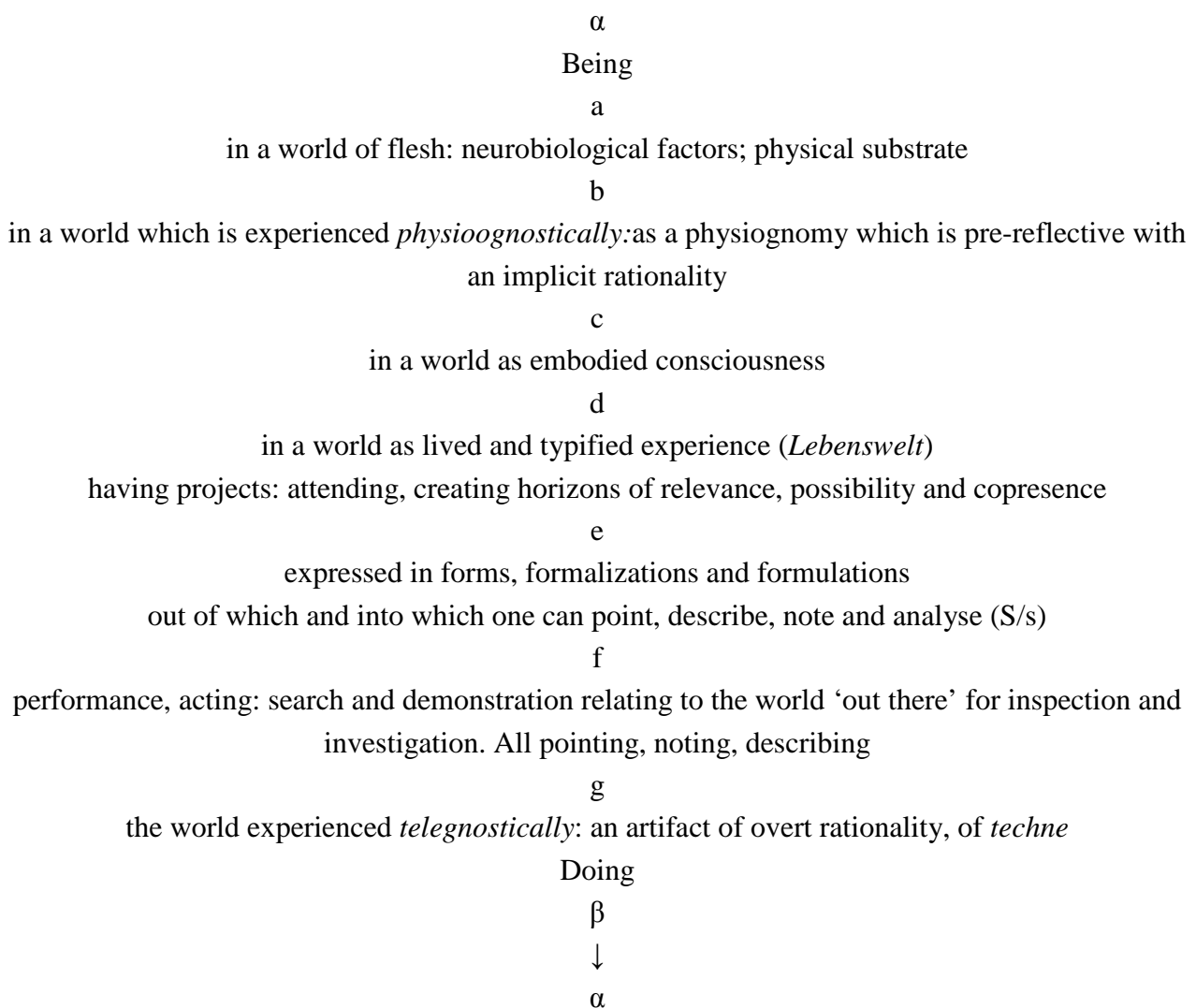
It is unlikely that homologous relationships alone are sufficient to explain the effectiveness of healing unless some more compelling data about phenomena such as resonance (electrodynamic, physiological, for example) or, for that matter, the dynamics of hypnosis which are still contentious ... what is hypnosis, 'state' or motivated behavior to perform or comply for example, and how does it translate from social-psychological interaction to physiological changes and what is its relationship to placebo and similar phenomena?

What may seem to involve, ostensibly, a psi component or unexplained homologous interactions may be re-investigated using the first-person approach advocated above. For example, the socially shared myth is a part of the culturally specific natural attitude which is the horizon and context for ritual actions and correlated personal meanings ... subjective experience. Monitoring physiological changes which may occur as the mythical-symbolic landscape is navigated through, shaped by the shaman and introjected by the patient, while accessing the first-hand experience of the patient in this landscape triangulates the elements of third- and first-person data.

3. Existential grammars:

I have set out an extensive guide to existential-phenomenological research, focusing on shamanism and mediumship, in Locke (2000a). This stands as a complement to and extension of the ‘triangular’ model and, indeed, unpacks it, or any other project in research, according to thorough-going phenomenological and eidetic reductions. The core of the existential grammars methodology is set out in an abbreviated form below, but readers are referred to the full exposition.

Returning to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the intentional arc, it is clear that it moves in two directions: into the world and constituting that world and associated embodied presence and identities and also into the self and the flesh, into the subjective and psychological-psychosomatic realms. This dual ‘pointing’ outward and inward takes the following, abbreviated, form:



This is a hermeneutic process and describes in broad terms the total ‘data’ complex which connects the ‘inside’ with the ‘outside’ of any phenomenon. It contexts and extends the earlier treatment of the triangulation methodology applied to mediumship.

Conclusion

It is my position that, drawing upon recent developments in first-person science, a productive foray can be made into research in the area of culture, consciousness and psi. This involves abandoning some old research chestnuts which encase rather blighted and limited notions of objectivity and opening the process of research up to the questions, ‘What is it like to be a researcher?’ and, for example, ‘What is it like to be a medium?’ These questions cannot be answered in a satisfactory manner by conventional social, psychological or neuroscience perspectives. Rather, what is required is development of methodologies of immersion which are prepared from through extensive work in existential-phenomenological methods, as is currently occurring in neurophenomenology (Thompson, 2007), for example.

The convention of writing research data and analysis in technically informed, contracted language may have to be abandoned in favour of a greater faithfulness to the ‘objects’ of our interest, expressed as correlations which lead on from Husserl’s work and which produce a rendition which has strong similarities to a device in fiction ... hypotyposis ... ‘which means making a scene so lifelike that it gives the reader the impression he can see it with his own eyes’ (Binet, 2013: 15) and, we might add, feel, smell, touch, taste, intuit, think about, get a sense of and so on.

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