

Θεωρίες αυτοσυνειδησίας ίδιας τάξης

Από τα παραπάνω προκύπτει ότι προκειμένου να αποφύγουμε την επ' άπειρον αναδρομή, θα πρέπει να δεχθούμε ότι δεν είναι δυνατό η γνώση του εαυτού να βασίζεται πάντα σε κάποιου είδους ταυτοποίηση του εαυτού. Αυτό το συμπέρασμα θα μπορούσε να ωθήσει κάποιον να δεχθεί τη θέση ότι το «εγώ» δεν έχει αναφορά¹⁸. Αλλά μια τέτοια θέση στηρίζεται, σύμφωνα με τη διάγνωση του Shoemaker, σε μια τάση να σκεφτόμαστε «την αυτεπίγνωση με βάση το μοντέλο της παρατηρησιακής γνώσης, σύμφωνα με την οποία το πράγμα που γίνεται αντιληπτό έχει μια συγκεκριμένη αισθητή ποιότητα»¹⁹. Και καθώς, όταν ενδοσκοπούμε, δεν βρίσκουμε στην εμπειρία μας κάτι σαν τον εαυτό, μοιάζει σαν το μόνο δυνατό συμπέρασμα να είναι ότι το «εγώ» δεν έχει αναφορική λειτουργία.

Γι' αυτό ο Shoemaker επισημαίνει ότι θα πρέπει να απορρίψουμε την παρατηρησιακή γνώση ως μοντέλο για την κατανόηση της πιο βασικής μορφής αυτεπίγνωσης και αντιπροτείνει ένα είδος μη-παρατηρησιακής σχέσης με τον εαυτό, η οποία είναι συμβατή με την ασυλία έναντι λάθους ταυτοποίησης. Έτσι, η αποδοχή αυτής της μη-παρατηρησιακής σχέσης υποστηρίζει την ιδέα ότι το «εγώ», όταν χρησιμοποιείται ως υποκείμενο, ενέχει αυτοαναφορά χωρίς ταυτοποίηση.

Ένας τρόπος με τον οποίο μπορεί να κατανοηθεί αυτή η ιδέα της μη παρατηρησιακής σχέσης με τον εαυτό είναι μέσω της υιοθέτησης μιας προσέγγισης της αυτοσυνειδησίας ως ενεργήματος ίδιας τάξης με το ενέργημα της συνείδησης. Για παράδειγμα, ένα αντιληπτικό ενέργημα δεν περιλαμβάνει μόνο την επίγνωση του αντιληπτικού περιεχομένου, αλλά και μια μη-αντιληπτική επίγνωση του ίδιου του ενεργήματος.

For example, the visual experience of a tree involves both the observational awareness of the tree and the non-observational awareness of itself. In that sense, consciousness and self-consciousness are intrinsically related in the act of experiencing. This generic approach can be further specified depending on how one analyses the idea of non-observational awareness.

In the phenomenological tradition, this kind of awareness was conceived as a non-intentional relation at the pre-reflective level. As Sartre notes: “[I]t is the non-reflective consciousness that makes reflection possible” (BN, liii/19)²⁰. When we are absorbed in what we are doing, we are intentionally directed towards our task and not towards our psychological state. The awareness of our psychological state at the pre-reflective level is not a kind of intentional awareness but what Sartre calls “non positional consciousness”. Non-positional consciousness is not

¹⁸ Anscombe 1975.

¹⁹ ibid, p. 89.

²⁰ “...it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible”.

intentional, it has no object. Sartre introduces non-positional consciousness not as a self-standing form of consciousness, but as a necessary *aspect* of every positional consciousness, every intentional consciousness:

"[A]ll positional consciousness of an object is at the same time non-positional consciousness of itself" (BN liii/19).

Thus, all intentional consciousness is self-conscious, not in the sense that it involves reflection but in the sense that it is non-positively conscious of itself. It follows that this pre-reflective self-consciousness is a ubiquitous form of self-consciousness since it characterizes all intentional consciousness. So, what should be explored is its internal structure and the relation it bears to intentional consciousness.

Zahavi has devoted a lot of effort to advancing this task. So I'll turn now to his analyses in his most recent writings. Zahavi takes PRSC to amount to the presence of a quale that he calls "for-me-ness". This quale is integral in all phenomenal consciousness and it concerns the first-personal character of experience:

"... there is... something that the different experiences, whatever their type, whatever their object, have in common. For every possible experience we have, each of us can say: whatever it is like for me to have this experience, it is for me that it is like that to have it. What-it-is-likeness is properly speaking what-it-is-like-for-me-ness. Although I live through various different experiences, there is consequently something experiential that remains the same, namely, their first-personal character." (Zahavi 2013)

Zahavi claims that for-me-ness, this first-personal character of experiences, is a kind of self-presence, a kind of first-personal givenness. He conceives for-me-ness or first-personal givenness as an intrinsic phenomenal feature of experience that does not depend on the capacity to self-refer by means of the first-person pronoun. In that sense, even one that cannot use competently the first-person pronoun, as it happens in certain cases of autism, has experiences that are characterized by first-personal givenness. More generally, for-me-ness is introduced as not dependent on the possession of language at all. It is supposed to be a feature of experience that we share with non-linguistic animals. Thus, for-me-ness or first-personal givenness is conceived as a primitive feature of experience that is unaffected by our initiation into culture.

But what exactly is this experiential givenness? The first-personal givenness of experience is a peculiar kind of givenness in the sense that it is not objectual. Namely, it does not present what it presents as an object. Zahavi is here inflating the notion of presentation to include an aspect of experience that involves a kind of minimal self. A self that is present but not as an object. In other words, the first-personal givenness of experience is a self-relation that is non-intentional, non-representational. It rather should be conceived as a kind of acquaintance.

An acquaintance relation, unlike intentional relations, requires that both its relata obtain. There cannot be an acquaintance relation with something that does not exist. Moreover, an acquaintance relation is direct not only in the sense that it is not inferential, but also in the sense that it is non-conceptual and does not involve the formation of any judgment. It is this feature of acquaintance that makes it veridical. One cannot be acquainted with an object in a non veridical way. If I am acquainted with a pain, then I actually have this pain. So, the acquaintance relation preserves a feature that resembles infallibility. However, it is not infallibility proper, since infallibility is a property of beliefs and there are no beliefs involved at the level of acquaintance²¹.

At this point, one may object that acquaintance, like intentionality, remains a relation to *objects*. For example, Russell suggests an acquaintance with sense data and some naive realists conceive perceptual experience as an acquaintance with external objects. But, as we saw, for-me-ness is supposed to refer to a distinctive kind of acquaintance with something existent that is not presented as an object. And as Zahavi (2013, 335) notes, this "experiential givenness differs from objectual givenness". How should we understand this peculiar kind of presentation?

Zahavi & Kriegel (2015) reject the idea that for-me-ness is a detachable self-quale that can occur on its own. That would make it an objectual givenness. More generally, they hold that for-me-ness does not pertain to *what* is experienced, to the content of experience. As Zahavi (2014) notes, it "doesn't refer to a specific experiential content, to a specific what; nor does it refer to the diachronic or synchronic sum of such content, or to some other relation that might obtain between the contents in question". Rather, the "me" of for-me-ness is an aspect of the *way* the content of experience is experienced (Zahavi & Kriegel 2015)²². The way the content is experienced is the *act* of experiencing. So, the "me" of for-me-ness is an aspect of the act of experiencing. Zahavi (2013) adopts a useful formulation from Rowlands (2013) to further specify the experiential non objectual presentation he introduces. According to this, for-me-ness or mineness (in Rowlands' terms) is "an adverbial modification of the act rather than a property of the object of that act"²³.

²¹ A similar point holds for self-intimacy in the sense that the subject is not self-blind about his experiences. In this picture, the self-relation is rather understood atomistically, namely as not depending on anything else.

²² "We can put this by saying that the 'me' of for-me-ness is not in the first instance an aspect of *what* is experienced but of *how* it is experienced; not an object of experience, but a constitutive manner of experiencing."

²³ "the phenomenological claim is not that experiences are things we persistently perceive or represent and that the relation between an experience and its first-personal givenness (subjective presence) is to be cashed out in terms of an act-object structure. The point is rather that experiential processes are intrinsically self-revealing. This is also why it might be better to say that we see, hear, or feel consciously, rather than saying that there is a perception of an object, and in addition an awareness of the perception (Thomasson 2000: 203)." (Zahavi 2013, 36)

I am not sure how this formulation helps us to clarify what for-me-ness is and how it is related to consciousness. One problem stems from the fact that this aspect of consciousness is postulated as having no internal structure and therefore it cannot be analyzed in terms of act and object. Moreover, given that for-me-ness is not a separate and distinct item but, as Zahavi & Kriegel (2015) acknowledge, it is "a 'formal' feature of experiential life as such" that characterizes every intentional consciousness, it must be examined why Zahavi insists on the experiential givenness of for-me-ness, conceived as an *occurrent* phenomenal quality. It is certainly not obvious that the phenomenology of experience involves this quality. I am not sure how Zahavi could argue for the phenomenological presence of for-me-ness given that he takes it to be a formal feature of experiential life, namely a feature that characterizes all conscious states. For-me-ness is considered to remain present even in pathological experiences, like thought insertion.

But Zahavi introduces for-me-ness not only on supposedly phenomenological grounds, but also for explanatory purposes. The most important purpose is to account for the distinctiveness of the first-person perspective. Let us examine this.

If we take for granted Zahavi's claim that for-me-ness is a feature of experience that we share with non-linguistic animals, then this feature is unaffected by our initiation into culture and the acquisition of concepts. But as Zahavi (2013, 337) acknowledges, the exploration of this primitive, non-conceptual form of self-relation cannot "capture that which is distinctive about human consciousness" and the conceptualized self-experience. However, if this is the case, it is not clear how the primitive, non-conceptual form of self-relation we supposedly share with non-linguistic animals can account for the first *personal* givenness that characterizes our distinctively human consciousness. After all, there are no persons at the level of non-linguistic animals.

Zahavi appeals, also, to an additional explanatory purpose that the introduction of for-me-ness as an *occurrent* quality of experiencing can serve. According to this, for-me-ness can account for the sense of familiarity and the lack of surprise with respect to what we experience as the experience unfolds. But given that the appearance of inserted thoughts is *not* accompanied by a sense of familiarity and a lack of surprise, I cannot see how for-me-ness can account for this, given that Zahavi considers for-me-ness as remaining present in thought insertion.

Our sense of familiarity and lack of surprise with respect to what we experience as the experience unfolds presupposes an understanding of the unity of our experience. This unity cannot be reduced to the presence of a non-conceptual quale. Rather, as Kant holds, experience must be embedded within a conceptually articulated form of thinking which allows us to encounter the world as objective from a subjective point of view.