

Antidescriptivist Psychological Nominalism as Phenomenological Semantics

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There is a dilemma in phenomenology that arises from Husserl's idea that "meaning is brought into conceptual form through description." I suggest that a commitment to this idea undermines the pragmatic, normative, and rule-governed form of meaning. To resolve this, I show that phenomenology should commit itself to Sellars' account of antidescriptivist psychological nominalism (ADPN). Along the way, I demonstrate the necessity that experience is seen as pervasively conceptual, aligning with McDowell's view of conceptual content as essential for reflective, phenomenological thought. I conclude by introducing *antidescriptive nominalist phenomenological semantics* and show that it offers a robust method for investigating how our perceptual experience is normatively governed, all while ensuring that meaning remains in the world.

Keywords: Antidescriptivism; Nominalism; Wilfrid Sellars; Husserl; Phenomenology; Semantics

Introduction

Husserl opens *Ideas* by stating straightaway that the knowledge of experience is non-conceptual:

I can let my attention wander from the writing-table I have just seen and observed, through the unseen portions of the room behind my back to the verandah, into the garden, to the children in the summer-house, and so forth, to all the objects concerning which I precisely "know" that they are there and yonder in my immediate co-perceived surroundings—a *knowledge which has nothing of conceptual thinking in it*, and first changes into clear intuiting with the bestowing of attention, and even then only partially and for the most part very imperfectly (Husserl 2014, 48–50).

And proposes that the manner in which knowledge becomes conceptual is through arranging a descriptively intentional picture of nature as meaningful for thought:

It is then to this world, *the world in which I find myself and which is also my world-about-*

me, that the complex forms of my manifold and shifting spontaneities of consciousness stand related: observing in the interest of research the *bringing of meaning into conceptual form through description; comparing and distinguishing, collecting and counting, presupposing and inferring, the theorizing activity of consciousness, in short, in its different forms and stages* (Husserl 2014, 50–51, second emphasis added).

But it has been shown—by McDowell and others—that an account of experience as non-conceptual commits the phenomenological project to a version of the Myth of the Given, by treating experience as though it were intelligible outside of the logical space of reasons. Sellars (2003, §36) states:

The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.

I think that it should be clear that the kinds of episodes or states that Husserl reports are a kind of *knowing*. For the contents of Husserl’s experiences are only knowable insofar as he is exercising first-personal conceptual capacities in reflective awareness of the world. And if the knowledge of experience is non-conceptual, it is difficult to see how it could be that we can use experience for being able to justify what we say.

But I suggest that there is another dilemma that phenomenology; it comes from idea that “meaning is brought into conceptual form through description”. I suggest that a commitment to this idea undermines the normative and rule-governed nature of meaning. The result of the dilemma is that meaningful experience is conceived of as abstract activity performed by detached minds, as something separate from the world.

To avoid this dilemma, I will show that phenomenology should follow commit itself to a Janus-faced position of antidescriptivism and psychological nominalism. To do, I will recount two relevant aspects Sellars’ antidescriptivism and psychological

nominalism. The reason for this is to show that treating antidescriptivist psychological nominalism as phenomenological semantics ensures that experience stays in the world as playing an intersubjective justificatory role in reports of experience.

The result of the argument will be that phenomenology can work as a method for making explicit the logical space of reasons as it exists between persons.

Antidescriptivist nominalist phenomenological semantics provides us with a rigorous method for investigating normatively rule-governed commitments to perceptual experience.

In (1) I provide an overview of the argument that experience is pervasively permeated by a conceptual structure that enables it to play a justificatory role in the space of reasons. The reason is to prevent phenomenology from advocating a position that separates minds and the world. As it is clear that phenomenology distinguishes itself as a tradition that unites experience as being in the world, it must take the conceptual structure of experience seriously in order to live up to such claims. To do so, we cannot accept that meaning is something brought into conceptual form through description, but rather that experience structures the conceptual form of meaning.

I follow McDowell's demanding account of conceptual content as that which is capable of being used in reflective thought. McDowell (1994, 47–48) states:

It is essential to conceptual capacities [...] that they can be exploited in active thinking, thinking that is open to reflection about its own rational credentials. When I say the content of experience is conceptual, that is what I mean by 'conceptual'.

In saying that experience is conceptual, we are saying that to have knowledge about our perceptual episodes, we have to already be exercising conceptualization about those episodes in order for them to be recognizable to us. I take McDowell's demanding

interpretation of the word ‘concept’ as ensuring that experience is eligible for playing a role in what Brandom refers to as the game of giving and asking for reasons.

Similarly, we need to make use of a demanding use of experience. I take it that the kinds of experience that are eligible for knowledge are experiences that one knows they are having. Seibt uses the term *full experience* for this, whereas bare attention to one’s surroundings, something akin to what we share with non-rational animals, Seibt terms *rudimentary experience*. I take full experience to also serve as the criterium of experience in phenomenology and will hereafter write the word experience.

In (2) I argue that if phenomenology is the study of meaningful and intentional experience, then we should offer an account of meaning and intention—and ultimately mindedness—that is fully world-embedded. If one’s experience is to be construed as meaningful and intentional, then it follows that our picture of experience must reflect the world. On the side of meaning, this implies that one does not mentally grasp non-conceptual experience and supplies it with conceptual content; instead, one learns how to perform rule-governed linguistic episodes in particular contexts within a conceptually-structured world. On the side of intentionality, this implies that our thought—covert linguistic expressions—are directed toward making explicit the intersubjective linguistic practices that allow us to make sense of our experiences in the space of reasons.

Last, in (3) I outline antidescriptivist psychological nominalism as phenomenological semantics. It may seem orthogonal to advocate an antidescriptivist psychological nominalism for phenomenology. However, my writing will demonstrate that (a) conceiving of experience as conceptually structured and (b) advocating that an antidescriptivist nominalist account of meaning is supportive to phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology will take on an antidescriptivist form, wherein descriptive

reports about experience will serve as a reflective machinery for linguistically explicating features of the phenomenal world. Phenomenological semantics will be framed as a practice for transposing subjective episodes of overt linguistic behavior into generalized categories of experience. I aim to show that phenomenological description can do more than mere reporting by showing that it gives us a picture of rule-governed linguistic activity. So, the purpose of this essay is to ensure that meaning remains in the world.

I. Keeping the Mind in the World: Pervasively Conceptual Experience

Suppose you were walking down a familiar street, a street that you did not need to actively consider directions, where you as it were felt at home. You realize that you've been thinking about other things: your social obligations later that evening, the weather, the chess move you made the day before, etc. Husserl says of such moments, moments of so-called wandering attention, that they have "nothing of conceptual thinking in them." Husserl (and most phenomenologists) would also say that your walking had nothing of conceptual thinking in. You simply knew where you were going without needing to actively consider what was required for that knowledge.

This is mistaken: without an account of pervasively conceptual experience, it becomes difficult to see how it is possible that we could have conceptual knowledge at all. Husserl's picture requires an account of epistemology that demonstrates where the point of non-conceptual experience ends and conceptual experience begins. It is difficult to see the shape of such an account without relying on the incoherent idea that rational animals are mysteriously able to apply concepts to a non-conceptual world. So, the question which guides this section is whether or not perception is something distinct from conceptualization. And I would like to say that we should take the answer to be a resounding *No*.

The appearance of this mystery was made explicit by Wilfrid Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (EPM). It is the Myth of the Given: that when we do not see that experience must always play a role in the space of reasons—our space of normative discourse—our knowledge becomes unintelligible.

All that is needed to avoid the Myth of the Given—the idea that our experiences are something distinct from our conceptual knowledge—is the recognition that perceptual experiential knowledge is knowledge that comes from judgment and that judgment is always conceptually articulated. To judge *that-p* is nothing other than to see *p* as capable of playing a justificatory role in our language games. Having knowledge of a perceptual experience is nothing other than the first-personal awareness of judging *that-p*. I use the term *judgment* synonymously with *having knowledge of a perceptual experience*, say, walking down the street and thinking about chess.

There are two problems with the phenomenological picture of non-conceptual knowledge. On the one hand, it is unclear how conceptual knowledge comes about. On the other hand, it is unclear how conceptual knowledge is differentiated from non-conceptual content.

Husserl's answer to the first problem is that the birth conceptual knowledge comes from the activity of intentional subjects who use the transcendental reduction, the so-called *epoché*, to make explicit features of perceptual experience that are otherwise taken for granted (Beyer 2020).

The epoché is the intentional act of suspending our everyday justificatory understanding in favor of a pre-predicative, pre-judgmental awareness of what are supposed to be the grounding qualities of perceptual knowledge in experience. It is from the position of the intersubjectively omniscient epistemic subject that conceptual knowledge takes shape through what the epoché reveals as foundational.

Conceptualization, then, is the result of bringing meaning into form through description. The epoché reveals the remainder that rational epistemic persons are capable of knowing about once their natural conceptualizations of the world are temporarily suspended. At base, the activity of intentional subjects—on Husserl’s picture—depends upon their use of the epoché to have any authentic philosophical knowledge at all. The consequence of this account is that the experiential world—the world of judgment—is mind-dependent and internal to intentional subjects, despite Husserl’s later attempts to insist a correlational view of knowledge while retaining the epoché of the dependency view (Beyer 2020).

Husserl’s answer to the second problem is that ground-level perceptual states are non-conceptual, whereas the explication of those ground-level perceptual states is conceptual. The rationale for this is that perceptual states are comprised of pre-judgmental non-conceptual dispositions to act in particular ways (say, riding a bicycle or playing rapid chess).

But these answers are insufficient: both remain committed to a version of Givenness and are inadequate for making clear how it is that our perceptual experiences—judgments—come to stand in justificatory relations in a space of reasons. We must remove the Husserlian distinction between judgment and conceptualization and follow Kant’s insight that *thoughts without content are empty and intuitions without concepts are blind*.

Now, there is extensive secondary research on conceptual and non-conceptual content. So, rather than attempt to offer a substantive account of the debate, the task of this section is to provide a summative picture of where I think we can and should land in light of this research. I will outline my reading of McDowell’s treatment of non-conceptual content in *Mind and World* as well as his response to Dreyfus. I will

conclude this section by suggesting that McDowell's account can be straightforwardly integrated with Brandom's explication of the Kant-Sellars thesis for ordinary empirical description (OED). So, despite taking a summative approach, I will offer a variation on McDowell's framework for understanding the necessarily conceptual structure of phenomenological knowledge.

We must understand just what kinds of experiences phenomenology tends to regard as non-conceptual. I take it that there are three paradigmatic types:

- (1) the performance of well-trained embodied acts
- (2) intersubjective and joint-attentional cognitive processes
- (3) ground-level empirical perceivings

The idea is that, in each of these cases, the application of a concept is not necessary in order to successfully have the experience (i.e., being aware of the fact that one is having an experience). In fact, Dreyfus argues that if one were to introduce concepts into such experiences, the experience would be interrupted and potentially become unsuccessful (i.e., not successfully carrying out an intention).ⁱ Dreyfus (2013, 18) states:

From the perspective of the skilled coper absorbed in the solicitation of a familiar affordance, the affording object, as Heidegger puts it, "withdraws." [...] In general, the absorbed coper is directly drawn by each solicitation in an appropriate way: the chairs draw him to sit on them, the floorboards to walk on them, the walls may draw him to hang pictures on them, the windows to open them, and the door may draw him to go out.

Leaving aside the strange idea of conversational furniture, the phenomenological picture of non-conceptual experience is that we simply know our way around the world and do not need to rely on the use of conceptualization to, say, sit down in a chair. But how is it that we come to do things like sit in chairs, ride bicycles, and play rapid chess without

conceptualization? According the next, self-refuting, paragraph from Dreyfus, those experiences are always firstly conceptual:

Once our situation becomes familiar our skilled dispositions respond directly to the solicitations of the relevant affordances [...] once a skill is acquired, concepts used in learning the skill need play no further role.

There are two contradictions in this section. First, if our experience is supposed to be non-conceptual, then how are we supposed to start to find our way in an unfamiliar situation; where do the concepts come from? Second, if concepts are necessary for learning but stop playing a role in our competent activity, then how are we supposed to make sense of learning to act normally without conceptualization? I cannot see how a coherent account can follow and numerous others have pointed out that our competent activity (a masterful game of rapid chess) does relies on conceptualization, critical reflection, and judgment in order to be competent (McDowell 1994).

The main problem is that phenomenological accounts fail to see that to be able to treat experiences as something that we are able to report, they must be conceptual.ⁱⁱ

By contrast, McDowell (2013, 41–42) states:

I first made the claim of pervasiveness in its application to perceptual experience. I claimed that as enjoyed by rational animals, experience is an actualization of the conceptual capacities. [...] The epistemological significance of the experience of rational subjects is that when our experiencing is perceiving, as it can be, features of the environment are perceptually present to us in a way that provides us with opportunities for knowledge, of a kind that is special to rational knowers: knowledge that is, to echo Wilfrid Sellars, a standing in the space of reasons (p. 41-42).

That is, in order for our perceptual knowledge to stand in the space of reasons, we must see that our experiences are capable of figuring into our discursive practices. Without

pervasive conceptual activity (further: *pervasiveness thesis*), it is unclear how that knowledge comes to be known.

With regard to the paradigmatic examples of non-conceptual content, McDowell says that what happens in moments when there seem to be no conceptualization at play, is the demonstration of cultivated rationality. Persons are able to know what they are doing as well as why they are doing it; and the knowledge of what and why is always coupled with knowing that it is they who are doing it, that an “I” is affixed to agential activity. We give expression to things that we already know (for example, knowing that this bicycle is able to be rode; knowing that when I see someone familiar on the street, that I greet them).ⁱⁱⁱ

Conceptualization requires the possibility to reflect on experience as a way into making sense of experiences rather than that conceptualization is always operative in perceptual states. Nonetheless, gaining masterful familiarity to our environment is a *Bildung*, a process of conceptualization from judgment (perceptual experience) that things are thus-and-so. I take McDowell to advocate a position wherein all experiences are eligible for being used in the space of reasons; and for that to be so, those experiences must something we are directly aware of. That is, when we say that experience is pervaded by the conceptual, we are maintaining a modal view of conceptualization that is grounded in the possibility of playing a role in the space of reasons. McDowell (1994, 54) says:

Human beings are rational animals. What could be more natural than to hold that capacities that belong to what differentiates human beings from other animals, their rationality, are operative in activity that is essentially human, including activity at the ground-floor level?

And what makes human beings rational animals, animals whose experiences are pervasively conceptual, is that we acquire second nature. Our second nature is the

developed, learned capacity to participate in a shared space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.^{iv} It is what comes from learning to follow a rule: knowing that, to use Wittgenstein's example, when asked to calculate $n+2$, when we successfully reach 1000, we ought not to begin calculating 1004, 1008, 1016, ..., as it wouldn't fit the rule. I would like to indicate—as a signpost for what comes below—that it is precisely because second nature is rule-governed (something taught and learned in a socially distributed way) that demonstrates just how central it is for phenomenology to ensure that our experiences are seen as conceptually structured.

Now, I would like to focus on Brandom's idea of modality in ordinary empirical discourse (OED)—his so-called Kant-Sellars thesis—as a way of demonstrating that experience is always pervaded by our conceptualization.

The reason for this is to drive home the fact that, even if there were a coherent picture of non-conceptual experience, we would still be tasked with explaining how it could be possible to recognize that experiences are eligible for making descriptive reports. Without this, we would have no record of our experience and would be unable to see our conceptualizations come into view. Even if one granted the idea of non-conceptual experiences, it would be still confusing to understand how we linguistically articulate those experiences. For, nobody would in good faith deny that linguistic expressions are conceptual through and through.

The Kant-Sellars Thesis as follows: insofar as one is able to use ordinary empirical discourse to make reports about experiences, one is also equipped with everything they need to be able to say (and know) that things could be otherwise. Brandom (2014, 261) says:

The underlying pragmatic dependence is that an essential aspect of grasping, understanding, or mastering the use of OED vocabulary is grasping, understanding, or mastering subjunctive and counterfactual reasoning in which that vocabulary

occurs. To know what cats or copper are requires knowing at least something about how they would behave under various circumstances: what follows from being a cat or made of copper, when that claim is conjoined with various auxiliary hypotheses, independently of whether one takes those auxiliary hypotheses to be true. (p. 261)

By using OED at all, we are already engaged in the process of making material inferences—in fact, we cannot use OED without material inference, for we would be unable to infer under which circumstances our reports would be relevant. By making reports of experience (and by knowing that experiences could be used in reports at all), it is necessary that we would be able to make other kinds of reports of experience. So, we must have conceptualization active in experience in order to exercise the criteria for knowing which kinds of reports we ought to make.

The minimal consequence is that, for one to make ordinary empirical descriptions of experience, then they must: (1) have already rationally cultivated the linguistic dependencies to make the report, and (2): have already rationally cultivated subjunctive conditionality (that if things were otherwise, then we would be rather talking about horses and silver than cats and copper). For example, by having the experience of knowing:

That the children are playing in the garden while I am sitting at my writing table, despite the fact that I cannot see them.

one must already be able to do quite a lot of conceptual work to have the experience at all. As Brandom shows, even when we do not take auxiliary modal hypotheses to be true, being able to make a report of such an experience in the first place requires that it be possible that the auxiliary *would be true in other circumstances*.

I think that a phenomenologist would agree that the experience of being mistaken about a perceptual experience (e.g., falsely seeing that the ice cube is pink) is

phenomenologically identical to the experience of being correct about a perceptual experience. Brandom's point about OED vocabulary is that, in order to know that one is having an experience, that experience must be immanently wrapped up in subjunctive and counterfactual counterparts (say, knowing what would be the case if the boiling point of water were different and being mistaken about perceivings of pink ice cubes).

The point to emphasize here is that, by combining Brandom's Kant-Sellars thesis with McDowell's pervasiveness thesis, we are in a position to recognize that the ground-level ability to distinguish between material particulars, of knowing that p and q imply different variables, rests on the conceptual structure of experience. In the following section, I will show that we ought to follow Sellars' program of antidescriptivist psychological nominalism to make sense of phenomenological descriptions that can authentically be in the world.

II. Pervasively Conceptual Antidescriptivist Psychological Nominalism

I wrote in the introduction that there are two relevant aspects of antidescriptivism and psychological nominalism for phenomenology. In what follows, I will outline antidescriptivism and psychological nominalism as philosophical approaches and indicate how each can benefit the phenomenological project (taken together, antidescriptivist psychological nominalism will be abbreviated as ADPN). The result will be what I term *antidescriptive phenomenological semantics*.

There are relevant two aspects of antidescriptivism:

AD1: We should be semantic externalists about the meaning of language and experience.

AD2: We should account for the rule-governed structure of linguistic practices, especially for analyzing phenomenological description.

According to **AD1**, meaning is nothing other than the functional roles linguistic expressions play in normative practices. Sellars' case example is that of color terms. We are used to saying:

Rot (in German) means *Red* (in English)

which suggests that there is something essential about the terms on either side of the meaning-relation; namely, picking out items that are essentially red. Over against this, Sellars shows us that we ought instead to reduce the meaning of the German expression *Rot* (or French expression *Rouge*, Portuguese expression *Vermelho*, etc.)^v to the equivalent functional role the term plays in English in order to have a correct picture of linguistic expressions.^{vi} The point is that there is nothing extralinguistic to the meaning of terms: meaning is only the expression of a role in a particular linguistic context. On this account, there is neither an epistemological nor ontological foundation to meaning on such accounts.

AD2 follows. If meaning is nothing other than functional linguistic roles, and if those roles must be intelligible to successfully express, say, particular information to others, then meaning must be conveyed according to a particular criteria which makes it successful. And if there is nothing extralinguistic about meaning, then it is a result of the rule-governed structure of shared linguistic practices. An antidescriptivist account of meaning is one that locates it as a part of a rule-governed system of linguistic behavior. Sellars (1949, 302) states:

To think of a system of qualities and relations is, I shall argue, to use symbols governed by a system of rules which, we might say, *implicitly define* these symbols by giving them a specific task to perform in the linguistic economy.

Antidescriptivist accounts of meaning also range over linguistic practices that are historically treated in philosophy as distinct from terms like color-predicates. In

particular, linguistic expressions that deal with concepts like inner states, self-knowledge, morality, intentionality, and even the concept *I* are to be understood in terms of functional roles (Brandom 2014; Seibt 1990). The consequence is that there is no foundational, essential, or otherwise a priori character of such terms, which implies that there is nothing extralinguistic in, e.g., the concept *I* of the *I think*....

So, when we use concepts about inner states, we are not describing something empirical or a priori; we are justifying or putting ourselves in a position to justify a space in the shared space of reasons.^{vii}

There are two relevant aspects of psychological nominalism:

PN1: There are no abstract entities and that thought and overt language are two sides of the same rule-governed behavior.

PN2: Talk about experience is not talk about mental contents and does not express the contents of mental states.

PN1 adds an important element to our picture of antidescriptivism. It specifies that the only thing that distinguishes thought and language is the extent to which it is publicly available. Thought is to be understood as covert linguistic behavior (talking silently) and speech is to be understood as overt linguistic behavior (thinking-out-loud).

Thought, being an abstract entity, cannot be seen as something distinct from language except through its mode of conveyance.

PN2 further specifies that mental states, as abstract entities, do not have contents. Instead, talk about experience falls under verbal behaviorism. Scharp (2012, 375–76) describes Sellars' psychological nominalism as a two-part rejection of traditional, realist approaches to talk about mental states:

Sellars rejects the view that a linguistic expression has its semantic features by virtue of the fact that minds mentally grasp the right abstract entity and associate it with that expression, and he also rejects the view that to understand a linguistic

expression is to associate the right mentally grasped abstract entity with it. Instead, a linguistic expression as its semantic features by virtue of the role it plays in a rule-governed system of expressions and the way it is used by members of a linguistic practice that display the right pattern-governed and rule-observing behavior [...] to understand a linguistic expression is to know how to use it in such a practice.”

That is, psychological nominalism rejects that experiencing something is the result of a mental grasping.

Taken together, our picture of ADPN semantics is a theory of knowledge that defines meaning of any type in terms of linguistic practice. When one has knowledge in such an epistemology, they have knowledge of how to make material inferences based on the functional roles of singular terms. The prerequisite for knowledge, then, is that one has been so-conditioned to perform inferences based on an intersubjective, rule-governed framework of those functional roles, that is, correctly.^{viii}

Now, it should be clear that our account of pervasively conceptual experience outlined above rests upon our current picture of ADPN epistemology. If meaning is understood as the role a term plays within a linguistic economy, and if our capacity to use OED vocabulary implies that we would be able to make other kinds of reports of experience (i.e., to see that things are thus-and-so and not otherwise), then it necessary for any ground-level report (and awareness of the ground of our report) to rest on our capacity to conceptually articulate it within the linguistic economy to which we are members of.

III. Pervasively Conceptual Antidescriptivist Psychological Nominalism as Phenomenological Semantics

I have been tacitly suggesting that there is something that an antidescriptivist psychological nominalist epistemology can do for phenomenology. Made explicit, I

argue that ADPN should be the epistemological basis for phenomenology. The reason for this is twofold: (1) There is already affinity between ADPN semantics and phenomenological judgment. (2) By relying on the non-conceptual experience of the epoché as the source of conceptual knowledge, phenomenology rests on weak epistemological grounds. Phenomenological philosophy needs to use ADPN epistemology in order to put forth a thoroughgoing account of intentional experience. The result will be to have built up phenomenological semantics on the basis of ADPN epistemology in order to provide a naturalistic means to making explicit the functional role of intentional and intersubjective—which should be read as inter-linguistic—patterns of rule-governed linguistic behavior in the world.

There is affinity between ADPN semantics and the Husserl of *Experience & Judgment*. Staiti (2018, 196) states:

Husserl shows that the origin of concepts as ideal objects involved in universal judgments (“Cats are mammals”) is to be found in the constitution of empirical types, that is, low-level, malleable bundles of expectations based on foregoing experience of various types of objects. Types guide our encounters with new objects and govern our attempts to make sense of what we do not know on the basis of analogy with what we already know. Unlike concepts, types do not have a definite intension and an indefinitely large extension. A subject’s type “cat” is based on the finite number of cats she has actually experienced, and it projects onto the world a set of expectations about what can legitimately count as a cat. It is only by a shift of focus from actual instances of the type to the ideal “something” that recurs as identical in all instances that we first form concepts as new kinds of entities that, unlike types, allow us to judge in the mode of “in general” (p. 196).

However, I have been trying to show that Husserl’s distinction between that which is conceptual and non-conceptual (in this case, types and concepts) is mistaken. We can see that Husserlian types are at the very least adjacent to Sellarsian distributive singular terms. The error of Husserl’s formulation is in the priority given to the

experiencing subject, who is supposed to pick out material particulars in a pre-predicative, non-conceptual way. That is, “what can legitimately count as a cat” is only knowable to a person through linguistic practices, which rest on conceptualization in experience. In this case, the conceptualization is of recognition of familiarity and generalization across individual members of what a singular term ranges over. There is nowhere inscribed that either concepts or conceptualization have definite intension and indefinitely large extension, so it is unclear why Staiti relies on this for explicating Husserl’s account of type-judgment. By doing so, Staiti’s explication of Husserlian phenomenology buys into the Myth of the Given by attempting to give an account of ground-level empirical perception without explaining how it is that we come to inferentially transpose material particulars into universals.

Husserl’s epistemology hinges on the transcendental reduction: robust philosophical knowledge is reached through investigating first-personal experiences in order to reveal what is essential to experience itself. Generally, phenomenology rests on a definitional framework that aims to leverage the faculties of intuition to describe the nature of consciousness and conscious experience.^{ix} So, on the phenomenological picture, what we know about consciousness comes from directly experiencing it and making explicit that experience in descriptive reports. In order to have a conscious experience, that experience is intentional (i.e., about something, the object of the phenomenological analysis). However, phenomenological knowledge is only possible insofar as rational cognitive agents engaged in the transcendental reduction are already making use of justifications that rest on inexplicit epistemological assumptions (Pietersma 2000). I suggest that those inexplicit assumptions ought to be made explicit in terms of ADPN epistemology.

Building up phenomenological semantics on an ADPN epistemology requires that perceptual experience is pervasively conceptual. To reiterate, for experience play a role in knowledge implies that we must be capable of recognizing its justificatory role in our thought. The recognition of an experience is at the same time the recognition that our experiences entitle us to a position in the space of reasons. As I argued above, without this dual recognition, it is unclear just how it is that experience is something that persons are capable of making reports about. Reports of experience rest on the ability to make counterfactual and subjunctive conditional alternative reports of the same experience. In order to make the inference that one is seeing a red cube, conceptual distinctions must already have been drawn over against other items, say blue circles and green diamonds. Acknowledging the foregoing as a requirement for experience puts phenomenology on firm epistemological grounds.

So, if having an intentional experience rests on being able to have alternative intentional experiences (and knowing that this is so), then knowledge gained through the epoché is knowledge of the role that the object intended to plays in thought.

Pietersma (2000, 39), in explicating Husserlian epistemology, states:

[W]e notice how an act in which one actually perceives an object is essentially accompanied by capacities for further perceptions. A perceiver ascribes to herself capacities, which give her a sense of environment and context. She knows that she can do things other than what she is doing at the moment, which gives her a sense of her powers of inquiry. She is therefore convinced that her actual awareness of an object at a given time takes place in a context of other ways of being aware of it, namely, those in which the same object would be apprehended under a different description or from a different perspective.

And later:

What seeing an F means depends on the concept of being an F. “Seeing” is used by Husserl to mark a contrast with various ways of not seeing F [...] It is a functional

relation [...] The frequently used phrases “seeing the object that was meant” or “seeing the object itself” do not describe any particular kind of act, but rather a role which, given a specific context, an act plays for an act of mere belief, namely, the role of giving it fullness or fulfilment, thereby putting a knower in a cognitively better position with respect to whatever object that person desires to know [...] the cognitive subject implied by Husserl's stated account of knowledge is a subject whose beliefs form a network and whose intentional references implicitly locate their objects in the context circumscribed by those beliefs. (second emphasis added)

which fits squarely within ADPN semantics. We must, however, recognize that the ground-level “cognitive subject” of Husserlian phenomenology is also an abstract entity (according to **PN2** above). That is, our phenomenological descriptions must be seen as meta-inferential reports that elaborate the functional role of perception in a particular context (say, a given language game), rather than first-personal empirical descriptions. For, on strictly ADPN terms, to talk about the experience of, e.g., a cognitive subject, is not talk about the inner episodes of that subject as they mentally apply conceptuality to an otherwise non-conceptual experience. Instead, it is to put oneself in a shared space of reasons according to a rule-governed semantic system. For example, in the phenomenological descriptive report:

I know that *seeing that-p before me now* implies *not seeing that-p before me now is otherwise in a variety of ways*

we are not reporting on the judgment of a particular person. Instead, we are making certain inference tickets explicit: that seeing that-p requires that we see it against an already conceptual horizon of counterfactual or subjective conditional possibility. By foregoing the appearance that the report describes a mental grasping in favor of **PN2** of ADPN, we gain further inferential capacity to reason about the judgment itself. Put differently, by recognizing that the I know of the report likewise plays nothing other than a linguistic role, we position ourselves to analyze the role it plays in a rule-

governed system of linguistic expressions and the extent to which first-personal judgments display an intersubjectively pattern-governed, rule-obeying behavior.

So, rather than reflecting an account of first-personal meaning, I argue that the phenomenological reduction should be used as a reflective machinery for linguistically explicating features of the experiential world in order to examine the rule-governed structure of experience. Doing so will transpose knowledge derived from the descriptive reports into overt linguistic accounts of judgment; when synthesized with additional linguistic accounts of judgments, particular intersubjective aspects of verbal behavior will become eligible for further philosophical analysis in order to generatively identify intersubjective categories of experience, grounded in the world.

So, insofar as meaning is the result of functional roles played by terms in a linguistic community; and insofar as being a member of a linguistic community presupposes that one is in a position to make (and think) subjunctively robust reports of ordinary empirical experiences; and, finally, insofar as our explication of such experience logically rests on a linguistically articulated conceptual understanding, then it follows that what the project of phenomenological philosophy provides is nothing other than a robust method for analyzing variations of experience according to ADPN semantics.

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- ⁱ It is important to cursorily note here that ground-level empirical experiences and intentional acts are conflated on this kind of phenomenological position. My purpose is not to repeat well-argued territory but instead to summarize how phenomenological accounts of experience posit non-conceptual content.
- ⁱⁱ Staiti has suggested that the idea of pre-predicative, non-conceptuality in Husserl is due to Landgrebe's misrepresentation of Husserl's ideas.
- ⁱⁱⁱ I point the reader here to Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Grammar* on expectation.

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- iv In his response to Dreyfus, McDowell points out that being disposed to stand at a particular distance to other members of a cultural community, one has acquired an embodied second nature.
- v Note that in linguistic systems that have different kinds of color-terms (e.g., value-based color systems like Mandarin), those terms simply play different functional roles than English color-terms. They demand a different role-semantic analysis.
- vi This is done through Sellars' dot-quote notation.
- vii Analogously, consider note vi: the point is that color-terms play a different role in different language-games. They express something different.
- viii But not in a truth-functional sense; rather, correct in terms of role. For example, we can follow Wittgenstein in saying that aesthetic terms (beauty, skill, sensibility) express something as being correct or not, depending on the linguistic practice the expression is uttered in.
- ix I will not differentiate between the epistemologies of different phenomenological philosophers. This is because Pietersma has shown that later phenomenologists (Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) employ Husserlian phenomenology.