

WHAT KINDS OF DISAGREEMENT ARE INTROSPECTIVE DISPUTES?

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Abstract. Introspective disputes are introspectively based disputes about features of experiences. This paper addresses the question of what kinds of disagreement are exemplified in such disputes. The following kinds of disagreement are reviewed with respect to introspective disputes – verbal, metalinguistic, faultless, deep and genuine disagreements. The paper defends the conclusion that introspective debates are genuine debates that are mostly of the theoretical kind and that some such debates may also involve metalinguistic negotiation.

Keywords: introspective disputes, introspection, phenomenal character, experience of time, deep disagreement, verbal disagreement, metalinguistic disagreement, faultless disagreement

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1. Introduction

Consider a debate between two persons, who are looking at an apple tree, and who have, as a result, a given experience. They are arguing over the nature of the experience, or more exactly, what sort of properties are represented in the content of the experience. One person supports the ‘smart experience’ view, the view that high-level properties (such as kinds and semantic properties) are represented in the content of experience. According to this view, one has an experience as of an apple tree. The other person does not regard the experience itself as smart: its content represents only low-level properties (such as colours, shapes, location etc.). On this latter view, the ability to grasp higher-level properties is sub-served by a separate, non-experiential process of conceptualisation. The introspective claim of this latter person is “I experience it as a green thing with a characteristic shape and then conceive of this thing as an apple tree”.

This is one example of an introspective dispute. More generally, such disputes can be characterised as disputes about phenomenology, which stem from participants' introspective judgements. However, the term 'phenomenology' is ambiguous. It may mean either one's own experience or experiences as such. It should be stressed that the second notion is more appropriate here. Introspective disputes are not disputes about a single person's experiences or the content of the introspective judgments of a single person. Rather, these disputes are aimed at establishing some general points about the nature of experience on the basis of the disputants' introspection. It is normally assumed that the parties to the dispute have sufficiently similar experiences and introspective capacities. Otherwise, there would be no point in having the dispute. Charles Siewert (2007: 17) characterises introspective disputes in precisely this way (though he calls them 'phenomenological disputes'): "phenomenological disputes' are disputes that arise in the context of attempts to do phenomenology – i.e., to rely on first-person reflection to arrive at a critically acceptable general framework for discussing mental phenomena." An introspective dispute has then a general aim. We saw this too in the above example. In that example, it was to establish whether experience represents high-level properties in addition to low-level properties.

More specifically, Bayne and Spener (2010: 2) outline the structure of an introspective dispute in the following way. Assume both that the dispute is about some claim ' p ', which concerns some phenomenal feature of experience, and that the parties of the dispute are persons A and B. An introspective dispute has then the following structure:

Person A: It is the case that p , based on introspection.

Person B: It is the case that not- p (or it is the case that q and q entails not- p), based on introspection.

The claims made in such a dispute are based on introspection, but this should not be read as saying that the reliance on introspection must necessarily be included in the contents of the opposing claims. Some disputes may be introspective without explicitly mentioning the word 'introspection'. Note also that this way of construing introspective disputes is highly idealised. I will return to this point later.

Introspective disputes are usually called 'disputes' in the literature, not 'introspective disagreements'. This is in order to stress the interactive nature of such debates. Introspective disputes involve active engagement between individuals, whereas two people can disagree without actually disputing with each other (cf. Cohnitz and Marques 2014, Fink 2018).

Having provided a general characterisation of introspective disputes, I will now look more closely at their nature. The structure of the paper is as follows. In the next section, I will more specifically characterize the relevant notion of introspection and formulate the main question of the paper. I then consider various kinds of disagreements – verbal, metalinguistic, faultless, deep and genuine disagreements – and discuss introspective disputes vis-à-vis each kind of disagreement.

2. Introspection and introspective disputes

What is introspection? Put briefly, introspection is first-person access to one's own mind, which is presumed to yield knowledge of one's own mental properties. Such a description does not commit one to a specific view of introspection. It is compatible with both a narrower and a wider understanding of introspection. One example of such a wider understanding is Jesse Butler's (2013) pluralism about introspection. He acknowledges that introspection can involve very different ways of gaining knowledge about aspects of one's mind. In particular, he claims that one can know one's own mind by having phenomenal knowledge, which is had only by having the respective experience or by getting propositional knowledge of one's propositional states through the application of the folk psychological framework. In addition, he argues that one could become aware of one's conscious propositional thoughts via inner speech and that introspection also has social aspects; that is, other people teach us about our social relationships and social characteristics.

Although such a pluralist approach to introspection may be useful in drawing our attention to the variety of processes through which we can learn about our own minds, in the literature on introspective disputes, the notion of introspective knowledge is usually conceived of in a much narrower sense. Eric Schwitzgebel (2019) has listed three minimally necessary conditions for introspection: the mentality condition, the first-person condition, and the temporal proximity condition. This means, respectively, that introspective judgements must be about mental states and events, that such mental states must belong to the person herself and that they must be about one's current or immediately past states and events. He also mentions three additional conditions. However, these are controversial and not universally shared: that introspective judgements must be direct, effortless and detect independent mental states and events. Thus, minimally, introspection is restricted to judgements about one's own current (and immediately past) mental states and events. But this does not entail that all introspective processes exemplify a single kind of basic process. These minimal conditions on introspection are compatible with introspection being constituted by different kinds of process. Or as Schwitzgebel has vividly remarked elsewhere:

What we have, or seem to have, is a cognitive confluence of crazy spaghetti, with aspects of self-detection, self-shaping, self-fulfillment, spontaneous expression, priming and association, categorical assumptions, outward perception, memory, inference, hypothesis testing, bodily activity, and who only knows what else, all feeding into our judgments about current states of mind (Schwitzgebel 2012: 41).

If this is the case, and it *is* very likely that 'introspection', even in the narrow sense, labels a host of different self-directed processes, then introspective disagreements probably do not form a unitary kind either. They may vary depending upon the kind of introspective process involved as well as on the object of disagreement. This is something to keep in mind when discussing introspective disputes.

Let us review some putative introspective disputes. I have already mentioned the dispute on the question of whether high- or low-level properties are represented in the content of experience. The following presents some additional paradigmatic examples¹:

- Is there *sui generis* cognitive phenomenology? Do thoughts have their own phenomenal character, one that is distinct from their associated images? Or does the phenomenology of thought derive from the non-cognitive images and sensations that merely accompany thoughts?
- Is consciousness rich or sparse? Are we aware of only what falls into the *focus* of our attention or are we simultaneously aware of many things? (Schwitzgebel's (2011) example of having „constant tactile experience of one's feet in one's shoes" is a striking example of the rich view on consciousness.)
- Is the unity of consciousness itself something phenomenally given or is it a relationship that does not manifest itself as a phenomenal object?
- Does perceptual experience appear phenomenally as purely representational or does it seem to have an intrinsic, non-representational character as well? This constitutes the main issue between pure and impure representationalism.
- Do we experience the passage of time or is the passage of time not directly given in the experience?²

As we can see from the examples, introspective disputes involve questions concerning the phenomenal character of experience or the lack thereof. It is assumed to be characteristic of such disputes that the conflicting answers to these questions are based on introspection. When I talk about introspective disputes in the rest of the paper, I bear these paradigmatic examples in mind.

It is typical of introspective disputes that they are persistent and ongoing among philosophers. This makes one wonder about the nature of the disagreement that these debates exemplify. This, in turn, leads to the central question of the present paper: when philosophers disagree over such introspective claims, what kind of disagreement are they having?

Identifying what kind of disagreement philosophers have (or kinds of disagreement as different introspective disputes may involve different types of disagreement) is important on various counts. First, their identification helps to clarify the status of introspection in general. Some philosophers use the existence of introspective debates to argue for a general scepticism about introspection. The concern is that persistent disagreements that are based on introspection raise serious doubts about the reliability of introspection as a phenomenological method. A reliable method should not yield such persistent disagreements (see Bayne and Spener 2010: 6-8

¹ Most of these examples are discussed in several major papers on introspective debates (see Siewert 2007, Kriegel 2007, Bayne and Spener 2010 and Fink 2018). Please turn to these papers for references to the philosophers who have adhered to one or the other side of these disputes.

² See Frischhut (2015) for a further discussion of this issue and for a defence of the view that we do not experience the passage of time.

and Fink 2018: 3168-3169) for a discussion of such a sceptical argument). This issue also has metaphilosophical relevance. Achieving clarity on what is going on in introspective disputes is itself a desirable aim. Such a clarity also allows us to choose the right steps for resolving introspective disputes, for different kinds of disagreement may need different strategies for overcoming them.

3. Kinds of disagreement

In the main section of this paper, I take various kinds of disagreement under scrutiny and compare them to the paradigmatic examples of introspective disputes introduced above. For the most part, in order to make otherwise very large fields manageable, I rely on the metaphilosophical literature on introspective disputes rather than upon an analysis of these disputes at the object level. I am going to discuss verbal disagreements, metalinguistic disagreements, faultless disagreements, deep disagreements, and genuine disagreements, both factual and theoretical. I take these to be the major kinds of disagreement, ones which have received considerable attention in the philosophical literature, even if there is no good straightforward way to explicate the basis of the distinction. Note that I am not claiming that these kinds are mutually exclusive: for example, deep disagreements are also genuine, although of a peculiar sort. Among the disagreements that have been widely treated in the literature, I am not going to discuss peer disagreements separately, as peer disagreements are orthogonal to those other kinds of disagreement – the disagreements between peers could be faultless or deep or factual, for instance.³

3.1. Verbal disagreements

Let us imagine the following debate. Person A says, pointing at a particular ring, “This ring is cheap”, while person B says about the same ring, “This ring is not cheap”. Now imagine that A means that the ring is cheap for the person who is going to receive the ring. Presumably, the receiver is used to higher standards and expensive items. B, on the other hand, means that the ring is not cheap for the one who is giving the gift, given that person’s financial situation. If this contextual information is added, we can see that A and B are not having a genuine disagreement. Assume that they would agree that the same ring can be expensive for the giver and cheap for the receiver. The only disagreement they had was merely verbal, arising only because they did not spell out what they meant by ‘cheap’ in the context. This is an example of a verbal dispute.

Although reaching an adequate definition of ‘verbal disagreement’ is far from straightforward, all things considered (see Jenkins 2014 for various difficulties), for present purposes it suffices to characterize a mere verbal disagreement in the following way: a disagreement is merely verbal just in case the disagreeing parties

³ Spener (2011) draws some lessons from the peer disagreement literature in her study of introspective debates. She analyses disputes about cognitive phenomenology on the model of peer disagreements and suggests a conciliationist reaction to such disagreement (the adjustment of original judgments).

are actually not disagreeing over the facts involved, but are unknowingly using the key terms in different senses. Thus understood, a merely verbal disagreement is not a genuine disagreement over facts of the matter. The dispute is only due to unnoticed differences in meaning. It has sometimes been proposed that a sufficient condition on a disagreement being verbal is that it ought to disappear when the terminological difference is removed (see Hirsch 2005 and Jenkins 2014 for discussion of this proposal). This presumes the availability of non-ambiguous vocabulary in which the dispute could be formulated in neutral terms.

Consider now introspective disputes. Could some of them be merely verbal? This option has attracted some attention in the literature (perhaps because it may yield an easy answer to introspective scepticism). If introspective disputes were merely verbal, then the persistence of such disagreements would not support scepticism about introspection, as the disagreement does not then originate in any fault with the introspective method. See, for example, Uriah Kriegel (2007: 124), who describes the ‘verbalist’ move concerning cognitive phenomenology: in one sense of ‘phenomenology’, there is the phenomenology of judgement, in another sense there is not. He does not endorse this move but regards it as a tempting overreaction.

Bayne and Spener (2010: 13) and Bayne (2015) also suggest that the debate over cognitive phenomenology might be verbal, as one party of the dispute might employ the narrow and the other one a wide notion of phenomenal character. Here, the narrow notion of the ‘phenomenal character’ is confined to qualia and thus excludes proprietary phenomenology from thoughts and other cognitive states. Bayne and Montague (2011: 7-11) present several examples of different senses of terms such as ‘qualia’, ‘what it’s like’ and ‘experience’ and conjecture that this polysemy might show that the debate over cognitive phenomenology is merely verbal in nature. However, these suggestions are very tentative and hypothetical. After all, the mere fact that terms related to phenomenal character have different senses does not yet show that the debates that employ these terms involve merely verbal disagreements and talking past each other. To show that, one would need to establish that it is precisely the usage of the terms in different senses that generates the disagreement.

In addition, there are also some reasons to think that introspective disputes are not verbal after all. Although there may be some occasional talking past each other owing to unclear vocabulary, in most cases, if there is no indication to the contrary, it is charitable to assume that when engaged in introspective disputes, people use the key terms, for the most part, in the same way.

There are two reasons for this. One is that the parties of introspective disputes are philosophers who are especially attentive to meaning differences. It is simply hard to believe that during these long-lasting disputes, philosophers have not been able to realize that they have been talking past each other and have not taken steps to fix the situation. But let me address one objection due to an anonymous reviewer here: if we assume semantic externalism, then meanings need not be luminous to the speakers and thus they would not grasp that they are talking past each other. Externalism makes the treatment of verbal disagreements more complex indeed, although it does not eliminate the possibility of a merely verbal dispute. However, my argument

here concerns the ability to realize that one is talking past one's discussion partner. Externalism is orthogonal to this issue. My point is that out of all people who might engage in a dispute, philosophers make special efforts to spell out the intended meanings of the contested terms. Even if there are aspects of meaning that they might not notice, they are able to compare the explicated aspects and find out if there are any differences. A verbal dispute could result from these explicable aspects of meaning. The defender of the objection should make a case that introspective debates are due to aspects that are unnoticeable in principle. I am not sure that such a case can be made. Assuming thus that philosophers succeed in explicating their terms and given that the debates have been going on for quite some time, it is very likely that if the issue would have been merely verbal, this would have been detected.

The second reason is that if the disagreements were merely verbal, they ought to have disappeared rather quickly once the meaning differences have been taken into account. But the debates still linger and this cannot be explained away by the fact that philosophers are especially stubborn. It is more likely that the disagreements involved in introspective disputes are of a different kind.

3.2. *Metalinguistic disagreements*

There is another kind of disagreement, which, like verbal disagreement, has to do with matters of language. These are metalinguistic disagreements, which are basically disagreements over the use of the terms. Such disagreements often involve negotiation over the sense in which one should use the disputed term. Plunkett and Sundell (2013) who have discussed metalinguistic disagreements at length note that metalinguistic disagreements and negotiations can often be implicit so that they are not seen by the parties of the dispute as being about concepts. Although metalinguistic disagreements take place at the level of language, not at the object level, Plunkett and Sundell treat them as genuine disagreements – but as disagreements over the best use of the term. The parties “accept (and communicate) incompatible contents” even though the contents that they literally express are not incompatible due to the use of the same words (Plunkett and Sundell 2013: 18). The examples they give of metalinguistic disagreements include a dispute about whether Pluto is a planet. There the disputed term is ‘planet’. Another example of theirs with serious social and legal consequences concerns the term ‘torture’ in a dispute over whether waterboarding constitutes a torture or not.

In relation to debates about consciousness, Joseph Gottlieb (2018) has provided an in-depth analysis of the dispute between higher-order and first-order theories of consciousness. He concludes that the proponents of the respective theories disagree tacitly about the language in which they frame the key points of the theories and that a good way to make sense of this disagreement is to say that it is metalinguistic.⁴ Let me spell this out briefly. On Gottlieb's reading, the higher-order theory of consciousness

⁴ More precisely, Gottlieb (2018) takes this dispute to be verbal at the object level and presents the hypothesis that the debate involves metalinguistic negotiation as an explanation of the fact that the verbal nature of the dispute has gone unnoticed. For me, this suffices to show that the debate is metalinguistic.

takes a necessary condition for a mental state to be conscious to be that its subject is aware of that state. The first-order theory denies that being conscious requires awareness of the first-order mental state. Gottlieb points out that both theories adopt the Nagelian conception of a conscious mental state: i.e. that there is something it is like for the subject to be in a conscious mental state. However, they diverge substantially on how they understand the phrase ‘there is something it is like’. For the first-order theorist, this means that there is a way the subject feels in virtue of being in a mental state. The higher-order theorist understands what-it-is-likeness in terms of there being a way such that it seems to a subject that one’s having the mental state is that way. For example, there is something it is like for S to see a red rose if and only if there is some way such that it seems to S that S’s seeing a red rose is that way (see Gottlieb 2018: 327-329, based on Stoljar 2016). The main difference between these senses is that on the higher-order reading of ‘there is something it is like’, if mental states seem to the subject in some way, then the subject must be aware of them, whereas the first-order theory rejects this link between awareness and what-it-is-likeness. On that view, there can be feelings of which one is not aware.

I do not challenge Gottlieb’s analysis of the use of the phrase ‘there is something it is like’ in these theories. What is important in the present context is that the dispute between higher-order and first-order theories of consciousness is essentially not based on introspection at all. The disputing parties rely on interpretations of experimental data, linguistic considerations and arguments of both an a priori and an a posteriori kind. So even if we concede to Gottlieb that this particular dispute is metalinguistic, it does not yet follow that introspective disputes are metalinguistic, for this particular dispute is not introspective. It is a major philosophical debate with some metalinguistic elements. I will return to the issue of the purity of introspective disputes in section 3.5. where I claim that the typical introspective disputes are not pure either. (For the notion of the purity of introspective disputes, see Fink 2018: 3169-3170.) Still, the concession that this particular debate between theorists of consciousness is metalinguistic neither entails nor makes it plausible that paradigmatic introspective disputes are metalinguistic.

However, if we consider the paradigmatic examples of introspective disputes and the choice is between two language-related verdicts – either they are verbal or metalinguistic disagreements – then insofar as the debates are linguistic at all, it is much more likely that they are metalinguistic than verbal. For instance, the textual evidence that Bayne and Spener bring out in support of their hypothesis that the debate over cognitive phenomenology is verbal can also be used to substantiate the claim that the debate is metalinguistic, for the parties of that debate are aware that they are using the terms in different ways (Bayne and Spener 2010: 13). There are two reasons to take language-related introspective debates to be metalinguistic. First, this accords with the fact that it is a standard practice in philosophy to negotiate over the use of key terms, both implicitly and explicitly. If introspective debates were mostly verbal, and involved merely talking past each other, then this would not fit that well with the standard practice. For why would introspective debates be different from other debates in philosophy? Second, if some introspective debates are metalinguistic, then

this accounts for the persistence of the debates as well, for negotiation over the best use of terms is a time-consuming activity. By this, however, I do not mean to imply that *all* introspective debates are metalinguistic. After all, introspective debates are not just about language in which we talk about experience, they concern the features of experiences themselves. Let us then look at some further options.

3.3. Faultless disagreements

The next kind of disagreement to consider is faultless disagreement. In essence, a disagreement between parties is faultless just in case no disagreeing party is wrong. The structure of faultless disagreement is the following: A judges that p and B judges that $\text{not-}p$, and neither A nor B is at fault (cf. Kölbel 2004: 53-54). The standard examples of faultless disagreements include commonplace disagreements about matters of taste – whether something is funny, tasty or beautiful. The usual way to understand such disagreements is to contextualise the judgements so that they are about each person's own sense of taste and thus no party is wrong (presuming they did not make a mistake in reporting their own taste preferences). Note that there is a danger that with such a contextualisation, the disagreement will vanish (Cohnitz and Marques 2014: 5). For if the judgements have different objects, the judgements are not actually in conflict.

Could introspective debates involve faultless disagreements? The main way in which an introspective dispute could turn out to be faultless is when the conflicting introspective claims are due to the differences in people's experiences. Fink (2018) has indeed argued that a cause for introspective disputes is inter-individual phenomenal variation. He presents some empirical examples of phenomenal variation (such as synaesthesia or variations concerning colour perception and illusions). Now, if there is phenomenal variation, then the differing introspective judgements can be both true. Since in such cases, p and $\text{not-}p$ concern different phenomenal profiles, it would turn out that the putative cases of introspective disputes are not disputes at all, because they do not involve disagreement.⁵

I would leave it open whether the faultlessness actually leads to the disappearance of disagreement, since this is still a contested issue and I do not think that there is phenomenal variation such that it makes introspective disputes faultless. In particular, there are no good grounds for thinking that a phenomenal variation exists among philosophers with respect to the phenomenal features that figure in typical introspective disputes. Uriah Kriegel (2015) has pointed out that phenomenal variation is more likely for very specific phenomenal features (such as the link between frustration and anger, for example), but not for basic features.⁶ I find this quite plausible. The paradigm examples of introspective disputes, however, concern cognitive phenomenology, rich or sparse consciousness, unity of consciousness, the experience of temporal properties and other such basic phenomenal features and structures of consciousness, for which phenomenal variation is not plausible.

⁵ Fink (2018: 3185) embraces this conclusion: he does not think that there are introspective disputes.

⁶ Also Schwitzgebel (2011: 133-134), who otherwise takes a sceptical view concerning the reliability of introspection, does not find radical variations in phenomenology believable.

In order to explain the persistence of introspective disputes, the experience must be stable intra-individually and show systematic variations inter-individually in a way that aligns with the sides of the dispute. In other words, if the experiences of each disputant are to yield stable introspective verdicts, the properties of the experiences of each disputant must not vary through time. But when each disputant's experiences are compared with those of the other, there should be systematic differences which give rise to the dispute. Take the debate between pure and impure representationalists, for example. Phenomenal variability is supported when the experience seems to one side of the dispute to have purely representational but to the other side to have non-representational elements. And there should not be any intra-individual variation – the introspective judgements of a committed pure representationalist should not tilt him or her towards the impure view. I am not aware of any evidence that there are such inter-individual differences with regard to the central phenomenal features over which introspective debates are held.⁷ In addition, since introspective disputes are characteristically held between philosophers, the defender of phenomenal variation should also argue that such variation is particularly high among philosophers. As already noted, I find this claim very hard to substantiate.

3.4. Deep disagreements

Let us move on to the next kind of disagreement – the disagreements that are called 'deep'. Deep disagreements go deep in the sense that they are due to the foundational conditions that make the very debate possible. Chris Ranalli (2018: 3) has characterised deep disagreements in terms of four features: they are *genuine* disagreements in the sense that at least one side of the dispute must be wrong; the disputants attempt to present *reasons* for their views; the disagreements are *systematic* over a large set of associated statements, and finally, they *persist* also after the relevant facts and arguments have been taken into account. As an example of deep disagreements, Ranalli presents the oft-discussed debate between a young Earth creationist and an evolutionary theorist over the age of the Earth. The creationist claims that the Earth is about 6000 years old, whereas its opponent rejects this claim on the basis of evolutionary theory and geological data. This debate has all four features: there must be a fact of the matter on how old the Earth is (or at least whether its age is over 6000 years); both parties argue for their claims; this disagreement is not an isolated one but includes large parts of their overall understanding of the world; finally the debate cannot be solved simply by pointing to the facts or paying closer attention to the presented arguments.

What explains these features of deep disagreements? Ranalli (2018) distinguishes two accounts of deep disagreements. One is the Wittgensteinian view on which deep disagreements involve conflicting hinge commitments. The other account explains deep disagreements in terms of clashing fundamental epistemic principles. Hinge commitments, also called 'framework propositions' or 'rules' (cf. Fogelin 1985: 5),

⁷ Hohwy (2011) argues that the view of the brain as an internal-models generator predicts widespread phenomenal variability. However, that sort of variability would also be intra-individual, and it would not be systematic along the dividing lines of introspective debates.

are basic presumptions that lie at the foundation of one's major system of beliefs or a worldview. Those presumptions form the backbone of one's other beliefs and giving up on them means giving up the whole system of one's beliefs as well. Fundamental epistemic principles are principles, which cannot be established non-circularly, since they concern one's most fundamental epistemic methods – those that should be used for establishing these principles (Ranalli 2018).⁸ Although there are some differences between these accounts, they nevertheless point in the same direction – that a deep disagreement goes beyond the surface, amounting to a fundamental difference between the commitments or principles of the very belief frameworks of the disputing parties.⁹ For the purposes of the present paper, we do not need to choose between these accounts. The aim is to check if introspective disputes could be deep disagreements no matter how these disagreements are accounted for.

Prima facie, it seems that the paradigmatic introspective disputes are not disputes over hinge commitments or fundamental principles. These are disputes over rather specific issues, which (at least explicitly) do not depend on such principles or commitments. I think that the prima facie impression is correct – it is hard to come up with a hinge proposition or a fundamental epistemic principle that could be at stake in disputes about, say, cognitive phenomenology, rich or sparse consciousness or properties represented in the content of experience.

But perhaps a more general epistemic principle concerning introspection such as “One should always trust one's introspection as a method for learning about one's own mind” could nevertheless be at stake? I do not think that this principle will do as an example. The problem with such general principles is that they are too general – they would not prescribe any concrete content to the introspective dispute. It would thus make no difference to whether one is disagreeing about, say, cognitive phenomenology or the unity of consciousness. But if this is true, then we should claim that all introspective debates are due to the same general underlying principle and this is somewhat difficult to believe given the variety of introspective disputes.

However, let us assume that some such general principle indeed plays a fundamental role in introspective disputes. Even then, it would not do the required job. On the one hand, if both parties to the dispute are clinging to their introspectively based claims due to their commitment to such a principle, then the disagreement they are having is not deep, since they share the same principle. The disagreement they have is a shallower one, owed to the deliverances of the introspective method when applied to their own mind, in given circumstances. On the other hand, if only one

⁸ In the example considered, the hinge commitment for the creationist's opponent would be the proposition that the Earth has existed for millions of years in the past and the fundamental epistemic principle would be the rule that the claims about the distant past should fit the geological evidence. The young Earth creationist's hinge commitment would be that it is written in the Bible that the Earth is about 6000 years old and the epistemic principle would be that one's claims (including those about the past) should fit what is written in the Bible (Ranalli 2018).

⁹ There may also be indirect deep disagreements (Ranalli 2018). A disagreement is indirectly deep just in case the disputants disagree over some proposition that commits them to disagree over a hinge proposition or a fundamental epistemic principle. In this way, indirect disagreements also involve disagreeing about some fundamental commitment or principle.

party relies on the principle that one should always trust one's introspection, and the opposing party is committed to the contrary hinge proposition that rejects trust in introspection, then it is difficult to see how that dispute could be both persistent and introspective. For given that the other party has a deep commitment to not trusting the introspective method, that party will not be committed to maintaining their introspectively based claims when faced with disagreement.

Let us now turn to a putative hinge commitment that is more specific. The debate over the dynamic and static view of time and especially over the question of whether there is objective temporal becoming could involve deeply rooted commitments. Here is a quote from William Lane Craig who is arguing against the static view:

...belief in the reality of tense and temporal becoming enjoys such powerful positive epistemic status for us that not only can we be said to know that tense and temporal becoming are real, but also that this belief constitutes an intrinsic defeater-defeater which overwhelms the objections brought against it. The experience of tense is universal among humankind (Craig 1999: 519).

This expresses the idea that commitment to the objectivity of temporal becoming is so fundamental that it cannot be defeated by any objection. Let us presume that this is a hinge commitment. Does it follow that the introspective debate over the experience of temporal passage is a deep disagreement? It does not, for most participants in the debate over the static and dynamic view on time agree on the phenomenology; they agree that the apparent passage of time requires an explanation.¹⁰ The big issue over which they disagree is whether the objective passage of time follows from the subjective passage. But that is a metaphysical debate about time that does not concern introspection.

There are other debates over the nature of the temporal phenomenology, where the issue is whether the temporal relationships such as change, motion, succession and duration are given in experience or are rather something cognitive, based on memory and judgement. This may also include a controversy over the constitution of the phenomenology of the subjective passage of time – in what way, if at all, is the subjective passage given in experience? (See Baron and Miller 2019: Ch. 3 for an introduction to this debate.) But those, rather intricate and specific debates on temporal phenomenology, even if they are partly introspective, do not seem to involve deep disagreements over hinge propositions. In particular, they do not involve the above-mentioned commitment to the objective temporal passage, for it is possible to discuss subjective time without incurring strong commitments on views about objective time.

¹⁰ See Frischhut (2015: 144) for textual evidence of this widespread agreement. Note that Frischhut (2015) herself is an exception to this general consensus.

3.5. *Genuine disagreements: factual and theoretical*

Finally, let us turn to genuine disagreements. One way to understand genuine disagreement is to view them as disagreements over factual matters. A disagreement can then be regarded as genuine if it involves incompatible claims such that at least one of those claims commits a factual error. For instance, A judges that p and B judges that $\text{not-}p$, and either A or B is mistaken. Either the cat is on the mat or not, for example. Usually, the matters are not so clear-cut, as the factual claims are embedded in theories, which makes the disagreement more difficult to diagnose. In that case, one needs to consider the whole theory to assess a given claim. Nevertheless, theoretical disagreements can be genuine as theories can represent the world either correctly or incorrectly. According to the way I understand ‘genuine disagreements’ here, genuine disagreements are not verbal or faultless, but may be metalinguistic or deep. However, not all genuine disagreements are metalinguistic or deep. In this paper, I understand ‘theoretical disagreements’ as having a more restricted sense that excludes metalinguistic and deep disagreements. I acknowledge, however, that there is a broader sense of ‘theoretical’ in which metalinguistic and deep disagreements are a subclass of theoretical disagreements. Theoretical disagreements in the restricted sense involve clashes between different theories of broadly the same subject matter. However, those clashes do not go as deep as in the case of deep disagreement. Thus, if there is a clash that has the potential to “unhinge” a whole worldview, then we have a case of deep disagreement. I also assume the relative independence between meanings of terms and theories. Not every change in a theory needs to lead to a change in the meaning of its terms and it is possible to disagree over the meaning or the usage of a term while still keeping the theory. This allows us to distinguish between a metalinguistic dispute over the use of the term and a theoretical dispute in the present restricted sense.

Do introspective debates exemplify factual disagreements? If that were the case, then the disagreement would be over facts about the phenomenal character of experience. There would thus be a fact of the matter of whether, say, consciousness is rich or sparse or whether there is distinctive cognitive phenomenology, etc. However, this solution is somewhat simplistic. As noted before, factual claims are embedded in theories and it is not so clear that, as far as phenomenology is concerned, there are pure facts about the features of experience, which are accessible to introspection. An elaborate theoretical framework needs to be in place before one could even start making introspective judgements concerning cognitive phenomenology or the unity of consciousness. When such a framework is in place, then presumably one can say that some such judgements are correct and some are incorrect, but then it makes sense to talk rather in terms of better and worse theories than in terms of pure facts of experience.

Let us then discuss the option that introspective debates mostly involve theoretical disagreements. One can distinguish two ways in which theoretical elements could enter into an introspective debate. First, the introspective judgements of the participants of the debate could be penetrable by their background theoretical views. Second, the paradigmatic introspective disputes could themselves be viewed as clashes between theories or theoretical frameworks.

Consider the background influence first. Bayne and Spener (2010: 9) draw attention to the influence of background expectations on introspective judgements. They point out that this could be one source of introspective debates. In this respect, some introspective judgements are similar to those perceptual judgements that are influenced by expectations. The introspectors are usually not aware of the influence of expectation on their judgements. Bayne and Spener suppose that theoretical background has influence on such judgements in all three of the debates they analyse – the debate over cognitive phenomenology, the debate over consciousness being rich or sparse and the dispute between pure and impure representationalists. For instance, as concerns the cognitive phenomenology debate, the anti-reductionists about phenomenal consciousness tend to support distinctive cognitive phenomenology, whereas reductionists deny this (Bayne and Spener 2010: 13). The disagreement over the richness of consciousness may be influenced by the participants' different criteria for what counts as conscious representation: if the criterion is severe, then consciousness is found to be limited by attention and sparse, whereas if the criterion is lenient, then the rich view on consciousness is supported (Bayne and Spener 2010: 15). These criteria should not be regarded as meanings, instead they are part of the participants' background conception of conscious representation. As concerns the debate over versions of representationalism, Bayne and Spener (2010: 12) claim that pure representationalists can be influenced by physicalism or by their affinity towards common sense, whereas impure representationalists are affected by the appeal of inverted spectrum scenarios. It should be noted that Bayne and Spener do not present empirical evidence in support of the listed factors really exerting influence on introspective judgements. They also themselves acknowledge that their hypotheses are "highly speculative" (Bayne and Spener 2010: 12) and allow cases where the influence of expectations is very weak. This is an unconvincing point in their account. The claim they need to establish is quite strong – that it is first-person introspective judgements themselves that are penetrated by such highly theoretical beliefs. It is not entirely clear by which mechanism theoretical beliefs could modulate these judgements. In any case, we need to know more about how introspective judgements work in order to assess this hypothesis.

This brings us to the second way an introspective debate could turn out to be theoretical. Instead of saying that an introspective judgment, which forms one element of an introspective debate is influenced by theoretical assumptions, the claim here is that the whole particular debate exemplifies a theoretical disagreement. The paradigmatic examples of introspective disputes listed in section 2 are all embedded in wider theoretical disagreements between different philosophical accounts. These disputes are informed and facilitated by various theoretical background assumptions and commitments. The instances registered by Bayne and Spener in relation to introspective judgements actually provide good examples of how claims about the phenomenal character of experience can be embedded in the context of theoretical assumptions. One can accept this without committing oneself to their more controversial hypothesis about the theoretical modulation of first-person judgements. These examples point to various inferential connections between the

wider philosophical themes and the contents of introspective judgements.

We thus need to draw a distinction between the properties of an introspective judgement and the properties of an introspective debate. The claim is not that introspective judgements are necessarily theoretical. The proposal I am making concerns the actual introspective debates of which several examples were given in section 2 – these debates exemplify disagreements between theoretical views.

If the paradigmatic examples of introspective disputes indeed involve theoretical disagreements, then it follows that those debates are not purely introspective. In the examples listed in section 2, the disagreeing parties are not basing their claims solely on introspection, but rely on other theoretical considerations too.¹¹ I thus think that the structure of an introspective dispute as proposed by Bayne and Spener (outlined at the beginning of this paper) is too idealised and that the paradigmatic examples of introspective debates blend introspective claims with theoretical and philosophical propositions. Perhaps purely introspective exchanges form only a transient minor part of the overall debate. I also think that they are not responsible for the persistence of the debates. In any case, when looking at some actual debates between philosophers it is very difficult to isolate that part which is purely introspective from the wider theoretical background. These debates usually take place in the written form over a prolonged period of time, and during writing, there is heavy interaction between the putative deliverances of introspection and one's theoretical commitments.

Moreover, it would not be surprising if so-called introspective disputes were to turn out not to be purely introspective: they involve the application of technical philosophical vocabulary and maintain sophisticated controversies that cannot be resolved on the basis of introspection alone.¹² Remember that an introspective debate is not just about one's own mind. It purports to establish something general about the phenomenal character of experience as such.

My argument for the view that introspective debates involve genuine theoretical disagreements is then basically an inference to the best explanation. Introspective disputes as represented in our paradigmatic examples are debates that involve extensive philosophical background assumptions, not just conflicting introspective judgements. The view that these disputes exemplify theoretical disagreements accounts for this particularly well. The verbal, the metalinguistic and the faultless disagreement options do not directly engage with this feature of introspective disputes at all. The view that introspective disputes involve deep disagreements would also fit quite well with the point that these debates are enmeshed with background assumptions, but as I argued in the previous section, there are no good candidates for suitable fundamental principles or propositions. The theoretical assumptions in introspective debates do not go deep enough to constitute deep disagreement. Moreover, viewing introspective disputes as theoretical disagreements allows us to make sense of the persistence of these disputes, for resolving them is not just a matter of the acceptability of a single introspective judgement, it requires us to resolve a host of theoretical issues.

¹¹ I thus agree with Fink (2018: 3183-3184) that introspective debates lack purity. He notes that those debates mix introspection with non-introspective methods such as induction, testimony and memory.

¹² See also Chudnoff (2015: 27) for a related point that even if a philosophical debate involves premises that are based on introspection, resolving the debate has to go far beyond introspection.

4. Conclusion

This paper was dedicated to the question of what kinds of disagreement are exemplified in introspective debates. Although nothing I said here amounts to a proof, some verdicts are more plausible than the others. It is highly plausible that introspective debates are neither deep nor faultless disagreements, and most likely they are not verbal disagreements either. They are genuine debates, which are mostly theoretical and insofar as they are about language, they may also involve metalinguistic negotiation.

This answer to the main question also helps throw some light on the issues mentioned at the end of section 2, where I talked about the wider relevance of this paper's question. It is thus instructive to spell out the consequence of these results for scepticism about introspection. If introspective debates are genuine debates over theoretical questions and the best usage of terms, then there is no good argument from the existence of introspective debates to the unreliability of introspection as such. This is because if the paradigmatic debates discussed in this paper are persistent, then this is due to the difficulty of resolving theoretical and metalinguistic disagreements and not due to some inherent faults with the introspective method.

Finally, identifying the types of disagreement involved in these debates allows us to pick the right procedure for resolving them. For metalinguistic disagreements it helps us to become aware that the issue lies at the level of language and to negotiate concepts explicitly. To resolve theoretical disagreements, one should stick to the usual practices of choosing the best theories, adhering to the ideals of simplicity, parsimony and coherence. As it turns out, introspective disputes do not differ in kind from other philosophical disputes. Charles Siewert has made a similar point, although on somewhat different grounds, reflecting on the role of phenomenal vocabulary in introspective disputes. Nevertheless, his advice for solving these disputes is golden:

strive to identify clearly and patiently the areas of agreement and disagreement; expose and question unstated assumptions; draw relevant distinctions and articulate alternatives; and make explicit the implications of the claims at issue (Siewert 2007: 9).

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