

Review of David Woodruff Smith and Amie L. Thomasson, eds., *Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Mind*, 2005, Oxford University Press.

Australasian Journal of Philosophy 84 (4) 640-642, December 2006

Michael Bruno
Philosophy and Cognitive Science
University of Arizona

In the past 15-20 years there has been an increased focus on consciousness amongst analytic philosophers of mind. Before that most focus was on intentionality. Today, many analytic philosophers claim that the project of understanding consciousness and the project of understanding intentionality cannot be carried out in isolation. In order to properly understand intentionality, we also must understand consciousness, and vice versa.

This perspective on the inseparability of consciousness and intentionality has been pervasive in the phenomenological tradition. It comes as little surprise that, as this idea has caught on amongst analytic philosophers, there has been a revival of interest in the works of figures such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Amie Thomasson and David Woodruff Smith have assembled a fine collection that testifies to this. *Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Mind* contains 14 original articles by distinguished philosophers, which attempt to bring phenomenological considerations to bear on issues that occupy analytic philosophers of mind. The anthology is well organized into five topical sections, contains a brief stage-setting introduction, a comprehensive index, and abstracts for each of the papers.

The volume aims to vindicate phenomenological methodology as vital to the philosophy of mind. On this particular point, broadening the scope of the volume may have been helpful. There is very little discussion of figures such as Heidegger and Sartre, and perhaps too much emphasis on Husserl. Husserl maintained that in order to properly understand the essential connections between various aspects of our experiential lives, we must bracket off assumptions about the existence of an external world. By doing this, Husserl thought, we could put ourselves in a position to discover important and certain truths about the nature of experience through a

process akin to conceptual analysis. This point of similarity between phenomenology and analytic philosophy is emphasized, particularly in the introduction, as the proper place to bridge connections between phenomenology and contemporary concerns. Within the phenomenological tradition itself, however, Husserl's bracketing method was rejected by most subsequent figures on the grounds that it actually distorted experiential insight and that it aspired for a level of certainty and determinacy that was not to be found. In the analytic tradition, many reject the utility of conceptual analysis on analogous grounds. Merleau-Ponty, who eschewed Husserl's bracketing, fortunately receives considerable attention.

Phenomenologists obtained many insights into the character of conscious experience on the basis of 1st person reflection. Developing an appreciation of these insights is the place where philosophy of mind really stands to benefit from an increased attention research in the phenomenological tradition. Many of the contributions to the anthology emphasize just this. Additionally, many explain various historical views by drawing helpful connections between terminological differences, which could otherwise cause confusion. In what follows, I'll review the volume's articles by considering each of the sections.

Part I: The Place of Phenomenology in Philosophy of Mind contains three essays. Paul Livingston provides an interesting history of the development of functionalism in the philosophy of mind, where it's putative weakness at explaining consciousness stems from a conceptual peculiarity, which also underlies the abandonment of Husserl's program in the phenomenological tradition. Consciousness tempts us to analyze its structure despite being resistant to description. Galen Strawson accuses contemporary analytic philosophy of mind of being rife with terminological confusion. Such confusions, he claims, cause philosophers to engage in meaningless debates and obscure obvious truths about consciousness and intentionality.

Taylor Carman attacks on Dennett's claim that there is no fact of the matter as to what is phenomenologically present in conscious experiences. Carman grants that Dennett's critiques of

infallible access to the character of experience have much merit, but this had been anticipated by Merleau-Ponty, who argued that such fallibility and indeterminacy does not undermine the idea that there are facts about experiential character. Carman also considers recent sensorimotor views of consciousness. He praises the view for taking phenomenology seriously, but claims that it is committed to a non-normative account of sensorimotor know-how. This last feature is supposedly problematic and it puts the account at odds with Merleau-Ponty.

Part II: Self-Awareness and Self-Knowledge features articles by David Woodruff Smith, Amie Thomasson, and John Bickle and Ralph Ellis. Smith develops an account of the sort of self-awareness he thinks is needed for conscious experience. He develops a conception of reflexive content in order to arrive at the following characterization of the content involved in visually experiencing a jumping frog: 'phenomenally in this very experience I see this jumping frog'.

Thomasson attempts to show how Husserl's method of bracketing questions about the external world from phenomenological analysis can provide the tools for a plausible account of self-knowledge. Thomasson argues that Husserl, unlike introspectionist psychologists, never held a higher-order perception model of self-knowledge. Rather, he thought that conceptual competence of a priori essential logical laws allows us to make hypostatic cognitive transformations, which serve as the basis for our knowledge of our mental states

Bickle and Ellis argue that neuroscience doesn't undermine phenomenology. They begin with a detailed survey of work, mostly Penfield's, on how cortical microstimulation can predictably give rise to different sorts of conscious experiences and then argue that these results are consistent with the results of phenomenological investigations.

Part III: Intentionality contains pieces by Johannes Brandl and Richard Tieszen. Brandl explicates Brentano's immanence theory of intentionality and reactions to it. The immanence theory posits, in order to explain the phenomenon of intentional inexistence, an ontologically reified stock of mental objects. Brentano later rejected this theory, and many others have

rejected the theory due to its alleged absurdity or its explanatory impotence. Brandl attempts to resurrect the immanence theory by (i) focusing on the connection between phenomenal character and content, and (ii) by suggesting the intentional objects are vehicles or mental information bearers. Tieszen argues the Gödel's incompleteness theorem demonstrates that we ought to accept the existence of abstract objects and that a Husserlean view of phenomenology can accommodate abstracta as the objects of conscious awareness.

Part IV: Unities of Consciousness includes pieces by Wayne Martin, Sean Kelly, and Kay Mathiesen. Martin elucidates Husserl's appeal to a logic of consciousness. Husserl held that there were inferential relations amongst experiences, which constituted a logic system. Martin reviews a number of objections to this as well as potential responses. Husserl's positive account of the logic of consciousness recognizes that intentional determinacy is necessary for and entails identity-conferring relations amongst conscious states and requires significant idealization.

The problem of temporal awareness concerns how it is that our experiences extend beyond the present. One way this happens is when we perceive pace. Kelly considers two models, the retention model and the specious present model, and argues that they are both inadequate. In the final section, Kelly points to Merleau-Ponty's notion of indeterminate experience as potentially providing the resources for how to account for temporal awareness.

Mathiesen argues that collective consciousness requires a collective subject, e.g. a congregation, which involves a plurality of individually conscious subjects collectively aware of themselves as constituting an additional entity. This occurs because of our capacity for intersubjective communication and our ability to simulate the perspective of a first-person plural entity.

Part V: Perception, Sensation, and Action is a highlight of the collection. Clotilde Calabi develops an account of how experiences can provide reasons for action in virtue of having perceptual salencies, which are worldly properties with normative force. Charles Siewert attempts to make sense of Merleau-Ponty's notion of sensorimotor intentionality. Merleau-

Ponty viewed our knowledge of motor contingencies as a sort of nonrepresentational skillful bodily know-how, which underwrites perception. It is nonrepresentational in that it lacks the sort of determinacy needed to specify it either linguistically or imagistically. The problem is how anything nonrepresentational can have accuracy conditions, a requirement on intentionality. Siewert sketches some ideas about how this might work.

José Bermúdez illuminates how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological revelations concerning bodily awareness and the nature of agency can be integrated with empirical research into somatic proprioception and motor control. Specifically, Bermúdez focuses on how we can appreciate Merleau-Ponty's insights once we understand bodily locations as being given on a non-Cartesian frame of reference.

Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Mind is a timely volume that contains many interesting pieces on connections between two philosophical traditions. Those looking for an appreciation of how analytic philosophy of mind can engage with phenomenology would do well to start here.