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Phenomenology and
Philosophy of Mind

edited by

DAVID WOODRUFF SMITH
AND AMIE L. THOMASSON

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OF MIND

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DAVID WOODRUFF SMITH
and
AMIE L. THOMASSON

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Introduction

David Woodruff Smith and Amie L. Thomasson

Phenomenology and philosophy of mind can be defined either as disciplines or as historical traditions—they are both. As disciplines: phenomenology is the study of conscious experience as lived, as experienced from the first-person point of view, while philosophy of mind is the study of mind—states of belief, perception, action, etc.—focusing especially on the mind–body problem, how mental activities are related to brain activities. As traditions or literatures: phenomenology features the writings of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roman Ingarden, Aron Gurwitsch, and many others, while philosophy of mind includes the writings of Gilbert Ryle, David Armstrong, Hilary Putnam, Jerry Fodor, Daniel Dennett, John Searle, Paul Churchland and Patricia Smith Churchland, and many others. Historically, philosophy of mind has been considered part of the wider tradition called analytic philosophy, while phenomenology has been considered part of the wider tradition called continental philosophy. But all that is changing as we write, and the present volume is designed to express the change.

This volume involves both disciplinary and historical issues, and aims to integrate results and methods of the two disciplines in the interest of philosophy as a whole. There has been a long-standing assumption that—for historical, methodological, or doctrinal reasons—analytic philosophy of mind has little in common with the tradition of phenomenology that began with Brentano and was developed by Husserl and continued through such figures as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. This volume overturns that assumption by demonstrating how work in phenomenology may lead to progress on problems central to both classical phenomenology and contemporary philosophy of mind. Specifically, the essays gathered here (all written for the volume) bring ideas from classical phenomenology into the recent debates in philosophy of mind, and vice versa, in discussions of consciousness, intentionality, perception, action, self-knowledge, temporal awareness, holism about mental state contents, and the prospects for ‘explaining’ consciousness.

The assumption that phenomenology and analytic philosophy of mind form entirely separate traditions—with little dialogue between them possible or even desirable—is largely based on some pervasive misconceptions about the respective histories of phenomenology and philosophy of mind, as well as misconceptions about the basic goals, methods, and concepts of historical phenomenology. This introduction is designed to expose some of these misconceptions by reexamining

the intertwined histories of the two traditions and clarifying the methods, goals, and central concepts of phenomenology in a way that can relieve us of the common misunderstandings. Once that work is done, the way will be cleared for the essays that follow to demonstrate the role of phenomenology (as an ongoing discipline) in the philosophy of mind (as an ongoing discipline).¹

1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

The canonical history of the philosophy of mind reads something like this:² In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the study of the mind—in both rationalist and empiricist schools—was thought to proceed by introspection, not by the methods of external observation, experimentation, and theory-formation used in the natural sciences. But in the early twentieth century, at the point when philosophy and psychology were finally to diverge, the old ‘introspectionist’ approach to psychology was discredited. It was rejected by ‘behaviorist’ psychologists seeking to avoid guesswork about the mental states of human and animal subjects,³ and by their philosophical counterparts adhering to the positivist view that propositions about mind or anything else can be meaningful only if publicly verifiable. If the scientific study of ‘mind’ was to survive at all, it had to be reconfigured as the study of something external, public, observable, and testable.

Initially, the obvious candidate for study was human behavior rather than ‘inner’ mental processes, and thus behaviorism came into prominence with psychologists like James Watson and B. F. Skinner. By the 1940s analytic philosophers were developing quasi-behaviorist analyses of language about mind, tying talk of mental states of sensation and belief to talk of behavior, this motif unfolding in Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, and Wilfrid Sellars. Though none were behaviorists proper, the air was laced with a certain suspicion of ‘inner’ mental states behind behavior and speech. Yet, as decades passed, the promised reductions of mind to behavior were not forthcoming. The elimination of the inner ‘springs’ of behavior seemed to have been a philosophical mistake, even if it had methodological benefits in psychology.

But what if mind were simply identified with brain? If the internal springs of action, in states of perception and thought and desire, were conceived not as distinct states of a Cartesian mind observable only by introspection, but as identical with physical states of the brain, then they too would be subject in principle to external observation

¹ Relations between phenomenology and philosophy of mind are the focus of two particularly relevant previous collections: Dreyfus (1982); Petitot et al. (1999). These two volumes concentrate on issues of cognitive science, at two periods in its recent history. The present volume aims to bring out conceptual and historical connections between phenomenology and analytic philosophy of mind broadly conceived (including but not exclusively focused on cognitive science).

² A nice synopsis of something like the canonical history may be found in Armstrong (1999: 3–7). An excellent sourcebook on philosophy of mind, congenial to the aims of the present volume, is Chalmers (2002). A wide-ranging collection of relevant work on consciousness in contemporary analytic philosophy of mind is Block et al. (1997).

³ See, e.g., Watson (1914) and (1925), and Skinner (1938).

and scientific verification. Thus there arose, in the 1950s, the identity theory, proposed by U. T. Place, J. J. C. Smart, and David Armstrong as a way of reintroducing 'inner' mental states while retaining both public verifiability and a materialist ontology consistent with modern science. It was thus proposed, for example, that pain is simply identical with a certain process in the nervous system ('C-fiber stimulation', as the mock physiology put it).

However, when one-to-one correlations between types of neural states and types of mental states, such as belief and desire, were not forthcoming, heirs to the identity theory were developed. Taking root around 1970 in writings of Hilary Putnam and Jerry Fodor, functionalism identified mental state types with types of causal or computational function, rather than types of physical state defined, say, by structures of neurons. The computer model of information processing further encouraged a functionalist ontology, promoted by Daniel Dennett and others, proposing that mind is to brain as software is to hardware. Gradually, though, it became apparent that function alone does not capture the representational features of belief and desire, or the qualitative character of seeing yellow. The eliminativism developed by Paul Churchland and Patricia Smith Churchland then sought to eliminate the recalcitrant 'mental' states of common sense or 'folk' psychology in favor of neural network activity discovered by physical science alone.⁴ These heirs to the identity theory are prominent on the stage of philosophy of mind today, seeking a theory of mind that is susceptible to empirical experimentation and committed only to a materialist ontology of physical-chemical-biological phenomena.

As a consequence of this path of development, contemporary philosophy of mind has been left with certain canonical problems and broad omissions. It is by now generally acknowledged that materialist views of mind at least have great difficulties in really explaining or understanding some of the philosophically most interesting features of mind, including the intentionality of many mental states, the nature and existence of sensory qualia, even the form and existence of consciousness itself.⁵ Philosophers of mind such as Thomas Nagel and John Searle have argued for the irreducibly 'subjective' characters of consciousness and intentionality, while still seeking a naturalistic scientific metaphysics. Other traditional problems about consciousness also lie in waiting, involving, notably, the nature of time consciousness, whether or not sensation should be considered as exhibiting intentionality, and the possibility of collective consciousness. These features of mind don't seem susceptible to investigation by the natural scientific methods of public observation and testing (whether of behaviors, brain states, or causal roles), and so have been largely ignored by the mainstream materialist tradition, or treated in merely physiological or behavioral terms that seem to bypass the real philosophical issues. Thus, even in the view of its practitioners, contemporary philosophy of mind faces some great hurdles and leaves a lot of work to be

⁴ Paul Feyerabend had proffered a view of eliminative materialism; the Churchlands pressed their case with details of neuroscience.

⁵ Thus, e.g., Armstrong (1999: 6–7) lists consciousness, sensible qualities, and intentionality as the three most serious problems facing materialist views of mind. A detailed critique of contemporary naturalistic philosophy of mind, informed by phenomenology, is the introduction to Petitot et al. (1999).

done if it is to solve many of the central philosophical problems about the mental, including problems regarding intentionality, sensation, consciousness, and action—and if it is to provide the needed groundwork for addressing other philosophical problems dealing with action, artifacts, culture, and society.

2. THE HISTORY, CONCEPTS, AND METHODS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The canonical history of philosophy of mind simply omits mention of phenomenology, on the assumption that the latter is part of a separate tradition of ‘continental’ philosophy, whose goals, methods, and doctrines are so completely separate from analytic philosophy of mind that the histories of the two traditions can be told in isolation. Phenomenology is well surveyed in its own right in many places.⁶ But here we want to approach phenomenology in a context that includes philosophy of mind.

Phenomenology is often associated today with introspectionist psychology, the rejection of which marked the start of analytic philosophy of mind.⁷ And so phenomenology is treated as justifiably ignored, and separated from philosophy of mind. But the idea that phenomenology is a hangover of an outmoded introspective approach to the mind is an unfortunate misconception that masks the history of the two traditions and misrepresents the goals and methods of phenomenology in a way that obscures its contribution to philosophy of mind.

The phenomenological approach to studying the mind was from the very start interwoven with the analytic tradition, as phenomenology grew out of Franz Brentano’s response to John Stuart Mill, and Husserl’s rejection of ‘psychologistic’ logic in Mill and other nineteenth-century authors.⁸ In fact, Husserl’s phenomenology influenced not only continental figures such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, but also (less famously) central analytic figures including Rudolf Carnap, Gilbert Ryle, Wilfrid Sellars, and Hilary Putnam.⁹ Most importantly, phenomenology sought a distinctively philosophical route to the study of the mind that avoids *both* the methods of introspectionist psychology *and* the methods of naturalistic psychology

⁶ A brief overview of phenomenology, appropriate to our Introduction, is David Woodruff Smith (2003). A detailed survey of classical phenomenology is Moran (2000). Fundamentals of Husserlian phenomenology and its relation to philosophy of language, logic, and mind are laid out in Smith and McIntyre (1982). Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (1995) study key aspects of Husserl’s philosophy in a broadly analytic style. A contemporary overview of transcendental phenomenology as a discipline is Sokolowski (2000).

⁷ See Dennett (1987: 154, 157–8).

⁸ See Dummett (1993–8).

⁹ For discussion of the relationship between Husserl and Carnap see Friedman (1999). On the relation between Husserl and Ryle, see Livingston, this volume, and Thomasson (2002). Discussion of Sellars and Husserl may be found in Thomasson, this volume. For Husserl’s influence on Putnam, see Putnam (1987), (1988), and (1981). There has also been at least an indirect influence on Jerry Fodor. Fodor’s notion of a ‘language of thought’ develops a Lockean view detailed by Husserl, and Fodor’s ‘methodological solipsism’ indirectly echoes Husserl’s method of bracketing, as Carnap coined the term ‘methodological solipsism’ after hearing Husserl’s lectures. (See Fodor (1982: 277–303).)

keyed to publicly observable physical phenomena—the methodology that has led to behaviorism, identity theories, functionalism, eliminativism, and their characteristic shortcomings.

On the standard story above, contemporary philosophy of mind emerged from the rejection of introspectionist psychology, the insistence on studying the mind via the methods of natural science, and the drive to preserve a materialist ontology consonant with the rest of natural science. But this line of theory was not the only reaction against the view that the mind was to be investigated by introspection of inner phenomena. In the late nineteenth century, before behaviorism of both psychological and philosophical varieties, before the Vienna Circle and its form of empiricism and positivism, and working already in a Viennese tradition of seeking exact and scientific philosophy, Franz Brentano sought to put psychology on a new path, notably in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874).¹⁰ Brentano became dissatisfied with the idea that studying the mind is a matter of studying internal mental phenomena by a kind of inner observation, just as studying the physical world is a matter of studying physical phenomena by external observation. But Brentano did not try to collapse the two areas of study by basing the study of mental phenomena in external observation of physical phenomena such as behavior or brains. Instead, he sought a way to distinguish the method of study proper to the philosophical study of mind from that proper to empirical psychology (regardless of whether the empirical observations were ‘internal’ or ‘external’). As a result, he distinguished what he called ‘genetic’ and ‘descriptive’ psychology.

For Brentano, ‘genetic psychology’ is the empirical study of mental phenomena, based in experimentation and statistical methods, from which we can search for laws and causal explanations. By contrast, Brentano held, ‘descriptive psychology’ or ‘descriptive phenomenology’ does not involve searching for laws of cause and effect, nor does it describe particular psychological episodes (whether by introspection or any other means). Instead, its purpose is to specify and classify the basic types of mental phenomena, determining their characteristics and essential interrelations. Thus, for example, rather than studying the causes of perceptions, emotions, etc. (whether through introspection, observation of behavior, investigation of brain states, or even, as Freud would soon propose, psychoanalysis), descriptive psychology would seek to answer such questions as: What is a perception, a judgment, an emotion, etc.? What is required for a particular emotion to be a case of regret? What is the characteristic relationship between emotion and judgment, or emotion and presentation? This sort of study involves the clarification of the very form of and relations among mental states of different types. And as such, Brentano argues,¹¹ descriptive psychology is prior to genetic psychology, since studying the causes of perception, memory, emotion, etc. presupposes understanding what it is for an event to be one of seeing, remembering, regretting, etc. This analysis of the basic types of mental functioning and their essential interrelations then comprises the distinctively *philosophical* approach to the mind, and provides a way of distinguishing it from the researches of empirical psychology.

¹⁰ See Brentano (1874/1995) (1874/1982). Also see Barry Smith (1994: chs. 1, 2), for discussion of Brentano’s influence on the development of philosophy in Vienna, including the Vienna Circle.

¹¹ Brentano (1982: 10).

Brentano's idea of descriptive psychology was then famously developed into his student Edmund Husserl's idea of phenomenology, first detailed in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900–1). Husserl made a concerted effort to demonstrate that phenomenology does *not* involve an introspectionist recording of, for example, the feel of one's own mental states, repeatedly arguing that phenomenology does not rely on any kind of inner observation and is not subject to the kind of skepticism leveled against introspection-based psychologies.¹² Like Brentano before him, Husserl is clear that phenomenology is exclusively a matter of studying the general essences of experiences and relations among these, not a matter of empirical study of one's individual experiences, whether by 'internal' observation or any other means.¹³ Like Brentano, he conceives of phenomenology as prior to empirical psychology, since it is concerned with analyzing and describing the 'intentional essences' of experiences of presentation, perception, judgment, imagination, etc., and thus with clarifying the essences or types of mental states that empirical psychologists must assume in their observations and experimentation.¹⁴

To give a certain authority or autonomy to phenomenology as distinct from empirical psychology and neuroscience—the cognitive sciences, in today's parlance—is not, however, to deny the latter's roles in understanding the mind. Nor is it to deny the relations of consciousness to its environment. Our conscious experience is dependent on what happens in our brains (see Bickle and Ellis, this volume). Furthermore, perception and action are intertwined with our bodies and are so experienced, as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty stressed (see Bermúdez, Siewert, and Carman, all in this volume). And our experience is further dependent, in different ways, on what happens around us in the world—on our personal histories, on social and political formations, on human history, and on the biological evolution of our species. But whatever gives rise to our conscious experience, the essences of our experiences of various types are there to be studied in their own right, and that is the point of the Brentano–Husserl conception of phenomenology as a discipline.

Nor is there anything mysterious about this study of 'essences'. The essences of experience types are understood through our *concepts* of experiences of different types. And so, to the extent that our concepts are accurate, we may study what is involved in the essence of, say, perceiving an external physical object, by asking what, according to the very concept of a perception of an external object, would be necessary for any experience to count as one of this type. Thus the phenomenological goal of studying the essential forms of and relations among different experience types has much in common with, and can be seen as leading into, the conceptual analysis of mental state types that characterizes at least one strain of analytic philosophy of mind.

In fact, Husserl's idea of a distinctively philosophical (phenomenological) approach to the mind—one based not on introspection, but rather on considering the essences and correlated concepts of mental states of various types—was the crucial historical influence on Gilbert Ryle's defense of conceptual analysis as the appropriate method of

¹² Husserl (1913/1962: §79, p. 204), known as *Ideas I*.

¹³ Husserl (1900–1/2001: vol. ii, Investigation VI, Introduction, §1, p. 183).

¹⁴ *Logical Investigations*, loc. cit., Volume II, Investigation VI, Introduction, §1, p. 183.

philosophy, and thereby also on Ryle's attempt to dissolve traditional problems with the concept of mind by rectifying the 'logic' of mental terms or concepts (see Livingston, this volume).¹⁵ In *The Concept of Mind* (1949) Ryle prefers to speak in terms of analyzing mental concepts as used in ordinary discourse, rather than in the Husserlian idiom of intuiting and analyzing essences of lived experiences. Yet Ryle's method of studying the mind is based on the Brentano–Husserl view that the job of a *philosophy* of mind is the analysis of the general types of mental functioning, their intentionality, and their 'logical' status, structures, and interrelations, where such inquiry is independent of the studies of neurophysiology and psychology. Accordingly, Ryle writes that *The Concept of Mind* is an examination of various mental concepts, so that 'the book could be described as a sustained essay in phenomenology'.¹⁶

Unfortunately, given Ryle's going concern to reconfigure apparent talk about the mind in terms of talk about externally observable events, his book drew interest and has been remembered for the ways in which his proposed conceptual analyses could support logical behaviorism (a view of his work that he always rejected), rather than for its demonstration of a philosophical method of studying the mind distinct from both introspection and natural science—the point Ryle himself was most interested in. Nonetheless, *The Concept of Mind*, along with many of Ryle's essays,¹⁷ remains as evidence of the linkage of the two traditions at hand, and joins Brentano and Husserl in charting the space for a distinctively philosophical kind of study of the mind. Indeed, the very term 'philosophy of mind' took root only in the wake of Ryle's influential book, and it was in reaction to that book that the identity theory was launched, leading into materialist, functionalist, and eliminativist ontologies of mind.

The word 'phenomenology' is often used in contemporary philosophy of mind to mean simply the qualitative or phenomenal character of an experience, that is, 'what it is like' to have an experience of a certain kind, primarily a sensation such as feeling pain or seeing red. While this concern with 'qualia' has led to some renewed interest in (or at least sympathy with) historical phenomenology, it is based in a double misrepresentation. First, the term as originally used by Brentano, Husserl, et al. is supposed to describe the *study* of experiences, not any part, quality, or aspect of experiences themselves (as noted by Strawson, this volume). Secondly, and even more crucially, historical phenomenology is not concerned exclusively or even primarily with studying the qualitative *sensuous* character of experience, as if that's all there is to the 'feel' of conscious experience. In fact, the widespread belief that this is what phenomenology is all about seems to derive from confusing classical phenomenology with the classical empiricist interest in mere seemings or sense-data. Instead, phenomenology—as a 'logic' of 'phenomena' of consciousness—sought to explicate what Husserl would call the essential 'logical' interrelations among experiences of different types (see Martin, this volume). Husserl uses 'logical' in a broad sense, covering not just essential relations and entailments among linguistic expressions based in logical form or syntax, but also

¹⁵ See also Thomasson (2002).

¹⁶ Ryle (1990: 188).

¹⁷ See, e.g., 'Phenomenology', 'Phenomenology versus "The Concept of Mind"', 'Heidegger's "Sein und Zeit"', and 'Review of Martin Farber: "The Foundations of Phenomenology"', all reprinted in Ryle (1990: vol. i) and his 'The Theory of Meaning' and 'Ordinary Language' in Ryle (1990: vol. ii).

essential conceptual relations based in meanings. As a result, in the hands of Husserl and others, phenomenology is focused primarily on the intentional or, as Husserl often puts it, 'logical' form of experiences as *meaningful*. For it is only with regard to experiences considered as fully meaningful and intentional that one can examine the logical, conceptual interrelationships among forms of experience.¹⁸

Phenomenology as a discipline came of age in Husserl's 1900–1 opus *Logical Investigations*. There Husserl began with an idea of 'pure logic', defined as the theory of theories, studying ideal meanings, including propositions, their logical forms and logical relations, and their semantic representation of objects and states of affairs. This idea of logic led Husserl into a conception of phenomenology as the science of the essence of consciousness in general, studying especially intentionality and the role of meanings in representing objects of consciousness, and then into a phenomenological theory of knowledge.¹⁹ For Husserl, the phenomenological theory of intentionality was thus a generalization of the logical theory of theories (or representational systems), studying meanings as ideal intentional contents of perception, judgment, imagination, emotion, etc. Phenomenology, in Husserl's hands, analyzes the forms and relations of intentional contents, including how they represent individuals, states of affairs, and events in the world. Indeed, today's concerns in philosophy of mind with the truth conditions or satisfaction conditions of contents of belief, perception, desire, etc.—adapting the notion of truth conditions from logical theory—fit smoothly into Husserl's original conception of phenomenology (see Smith, this volume).²⁰

Husserl's idea of phenomenology developed hand-in-hand with his theory of intentionality. Brentano had revived the medieval notion of the mind's 'intentio' (aiming toward something), but it was Husserl who brought the concept of intentionality into a really sharp focus (along with Kasimir Twardowski and Alexius Meinong, fellow students of Brentano's). Husserl's innovation was to combine psychological theory (from Brentano) with logical theory (from Bernard Bolzano) into a bona fide theory of

¹⁸ In fact, Husserl's conception of a 'logic' of mental states was influential not only on Ryle (and thereby on the philosophy of mind tradition), but also on the study of language and logic in analytic philosophy. In the late nineteenth century Gottlob Frege introduced new theories of logical form that transformed logic from Aristotelian syllogistic into modern quantifier-predicate logic. The new tools of logic were quickly put to work in philosophical analysis by Bertrand Russell and others. Then, in the 1920s and 1930s, amid the Vienna Circle movement, Rudolf Carnap's logical empiricism sought to use the new logical syntax to develop an ideal language that expresses our knowledge of the world based on sensory experiences, seeking to build up our public language about the world from our private language about sensation. In retrospect, Carnap turned logic through epistemology toward the study of mind: philosophy of logic led Carnap into theory of knowledge and therewith of mind. This turn was no accident, for Carnap had attended Husserl's lectures on phenomenology in 1924–5. In the 1930s and 1940s Alfred Tarski developed a semantic theory of truth, and the foundations of model-theoretic semantics. (See Tarski 1933/1983 and 1944/1952.) Tarski notes Husserl's conception of categories in *Logical Investigations*, central to Husserl's vision of 'pure logic'. And Tarski was occasionally schooled in what is called the Warsaw—Lvów school of philosophy, founded by Kasimir Twardowski, who along with Husserl developed the act—content—object model of intentionality. And so, contrary to the prevailing view, logical theory, too, was intertwined with the roots of both analytic philosophy and phenomenology. (See Friedman (1999).)

¹⁹ On the role of phenomenology in Husserl's overall philosophical system, see David Woodruff Smith (2002). On Husserl's theory of knowledge as grounded in phenomenology, see Willard (1984).

²⁰ Compare Searle (1983), and Perry (2001).

intentionality. Very briefly, Husserl's model of intentionality can be depicted in the structure:

subject—act—content → object.

Each experience or act of consciousness has a subject or ego ('I'), a content or meaning, and, if successful, an object toward which it is directed. The act is experienced by the subject, and is directed from the subject toward the object by way of the content. The content is a meaning (*Sinn* in Husserl's German), and meanings represent objects (individuals, states of affairs, etc.) in accordance with 'logical' or semantical laws, characterizing how various meanings are interrelated and how they represent various objects.²¹

As we have seen, the goal of phenomenology is not to record the 'feel' of one's own mental states, but rather to explicate the essential types and structures of conscious experience as lived (from the first-person perspective), thus the logical or conceptual relations among experience types, with the focus on the intentional or representational structure of experience. Accordingly, the methods of phenomenology do not rely on an introspective 'peering inwards' at one's passing stream of consciousness. Instead, Husserl proposes a new method, what he calls 'phenomenological reduction', the point of which is precisely to redirect our focus away from the entire empirical, natural world, including our real psychological experiences, and to refocus our study of the mind on the essences of conscious experience of various kinds, including especially their intentionality.²² This method has been regularly misunderstood. Ironically, the method can be rather easily understood, by analogy with some familiar techniques of logical or linguistic analysis.

Although the method is explicated in different ways in different parts of Husserl's corpus, the fundamental idea of phenomenological reduction involves two steps detailed in *Ideas I* (1913). The first is a 'reductive' step that enables us to move from our ordinary world-oriented, world-representing experience to a philosophical description of its features *as* an experience. This is not an ontological reduction, but rather a methodological narrowing of focus, excluding from consideration certain empirical features of experience such as its relationship to the real, physical world. The second step is a generalizing or abstracting step that enables us to move from consideration of real, individual conscious experiences, to examining the general *types* or *essences* of the experiences involved.

Both stages famously involve 'bracketing', a kind of withholding of commitment. In the first stage, we bracket the 'thesis of the natural standpoint', viz., that the world around us (*Umwelt*) exists, the 'fact-world' of natural objects and other subjects and even numbers, so that we (globally) withhold commitment about the world represented in our experience.²³ By bracketing this thesis we can address our experience *as representing* things in the world in certain ways, rather than 'using' our experience so to

²¹ This semantical model of intentionality is discussed in essays in Dreyfus (1982). The model is detailed, addressing historical precedents and relevant semantical theories, in Smith and McIntyre (1982). A partly differing interpretation of Husserlian intentionality theory is presented in Sokolowski (2000).

²² *Ideas I*, Introduction, p. 40; §79, p. 205.

²³ *Ideas I*, §§27–31.

represent things in the world. This move is similar to placing a piece of language in quotation marks, say, when we are mentioning what a witness said, rather than using those words to make an assertion ourselves; quotation thus enables us to address the meaningful content of a piece of language without committing ourselves to its truth. So understood, the first stage of phenomenological reduction involves not a pseudo-perceptual ‘peering’ at one’s own experience, but rather a form of semantic ascent from world-representing experiences to talk or thought about the representational contents of these experiences. (See details in the articles by Smith and Thomasson, this volume. The term ‘semantic ascent’ is borrowed from W. V. Quine, whose concern was language.) The idea that knowledge of the contents of one’s own mental states may be based in first-order world-directed experience, combined with a kind of conceptual transformation based in withholding commitment about the real nature of the world represented, has in turn been influential on contemporary ‘outer awareness’ views of self-knowledge developed by Sellars, Shoemaker, and Dretske (see Thomasson, this volume).

In the second stage of phenomenological reduction (sometimes called ‘eidetic reduction’), we bracket the very existence of the experience addressed—considered as a real, occurrent experience—so that we can attend to the essence (or *eidōs*) of the experience.²⁴ That is, we abstract the ideal essence from the concrete experience. Now, a crucial part of the essence of most experiences is their intentionality. As we turn to the structure of intentionality in an experience, we then turn to the content or meaning involved in the experience and its essential interrelations to other meanings (‘logical’ relations).²⁵ The essence and therewith the meaning of an experience remain to be studied whether or not there is any actual occurring experience. This way of avoiding reliance on any empirical claim about the existence of particular mental episodes enables us to discuss the *essences* of experiences of various types and the relations among their meaning contents, rather than offering observational reports about the occurrence and content of various particular experiences. In this way Husserl presents ‘phenomenology as descriptive theory of the essence of pure experiences’.²⁶

The later Husserl introduced a doctrine of ‘transcendental idealism’ that has vexed his interpreters ever since. For our purposes, we take Husserl to be a realist, not an idealist: the object of a veridical experience is something in the world, not in the mind. His transcendental idealism is then a theory about the role of meaning in the ‘constitution’ of objects: only through meanings are experiences directed toward certain objects. Alternatively put, we experience an object only ‘as’ such and such, and this mode of presentation is captured in the act’s meaning. Husserl famously introduced the term ‘noema’ for this meaning, characterizing the noema or noematic meaning of

²⁴ *Ideas* I, §§69–75.

²⁵ *Ideas* I, §§88–90. Meanings and essences are distinct in kind: the essence or property of being an elm tree is distinct from the meaning or concept of an elm. For Husserl, the meaning ‘elm’ is part of the content of seeing or thinking about an elm, and the experience’s being intentionally directed via that meaning is part of the essence of the experience. In the *Logical Investigations* Husserl had identified the intentional content or meaning in an act of consciousness with the act’s species or essence of being directed in a certain way. Later, by the time of *Ideas* I, he distinguished these two types of ideal entities, introducing the Greek term ‘noema’ for the meaning (*Sinn*) of an act.

²⁶ *Ideas* I, §75. The phrase quoted is the title of that section.

an experience as the ‘object-as-intended’, somewhat as Kant spoke of ‘phenomena’ as ‘things-as-they-appear’. The Kantian terminology may suggest, wrongly, that consciousness brings the world into existence, but that is not the point, on our reading of Husserl. In any case, interpretative issues aside, it is clear that neither the methods of his phenomenology nor its results for philosophy of mind involve one in any commitment to a metaphysical thesis of idealism.²⁷

This brief sketch should be enough to make it clear that the phenomenological approach to the mind has been interwoven with the contemporary analytic ‘philosophy of mind’ tradition—despite common misconceptions in the histories of both philosophy of mind and phenomenology—and that its central methods and concepts are neither mysterious nor in conflict or competition with those of the empirical cognitive sciences. Yet it is not these historical facts in themselves that are of greatest interest, but rather the way in which the approach of the phenomenological tradition may help overcome some of the shortcomings of contemporary philosophy of mind. Work in the phenomenological tradition has long provided an alternative route to the study of the mind that avoids both introspectionism and collapsing the study of the mental into behavioral psychology or neuroscience. Indeed, the phenomenological approach to the mind was designed, in its very conception by Brentano, as complementary to, not in competition with, the results of empirical science—thus of neuroscience, empirical psychology, evolutionary biology, and the like (cf. Bickle and Ellis, this volume). Perhaps most importantly of all, the distinctively phenomenological approach to the mind has yielded a variety of detailed concrete analyses—notably, of consciousness, perception, intentionality, time-consciousness, and action—that can lead the way to reexamining current debates on these topics from a perspective unencumbered by some of the methodological and terminological commitments accrued by the analytic tradition’s dedication to a publicly observable natural-scientific approach to the mind (see Strawson, this volume).

3. PHENOMENOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MIND IN THE ESSAYS TO FOLLOW

While some of the essays in this volume draw explicitly on historical work in phenomenology and others apply a phenomenological approach directly to contemporary problems or indicate the role of the phenomenological amid empirical studies, all help demonstrate the ways in which a phenomenological approach to the mind can both enrich and sharpen discussion in the philosophy of mind.

The essays below are divided into five parts. Those in Part I all contribute to understanding the place of phenomenology amidst other strands of work in philosophy of mind. Paul Livingston’s essay reopens the history of philosophy of mind, especially functionalism, exhibiting its motivations and continuities with historical phenomenology, as both traditions seek to provide a logical/conceptual analysis of our mental terms and concepts. Understanding the commonalities between them helps bring to

²⁷ See the discussion of transcendental idealism in David Woodruff Smith (1995).

the fore the problems both approaches face in attempting to explain consciousness. Galen Strawson attempts to cut through the terminological accretions left behind by the tradition of analytic philosophy of mind, in its rush to explain features like intentionality, representation, and the like by separating them from experience and considering their application to non-conscious entities such as robots and thermometers. The terminological tangles that have resulted, he argues, have obscured some basic and obvious truths about the mind—for example, that there is cognitive experiential-qualitative content, and that intentionality is categorical, occurrent, and experiential—and have left the philosophy of mind mired in pseudo-disputes generated by bad terminological choices. Reaching back to a tradition of historical phenomenology, which preceded the later terminological tangles, may thus provide hope of a way out of contemporary pseudo-debates to rediscover certain natural and obvious views about the mental. In the final essay of this part Taylor Carman picks up a similar theme, arguing that eliminativisms like Dennett's are incoherent in denying the existence of qualitative sensory experience given the fallibility of our experience reports, for ultimately that means denying that there is anything about which we are fallible. As a result, we cannot coherently eliminate experience in favor of mere verbal judgments (Dennett's 'heterophenomenology'), and we must accept that we have some access to the structures and contents of our own experience, even if we are not infallible about them.

But what is the distinctively first-person access to experience supposed to be, which makes possible not only knowledge of our own mental states, but also a phenomenological approach to the mind? This is the central question behind the essays of Part II, which seek to draw out the possibility and distinctive characteristics of first-person knowledge, and its relation to the third-person knowledge characteristic of the neurosciences. David Woodruff Smith begins the section by explicating the sort of 'inner awareness' that forms the basis for phenomenological knowledge in a way that avoids the shortcomings of higher-order views. Properly understood, Smith argues, inner awareness in the phenomenological sense can provide a way to understand the characteristic privacy of inner awareness without making it incommunicable or beyond the reach of intersubjectively practiced phenomenology. Amie Thomasson, like Smith, insists that phenomenology is not based in any kind of inwardly directed observations of one's own mental states, by explicating and reinterpreting the central Husserlian method for phenomenology: the phenomenological reduction. Properly understood, Thomasson argues, phenomenological reduction is based in the idea that our knowledge of our own mental states is based not in introspective observation of them, but rather in our familiar outer observations of the world, combined with certain cognitive transformations initiated by bracketing assumptions about the world represented in our normal (outwardly directed) experience. So understood, phenomenological reduction does not rely on the viability of introspective approaches to the mind. More importantly, we can derive a new 'cognitive transformation' theory of self-knowledge based on Husserl's phenomenological reduction that may provide a viable contribution to contemporary debates about self-knowledge. Finally, John Bickle and Ralph Ellis bring issues about phenomenological methods and results into discourse with results of contemporary neuroscience. There is recent evidence that experiences very

similar to those produced by normal sensation may be brought about by cortical microstimulation in the brain, and some have thought that this undermines claims to first-person phenomenological knowledge. But Bickle and Ellis argue that this latter reaction is based on confusing phenomenology with certain forms of folk psychology from which Husserl explicitly distinguished it. If we properly understand the goals and methods of phenomenology, they argue, we can see that not only is there no conflict between these results of neuroscience and phenomenology, but combining the two approaches may provide a useful route to address the hard problem of consciousness.

With the role and methods of phenomenology clarified, the essays of the later three parts apply some of the results of phenomenological work to other issues in contemporary philosophy of mind, beginning in Part III with the central issue of intentionality. Johannes Brandl begins by reaching back to consider Brentano's view that intentionality involves a relation between a subject and an immanent intentional or 'in-existent' object. This 'immanence' theory of intentionality, Brandl argues, is far more defensible than is commonly realized. Indeed, a contemporary version of the theory that takes the relevant immanent objects to be mental information bearers may be able to help explain the subjectivity of experience. Richard Tieszen addresses the largely ignored question of how we can account for intentional relations not just to concrete, perceived objects, but also to abstracta such as the objects studied in mathematics. Tieszen argues that, unlike many approaches to the mind, a Husserlian phenomenological account may offer the way to understand consciousness of abstract objects; indeed Gödel appealed to Husserl for just this purpose.

The three essays of Part IV examine three different senses in which there may be unities across different conscious experiences. First, Wayne Martin greatly clarifies the basic goals of phenomenology by reexamining Husserl's idea of phenomenology as a 'logic of consciousness'. Martin shows that taking this idea seriously presupposes conceiving of mental states not as atomistic, qualitative entities (as sense-data might be considered), but rather as intentional, meaningful states unified by internal relations among them. So understood, Husserl's ideal of phenomenology as a logic of consciousness may provide a distinctive approach to understanding consciousness as a cognitive and rule-governed domain that can present us with a world. Sean Kelly addresses the unities of conscious states as they unfold *over time*, asking how it is possible for us to experience (at a time) events that, like motion, must unfold over time. He brings the 'retention' view favored by Locke, Hume, and Husserl into dialogue with the 'specious present' view defended by James, Broad, and Dainton, arguing that the former has advantages that have long been overlooked by those steeped only in the 'analytic' tradition. In fact, Kelly argues, we can use Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the phenomenology of indeterminate experience as the basis for giving more positive content to Husserl's 'retention' view, on the way to a more adequate understanding of the nature of time-consciousness. In the third essay of this part, Kay Mathiesen addresses the unities that may exist across experiences of different *individuals*, resulting in a 'collective consciousness'. While collective consciousness is often thought to play a role in the understanding of collective behavior and even in establishing conventions and a social world, how individuals may come to share in a collective

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