

PRÉCIS: *THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL MIND*
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Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi

It is difficult to give a nice succinct précis of *The Phenomenological Mind* since it is composed of a set of chapters each of which addresses a different topic. The topics are linked in numerous ways. There is one way, however, in which all of the chapters are bound together to constitute a unified whole, and this might be considered something like a framework proposition. Phenomenology, understood as the philosophical approach taken up by Husserl and a number of people who loosely follow his lead, has something important to contribute to philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences. The proof of this claim is to be found in the details of the various chapters. In some cases it consists of showing that a phenomenological approach provides a genuine alternative to the standard or current approaches to be found in these areas. In other cases, phenomenological methods may provide insights about certain key concepts; or insights that are suggestive for experimental work. To do any of this requires that we take an interdisciplinary approach and recognize that these various investigations do not move on a one-way track. Phenomenology can take as much as it can give. Investigations in philosophy of mind, psychology, cognitive neuroscience, etc., can offer productive directions to phenomenology. In the book we tried to avoid tying ourselves too closely to any one conception of phenomenology, and our aim was not to settle various debates within the phenomenological tradition. We are convinced that if phenomenology is to improve and develop its own analyses of human experience, it needs to enter into just the kinds of discussions that we address in this book.

This book builds not only on the work of the classical phenomenologists like Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, but also on much of our own previous work on many of the topics that we take to be central to philosophy of mind. However, not only do we think that phenomenology and analytical philosophy of mind have overlapping concerns, we also think that there are relevant and productive differences. Thus, our intention was certainly not to displace or dismiss analytic philosophy of mind.

Indeed, we wanted to explore how phenomenology can enter back into a communication with analytic approaches in a way that goes beyond generalities.

We also rehearse a very short history that mentions Hubert Dreyfus's phenomenological critique of computationalist artificial intelligence, the advent of embodied approaches to cognition (to be found, for example, in Varela, Thompson, and Rosch [1991]), and the recent advances in neuroscience that seem to make constant reference to subjective experience and at the same time is consistently searching for a method to deal with this subjectivity.

Phenomenology is neither analytic philosophy nor empirical science. A phenomenological account of the mind is different from either a purely conceptual analysis, or a psychophysical or neuroscientific account. Phenomenology is concerned with attaining an understanding and proper description of the structure of our mental/embodied experience; it does not attempt to develop a naturalistic explanation of it in terms of biological genesis, neurological basis, psychological motivation, or the like. Nonetheless we suggest that this phenomenological account is not irrelevant to a science of consciousness. We will not get very far in giving a scientific account of the relationship between consciousness and the brain, for example, unless we have a clear conception of what aspect or feature of consciousness we are trying to relate to brain function. Any assessment of the possibility of reducing consciousness to neuronal structures (which we think is unlikely) and any appraisal of whether a naturalization of consciousness is possible (which is something that does not necessarily involve a reductionism) will require a detailed analysis and description of the experiential aspects of consciousness. Providing a detailed phenomenological analysis, and exploring the precise intentional, spatial, temporal and phenomenal aspects of experience, we suggest, should deliver a description of just what it is that the psychologists and the neuroscientists are trying to explain when they appeal to neural processes, information processing, or dynamical models.

The overarching claim of *The Phenomenological Mind*, then, is that phenomenologically based theoretical accounts and descriptions can complement and inform ongoing work in the cognitive sciences. We think they can do so in a far more productive manner than the standard metaphysical discussions of, say, the mind-body problem that we find in mainstream philosophy of mind.

The second chapter of the book is devoted to certain methodological questions which are directly relevant to the practice of experimental science. We set out to ask what actually happens in the lab, in the experiment, and how scientists go about studying the mind. If part of what psychologists and neuroscientists want to study is experience, what kind of access do they have to it? We provide a clear explication of phenomenological methods.

In Chapter 3 we discuss different concepts of consciousness. We review an ongoing debate in philosophy of mind about higher-order theories of consciousness, and, appealing to the phenomenological concept of pre-reflective experience, we suggest an alternative way to approach the problem of consciousness. We clarify the phenomenological alternative by considering examples that one often finds in the philosophy of mind literature – the common experience of driving a car, some experimental results about non-conscious perception, and the more exotic case of blindsight.

In Chapter 4 we explore one of the most important, but also one of the most neglected aspects of consciousness, cognition, and action – the temporality of experience. William James had described consciousness metaphorically as having the structure of a stream. He also argued that the present moment of experience is always structured in a three-fold temporal way, the so-called ‘specious present’, to include an element of the past and an element of the future. We present a phenomenological approach to this topic, which extends and deepens the basic account provided by James.

In Chapter 5 we examine perception. Contemporary explanations of perception include a number of non-traditional, non-Cartesian approaches that emphasize the embodied and enactive aspects of perception, or the fact that perception, and more generally cognition, are situated, both physically and socially in significant ways. We try to sort out which of these approaches are in agreement with a phenomenological analysis. This leads us to consider the debate between non-representationalist views and representationalist views of the mind.

Chapter 6 addresses one of the most important concepts in our understanding of how the mind is in-the-world – intentionality. This is a basic concept in phenomenology, deriving from the work of Brentano. It’s the idea that experience, whether it is perception, memory, imagination, judgement, belief, etc., is always

directed to some object. Intentionality is reflected in the very structure of consciousness, and involves notions of mental acts and mental content. We show how this concept has direct relevance for the contemporary debate between externalism and internalism.

Chapter 7 takes up the question of embodiment. Here we examine the classic phenomenological distinctions between the lived body (Leib) and the objective body (Körper). But we also seek to show that phenomenology can make room for the idea that biology and the very shape of the body contribute to cognitive experience. We explore how embodied space frames our experiences and we discuss cases of phantoms limbs, unilateral neglect, and deafferentation. We also pursue some implications for the design of robotic bodies.

Chapter 8 shows how certain phenomenological distinctions between the sense of agency and the sense of ownership can contribute to an adequate scientific account of human action. We show that human action cannot be reduced to bodily movement, and that certain scientific experiments can be misleading when the focus is narrowed to just such bodily movements. Here too there are a number of pathological cases, such as schizophrenic delusions of control, that help us to understand non-pathological action.

Chapter 9 concerns the question of how we come to understand other minds. We explore some current "theory of mind" accounts ("theory theory" and "simulation theory"), and introduce a phenomenologically-based alternative that is consistent with recent research in developmental psychology and neuroscience. This alternative builds on the idea that we can directly perceive the intentions and emotions of others in their bodily movements and expressions, and that our understanding of others is helped along by the pragmatic and social contexts that we share with them, and that are often expressed and enhanced through narrative.

In Chapter 10 we come to a question that has been gaining interest across the cognitive sciences – the question of the self. Although long explored by philosophers, this question has recently been revisited by neuroscientists and psychologists. What we find is that there are almost as many different concepts of the self as there are theorists examining them. To make some headway on this issue we focus on the basic pre-reflective sense of unity through temporal change that is implicit in normal experience. We examine how this pre-reflective sense of self can break down in cases of

schizophrenia, and what role it plays in the development of a more reflective sense of self, expressed in language, narrative, and cultural contexts.

Here are some of the conclusions that we work toward.

- **Methodology:** phenomenology is distinct from both introspection and heterophenomenology; it offers philosophically informed methodological tools that can disclose significant – but frequently overlooked – dimensions of experience; it can help to define good empirical questions and can contribute to the design of behavioural and brain-imaging experiments; and it can frame interpretations of empirical data in ways that are scientifically rigorous without being reductionistic.
- **Consciousness and self-consciousness:** phenomenology offers a clear alternative to higher-order theories of consciousness, and contributes to an account of experience which has wide ramifications for empirical science (including developmental psychology, ethology, and psychiatry).
- **The temporality of experience:** phenomenology offers a painstakingly detailed analysis of one of the most important aspects of consciousness, cognition, and action: the intrinsic temporal nature of experience that is the phenomenological complement to the dynamical nature that underpins our brain-body-environment system.
- **Perception:** in contrast to various representationalist models of perception, phenomenology defends a non-Cartesian view that emphasizes the embodied, enactive, and contextual nature of perception.
- **Intentionality:** phenomenology offers a developed non-reductionist account of the intentionality of experience that stresses the co-emergence of mind and world and suggests an alternative to the standard choice between internalism and externalism.
- **Embodied cognition:** perhaps more than any other approach, phenomenology has consistently championed an embodied and situated view of cognition. Although insisting on the phenomenological distinction between the lived body and the objective body, phenomenology also shows that biology, even beyond neuroscience, is important for understanding our mental life.

- **Action and agency:** phenomenologically sensitive distinctions between kinds of movements, and between the sense of agency and the sense of ownership, can provide important tools for a more adequate account of action and for the understanding of certain pathologies where the sense of agency is lacking. Such distinctions can also inform various neuroimaging experiments.
- **Intersubjectivity and social cognition:** phenomenology offers a non-mentalizing alternative to theory-of-mind explanations, complements evidence from developmental psychology, and suggests a reinterpretation of the neuroscience of resonance systems.
- **Self and person:** phenomenology offers clarifying analyses about self-experience and different concepts of the self that can inform the recent and growing interest in these questions in cognitive neuroscience. Specifically, phenomenology shows that the self is significantly involved in all aspects of experience, including intentionality, phenomenality, temporality, embodiment, action, and our interaction with others.

Our intention was not to cover all topics or to provide an exhaustive analysis of the topics that we do address. As the sub-title of the book specifies, our goal was to provide an “introduction” to phenomenological approaches to some of the central problems in philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences.

Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi

University of Central Florida and University of Hertfordshire /

University of Copenhagen

gallaghr@mail.ucf.edu / dza@hum.ku.dk