

Thiemo Breyer and Christopher Gutland (Eds.):
Phenomenology of Thinking: Philosophical
Investigations into the Character of Cognitive
Experiences

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Chad Kidd¹

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The topic of this collection of essays is the phenomenology of “*cognitive experience*”—the phenomenology characteristic of thought, belief, doubt, inference, and so on—as opposed to the phenomenology of “*sensuous experience*”—the phenomenology characteristic of perceptual experiences, bodily sensations, emotions, and moods. The nature of this phenomenological distinction has recently become a popular topic of debate in analytic philosophy of mind. And this volume of essays attempts to “broaden the scope of this debate by fostering dialogue between the philosophy of mind and the phenomenological tradition inaugurated by Edmund Husserl” (p. 1). There has been a strong trend in philosophy of the last two decades to build bridges between contemporary debates in analytic philosophy and the rich and diverse set of philosophical views represented in the phenomenological tradition.¹ This volume is a welcome addition to this practice both because of the intrinsic interest of its topic, and because it demonstrates that it is possible for volumes of this sort to focus on a specific subject matter and still be a rewarding collection to read all the way through, even for those who are not intimately acquainted with the topics.

I believe that the volume’s most rewarding attribute is the way it draws connections between views in traditional phenomenology and many of the important aspects of the debate about cognitive phenomenology as it has arisen in recent analytic philosophy of mind—though there are some significant omissions

¹ Other recent collections of essays and books of this sort include Petitot et al. (1999), Smith and Thomasson (2005), Gallagher and Zahavi (2012), and Dahlstrom, Elpidorou, and Hopp (2015).

✉ Chad Kidd
ckidd@ccny.cuny.edu

¹ North Academic Center, City College of New York (CUNY), Room 5/136a, 160 Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031, USA

here, as I shall discuss below. And I believe that the collection also does a fine job at the sometimes difficult task of introducing those familiar with the analytic side of the divide to the phenomenological points of view—and vice versa, insofar as a phenomenologically trained philosopher has some familiarity with the general contours of contemporary philosophy of mind. The majority of the papers—namely, those by Kriegel, Hopp, D. W. Smith, Jorba, Doyon, Gallagher, Lohmar, and Crowell—draw on some key concepts from a philosopher in the phenomenological tradition and apply them to some aspect of the contemporary analytic debate about cognitive phenomenology. Since the discussions in these papers are, for the most part, framed in terms of the contemporary debate, all should provide the analytically trained philosopher an easier entry-point to the relevant sources in the phenomenological literature than she is likely to find by approaching the source-texts on her own. The papers by Kriegel, Smith, Hopp, Jorba, and Doyon are exemplary in this regard. However, for want of space, I offer a few brief remarks about only three of these papers.

The paper by Uriah Kriegel opens the volume with an attempt to show how one might go beyond the analytic preoccupation with justifying the existence of cognitive phenomenology by taking some initial steps toward a complete phenomenological description of cognitive experience. Kriegel does this by focusing on the phenomenal features of *judgment*. He derives a list of features of judgment from Bolzano's once influential *Theory of Science*. One very interesting part of this study for the analytic philosopher is how Kriegel relates the process of phenomenological description to the process of analyzing the concept of judgment. Kriegel expresses his analysis of the concept of judgment in the form of a Ramsey sentence, which is a sentence “produced by collecting a large number of ‘platitudes’ about that which one wishes to elucidate, stringing them into a long conjunction, replacing the occurrences of the elucidandum with a free variable, and prefixing the whole thing with the existential quantifier” (p. 30). Kriegel points out how this allows phenomenological description to contribute to the elucidation of the concept (or, if one is ontologically inclined, the essence) of a phenomenon *piece by piece*, taking each conjunct as expressing only a *part* of the complete concept of the phenomenon and building on other pieces as they are encountered in phenomenological introspection. Furthermore, Kriegel argues that phenomenological descriptions of this kind can be of use in the debate over the existence of cognitive phenomenology insofar as one can use these descriptions as a foothold for intuitively grasping the relevant phenomenal concepts for oneself, in one's own stream of consciousness. Indeed, Kriegel notes, this is likely the only way to proceed in phenomenological analysis, since cognitive phenomenal concepts (like the concept of judgment) are likely to be irreducible to other, more familiar concepts, such as the concepts of sensuous experiential qualities.

One lesson the analytic philosopher might derive from this is that standard analytic procedures of conceptual analysis are unfit for phenomenological inquiry. So if phenomenological philosophy is to thrive, it must seek out other conceptual tools, like that which Kriegel offers. On the other hand, the phenomenological philosopher would find interesting the analogies between Kriegel's idea about Ramsey sentences as tools of phenomenological inquiry and Husserl's ideas of the

phenomenological reductions as useful for both fixing attention on pure transcendental consciousness and for intuitively grasping its essence.

Jorba's contribution is also an attempt to broaden the scope of the analytic debate by using conceptual resources from Husserlian phenomenology. Her goal is to highlight the importance of *attitudinal* cognitive phenomenology and to show how concepts in Husserlian phenomenology are useful for articulating this aspect of cognitive experience. If we take "I judge that *P*" to be at least a provisionally accurate expression of the structure of an act of judgment, then we can draw a distinction in the structure of the act between the *content* of the act—expressed by " *P*"—and the *attitude* of the act—expressed by " judge(s) that ". Jorba observes that the analytic debate over cognitive phenomenology has focused primarily and almost exclusively on the phenomenology of the *content* of thinking.² And she wants to argue that one can also show that the attitudinal components of this act also have a proprietary phenomenology, which is irreducible to the phenomenology of sensory, imagistic, or emotional experience. She does this by means of an epistemic argument for the existence of attitude-related cognitive phenomenology that closely mirrors David Pitt's (2004) argument for the existence of content-related cognitive phenomenology. The argument is, roughly: if it weren't for the existence of attitudinal cognitive phenomenology, then it would not be possible for us to immediately distinguish, on the basis of introspection alone, *judging* that *P* from *wondering* whether *P*, *doubting* that *P* from *hoping* that *P*, and so on. Therefore, since we can immediately distinguish the attitudes in each of these kinds of mental act from the others on the basis of introspection alone, they each must have a proprietary set of cognitive phenomenal features that pertains to the attitude of the act (pp. 81–86). Jorba then connects this argument to the Husserlian notion of the "horizon" of an experience—the anticipated, intuitively "empty" pre-delineation of the content of future experiences of something. In connection with cognitive experience, she notes that "When one understands a given proposition, one embeds the proportion understood within one's overall knowledge regarding such a proposition" (p. 86). And this has an influence on one's experience of understanding, insofar as the background of one's overall knowledge consists (at least in part) in an *experience* of there being "an element of potentiality or anticipation of inferences in our experience" (p. 88), an experiential or "felt" awareness of logical *consequences* of thinking certain thoughts. Jorba closes by noting how, if this insight about the horizon of cognitive experience is correct, it shows how one can analyze the phenomenology of cognitive attitudes by reference to the horizons associated with the experience of propositional contents. Moreover—and this is something Jorba doesn't discuss—it also marks an interesting connection to the phenomenology of *practical* self-consciousness insofar as an awareness of the horizon of possible inferences from a given thought also determines the horizon of *permissible* attitudes—the attitudes one *may* adopt as a responsible cognitive agent—toward different contents, given that one endorses or denies the given content. This opens the door to historical connections with the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger, insofar as an analysis of normativity is a

² See, e.g., the arguments for the existence of cognitive phenomenology in Bayne and Montague (2011).

central part of their philosophical projects,³ and to more recent discussions in analytic philosophy about the nature of practical self-knowledge.⁴

There are, however, a few significant gaps in the range of topics covered by the essays that attempt to build bridges between the phenomenological tradition and the contemporary analytic discussion about cognitive phenomenology. Of course, no volume of essays this size can be comprehensive. And the editors acknowledge in their introduction that the papers in the collection are focused largely on the question concerning the existence of cognitive phenomenology. Therefore, it is best not to take the next three paragraphs as a charge of editorial failure, but as pointing out important topics at the intersection of phenomenology and philosophy of mind that this collection of essays simply does not address.

First, there is only passing discussion of the important set of issues surrounding the theoretical connections between the acknowledgement of cognitive phenomenology and the metaphysics of intentional content in general.⁵ And relatedly, there is no mention of the issues surrounding the implications that acknowledging cognitive phenomenology has for the metaphysics of logic. Concerning the former, in the analytic discussion, commitment to the existence of cognitive phenomenology is typically theoretically coupled with a commitment either to the claim that *all* or that at least *some* intentional content is *phenomenal* content, i.e., that *what an intentional mental state intends or is “directed at” is determined completely or in part by the mental state’s phenomenology.*⁶ For, the line of reasoning goes, if the intentional content of a cognitive act is determined (wholly or in part) by its phenomenology, then this will secure the claim that at least some intentionality is determined by phenomenology. Furthermore, if we can understand how the intentionality of thought is phenomenally based, then this will provide a model for understanding how *all* intentionality is determined by phenomenology. For in that case, all that’s left is to show that *perceptual* phenomenology too completely determines the intentional content of perceptual experience. Now, many in the phenomenological tradition are plausibly interpreted as being proponents of the phenomenally based intentionality of experience (Brentano and the Husserl of the *Logical Investigations* most obviously). So there is much here that analytic philosophers might find of use in forging these connections.

Turning now to the relation of cognitive phenomenology to the content of logic, the importance of this has recently come to the fore in the analytic literature by David Pitt’s recent endorsement of a version of psychologism about logic (Pitt 2009). In that paper, Pitt argues that psychologism is *entailed* by the conception of cognitive phenomenology that he endorses—one that takes *all* cognitive intentional

³ Crowell touches on the normative aspects of cognitive phenomenology in his contribution to this volume. This is an abiding theme in Crowell’s historical research. See Crowell (2013).

⁴ See, e.g., the influential discussion of the centrality of practical self-knowledge to our concept of reflective self-knowledge in Moran (2001).

⁵ If the reader knows about this aspect of the analytic debate already, then she can see it in pp. 6–12 of the editorial introduction, where the editors compare and contrast the general contours of the concept of intentionality as it was developed in the phenomenological and analytic traditions.

⁶ For a clear representative statement and defense of the strong version of this thesis see Farkas (2008). See also Kriegel (2013) for more recent discussion about phenomenal intentionality.

content to be determined by the cognitive phenomenal features of an individual's cognitive experience. This, of course, has created a stir amongst analytic philosophers, who are accustomed to resting on their anti-psychologicist laurels. And it should be equally stirring to those in the phenomenological tradition, but for different reasons. Husserl is today known alongside Frege as being one of philosophy's most influential *critics* of psychologism. Moreover, there is also the apparent opposition within Husserl's *Logical Investigations* between the strident anti-psychologism of the Prolegomena and the phenomenological elucidations of knowledge that seem to be compatible with psychologism (construed in a specific way) contained in the other Investigations and his later transcendental phenomenology. Given this, assuming that Husserl does have a consistent anti-psychological position, there is a rich resource in Husserl's work for clearing up some of the confusion that has arisen in the wake of the (purported) clarifications of cognitive intentionality coming out of the cognitive phenomenology movement. Or, if Husserl does not have a consistent position, then there is fecund ground here for a challenge to the legitimacy of the cognitive phenomenology program. In any case, Husserl and the phenomenological tradition that follows him have much to contribute to this aspect of the analytic debate.

A third lacuna is that there is only passing mention of unconscious mental states⁷ and there is no mention of the challenge that acknowledging these poses to (at least certain versions) of cognitive phenomenology. The challenge here is that if (to take the most extreme line) *all* cognitive intentional content is determined by the cognitive phenomenology of the experience, then *unconscious* beliefs, desires, and intentions are impossible. For, since unconscious mental states by definition lack phenomenal features, they do not have intentional content. Here too, there are well-known phenomenological predecessors who faced similar problems, and some in the phenomenological tradition have addressed these problems. It is well known, for instance, that Brentano was also a denier of unconscious mental states. But it is not so clear that Husserl followed Brentano in this. Moreover, there are other figures in the phenomenological tradition (perhaps broadly construed)—Freud, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacan, just to name a few—who have phenomenological perspectives on the unconscious that would certainly enrich the analytic discussion of this challenge.

I turn now to the set of papers in the collection that set out primarily to advance claims about the history of phenomenological philosophy. These are the papers by Doyon, Bernet, and Crowell. The focus of these papers is largely on the interpretation of Husserl and Heidegger.⁸

However, the contribution by Bernet really stands out in this regard, since it is focused completely on setting up the historical and theoretical background to a Deleuzian view of thinking in order to vindicate its legitimacy as a phenomenological philosophy of thinking. It says little (except by way of passing criticism) of

⁷ This is found in the editors' introduction in the section on introspection (pp. 12–16).

⁸ Such a procedure is often regarded as completely appropriate, given the influence of these two philosophers in the phenomenological tradition. As the editors of this volume note, one main thread of discussion in the phenomenological tradition is its own history, and this history is “[i]n Ricœur's well-known phrase, [...] ‘the history of Husserlian heresies’” (p. 1).

Husserl's views, and it discusses Heidegger as a way to illuminate the Deleuzian view it is setting out. According to Bernet, Deleuze's conception of thinking attempts to recover "a form of conceptual philosophical thinking that operates without the metaphysical presuppositions of the traditional image of thought" (p. 149)—an image of the thinker as a timeless transcendental subject engaged in an activity governed by fixed, timeless laws, the denial of which is tantamount to skepticism. This "traditional image of thinking" resonates deeply with key figures in the philosophical tradition (prior to the divide between Continental and Analytic philosophy), who saw the theory of judgment as first philosophy.⁹ And, as such, it should prove of interest to those at work in the history of analytic philosophy, neo-Kantianism, and phenomenology. However, given the purview of Bernet's paper, I'm sure that it will also prove to be the toughest for the untutored analytic philosopher to comprehend. Given Deleuze's recent popularity among some analytic philosophers,¹⁰ however, this might not pose a significant problem.

Now, as mentioned above, the papers by Doyon and Crowell are framed in a way that attempts to make the historical claims about the phenomenological tradition relevant to the contemporary analytic debate. But for now I want to focus only on the historical claims themselves and their implications for the historical debates. Doyon's paper contains an argument that the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and the later Husserl, especially in *Experience and Judgment*, see the fundamental phenomenological structure of both perception and thought as having a closely analogous "as-structure". In other words, it is true of both thought and perception that they "present something *as something*", even though there are important differences in this as-structure as they are manifest in perception and thought. This reading of the later Husserl is largely uncontested. However, as Doyon points out, his reading of Heidegger presents a strong challenge to a popular picture of Heidegger's views due to Hubert Dreyfus, which construes perception as a form of practical coping that has no phenomenological as-structure at all.

Crowell's paper can be divided into two parts. The first part advances the claim that one argument for the existence of cognitive phenomenology that can be derived from Husserl's *Logical Investigations* is based on Husserl's analysis of fulfillment, or the "experience of truth". This is, roughly, the experience of a merely signitive intention (a belief or a hunch) being *fulfilled* by an intuitive intention (a perceptual experience) that intends more or less exactly what the signitive intention intends. It is, in other words, the experience of the world *being* (presented in perception) just as it is *thought* to be. Crowell argues that, in the unity of an experience of truth, alongside the distinctively non-sensuous phenomenology that is present in a signitive intention, there is also a distinctively non-sensuous phenomenology pertaining to the intuitive or perceptual experience of the thing as presenting "itself as the norm of a judgment [...] thanks to which the judgment can be assessed in terms of success or failure, truth or falsity" (p. 188). After noting this normative element in cognitive experience as grounds for the acknowledgment of cognitive

⁹ See, e.g., the discussion of this in relation to Frege in the remarkable Bell (1979) and the recently influential Martin (2006).

¹⁰ See the discussions of Deleuze in Moore (2011) and Moore (2015).

phenomenology, Crowell turns in the second part to providing the beginnings of a conceptual analysis of thinking itself. He claims that a phenomenology of thinking must proceed on the basis of an understanding of what thinking is, that conceptual analysis of thinking is a preparatory measure for a phenomenology of thinking. He then reviews some influential views of the activity of thinking in the phenomenological tradition. Most interesting here is the inclusion of Hanna Arendt's (1971) views alongside the more well-known views of the later Heidegger.

The volume also contains a few contributions that seem to be dedicated to advancing the discussion within the phenomenological or analytic traditions as these are playing out today. The papers by Nes and Chudnoff stand out as focused almost completely on topics that are of interest to contemporary philosophers of mind, and they address these debates with minimal reference to figures in the phenomenological tradition. Nes's contribution contains a characterization of the content of conscious inference as containing a sense of what Grice (1957) called "natural meaning", i.e., a sense that "P" means that "Q" in the sense of natural meaning that Grice articulates. He also defends this thesis against alternative views of inference given by others in the analytic literature. Chudnoff's paper argues for the claim that moral perception—i.e., perception that a situation demands that one *ought* to do (or not do) something—involves a kind of cognitive phenomenal experience (a "low level intuition", as Chudnoff calls it), as opposed to merely involving a kind of "high level" perceptual content (a perceptual experience of a state of affairs as being morally acceptable or not).

That these papers say little or nothing about philosophies in the phenomenological tradition is not a criticism. Rather, I believe that it is completely appropriate, perhaps even obligatory, for a collection of essays on phenomenological philosophy to include papers of this sort. For it indicates that phenomenological philosophy is not just the history of phenomenology and that, as such, phenomenology is far from being a dead philosophical movement.

This conviction is also on display in Gallagher's contribution, which focuses on the recent debate over the nature of mind between John McDowell and Hubert Dreyfus. Famously, Dreyfus advances a reading of Heidegger according to which human consciousness is fundamentally a kind of skillful embodied coping with one's world. And he opposes this picture of intentionality to McDowell's (in)famously conceptualist understanding of intentionality as an encounter with the world that is always already infused with conceptual content and shaped by epistemic rationality. In this essay, Gallagher reports some interesting and enlightening history of the development of this debate between Dreyfus and McDowell. And he ultimately argues that Dreyfus's attack on McDowell's view suffers from a blindness to a view of skillful embodied activity as something that involves "an inherent rational or proto-conceptual structure" that "has already been put there by our pre-predicative embodied engagements" (p. 139). Gallagher supports this conception of the fundamental nature of human intentionality by recourse to Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (or practical wisdom) and findings in contemporary cognitive science. He also suggests that McDowell's more recent version of his conceptualism is compatible with this proto-conceptual understanding of the fundamental structure of human intentionality. This

thesis also dovetails nicely with Doyon's criticism of Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger. And so it provides a conceptual background against which one can see how this debate between two influential figures in contemporary philosophy hooks up to fundamental philosophical debates in the phenomenological tradition and to the contemporary analytic discussion about cognitive phenomenology.

As I hope the brief overview of some of the papers in the volume demonstrates, it is largely successful in its aims. The essays in the collection are engaging and worth careful study. And, even though there are a few gaps in the discussion of themes in the contemporary debates about cognitive phenomenology that the phenomenological tradition could enrich, the collection of papers in this volume is well-positioned to help both analytic philosophers and phenomenologists achieve significant insights into this area of research.

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