Review of Tim Bayne and Michelle Montague (eds.) *Cognitive Phenomenology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011 (paperback ed. 2014), 388 p., £47.50 (hardback), £22.00 (paperback).

Reviewed by: Anders Nes, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, Norway.

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The increased interest in cognitive phenomenology is well exemplified in and by this volume, with 14 specially written essays by influential contributors to the debate and a substantial introduction from the editors. The debate concerns the place of the cognitive – reasoning, understanding, conceiving, etc. – as opposed to the sensory and the affective in phenomenal consciousness. It is not in dispute that there typically is something it is like to be us when we think, or that thinking interacts with phenomenal consciousness; the question is whether thinking is partly constitutive of the character of such consciousness. Crudely, could our thoughts be stripped off whilst leaving what it is like to be us intact? If so, our thoughts would seem a bit like our socks. There is typically something it is like to be us when we wear them (we take them off when sleeping), they impinge on our stream of experience (causing an itch, say, or embarrassment), yet there is no sock phenomenology over and above the phenomenal character of these associated sensations, emotions, etc.

In their very helpful introduction, Tim Bayne and Michelle Montague label those who liken thoughts to socks 'conservatives'. Conservatives grant that perceptual experiences, bodily

sensations, sensory imagery, and at least some emotions or moods are what they are in part through how they modulate our overall experience. They argue, though, that we can account for what the phenomenology of any of our states of mind consists in just through some combination of these sensory/affective raw materials. The opposing 'liberals' (Bayne and Montague's term) deny this, finding more to phenomenology than sensory/affective differences, at least in part thanks to cognitive states.

A key question is how rich the would-be sensory/affective reduction base is supposed to be. Perceptions and emotions might themselves be impregnated with conceptual, broadly cognitive, content, i.e. content of the sort expressed in language and deployed in reasoning. To the extent that they are, does their conceptual content partly constitute their phenomenal character? Most conservative contributions to this volume, including those by Peter Carruthers and Bénédicte Veillet, Jesse Prinz, and Michael Tye and Briggs Wright, explicitly deny this: the phenomenologies of perception and emotion, in so far as they are intentional, are merely a matter of the representation of colours, sounds, bodily states, and kindred 'low-to-intermediate level' (in information-processing terms) properties. The remaining pro-conservative contribution, by William S. Robinson, is perhaps less explicit on this point, but at least does not evidently invoke conscious entertaining of conceptual content in characterizing emotional, perceptual, or cognitive phenomenology. Here, then, I shall construe conservatism as rejecting irreducibly cognitive phenomenology, where the irreducibly cognitive phenomenology is held to subsume conceptual content-constituted perceptual or emotional phenomenology.

There is some common ground in the debate. Conservatives agree with liberals that there some such thing as conscious, occurrent thought. Liberals agree with conservatives that such thought at least typically is associated with verbal or other imagery. They agree there typically

is a phenomenal difference between, inter alia and for example: seeing an animal as a duck vs. as a rabbit; reading a sentence with understanding vs. uncomprehendingly; shifting from taking 'I'm hot' as a comment on temperature to one on sexiness (the last example is taken from Charles Siewert's essay (pp. 261-2)).

The included conservatives pursue two broad strategies against the assumption of irreducibly cognitive phenomenology. On the one hand, they argue, in a bottom-up fashion, that irreducibly cognitive phenomenology is unnecessary to account for the incontrovertible phenomenal contrasts. This argument is perhaps most systematically made in Prinz's essay, with references to several psychological and neuroscientific studies, but similar points are made in the other conservative contributions. In duck/rabbit contrasts, they argue, there is a shift in what you attend to, and perhaps in what you imagine (a rabbitish versus a duckish back-side, say). Conscious shifts in how a visual image is construed goes together with a shift in verbal imagery, and conversely. When you go from incomprehension to comprehension there is change in epistemic feelings, say from confusion to felt fluency, where these feelings for present purposes can be likened, respectively, to an itch and a sense of silky smoothness in the head. Once these sensory/affective items have been accounted for, conservatives find nothing more experiential to introspect; anything alleged to remain, they suggest, is bigfoot phenomenology.

On the other hand, conservatives argue, in a more top-down fashion, that cognition has some feature, X, and phenomenology some feature, Y, that combine to create an obstacle to the admission of irreducibly cognitive phenomenology. In his essay, Prinz proposes an isolability requirement on phenomenal features. We should be able to experience them 'in isolation', i.e. to experience them 'without other conscious qualities.' (p. 193) He argues sensory phenomenal

features, notably colour, meet this requirement: 'We can see any given color on different objects or covering a formless *ganzfeld*.' (idem.) If irreducibly cognitive phenomenology were thus isolable, we should be able to have it in the form of conscious thoughts devoid of any relevant attendant sensory or emotional consciousness. Prinz, not implausibly, says this is hard to find. However, the isolability requirement is dubious even for Prinz's paradigm case of colour. There are 'related colours' such as brown that only can be experienced in certain relations of contrast to other colours, and cannot make up a *ganzfeld* (Fairchild, M. D. *Color Appearance Models*. 3rd Ed. Wiley, 2013, pp. 91-2). It is also hard to imagine how we could visually experience the shape of something without any experience as of the colour of the shaped thing or its surround, or its egocentric location.

There is, though, another nearby requirement here that Prinz could fall back on, or perhaps charitably could be interpreted as already intending, viz. that any phenomenal quality is one on which we can get an attentional fix. Brown, visible shapes, etc. arguably meet this requirement, but it is not so clear any irreducibly cognitive phenomenology would meet it, as the liberal Galen Strawson indeed allows in his contribution. Comparing such phenomenology to the experiential character of seeing blue, Strawson writes that "[a]t the very least, it is far more difficult" (p. 296) to bring the former to attention in introspection. Strawson suggests this is because such introspective efforts inevitably involve rethinking the thought whose phenomenology is in question, but that this rethinking 'seems to leave one with no mental room to stand back in such a way as to take the experiential character of [the target thought], redelivered by this rethinking, as the principal object of one's attention.' (p. 295) It is unclear whether he regards the difficulty he posits here as surmountable/circumventable or as rendering selective attention to cognitive phenomenology impossible. In the latter case, he

would surely reject even the weaker Prinzian requirement. In any case, he sees the difficulty first and foremost as something that explains why cognitive phenomenology is liable to evade recognition in a way sensory phenomenology is not – why it is, as he says, 'simultaneously obvious and elusive' (p. 320).

Tye and Wright's essay offers a very different top-down argument against irreducibly cognitive phenomenology, positing mismatched temporal profiles for cognition and phenomenology. They affirmatively cite Geach's claim that 'unless the whole complex [of a thought] is grasped all together … the thought or judgement does not exist at all.' (Geach, P. *Mental Acts,* London: Routledge, 1957, p. 104, cited at p. 342). There is no such thing as being halfway through grasping the content that P, and to that extent a thought does not unfold over time as a process does. Yet, Tye and Wright claim, any introspectible phenomenology associated with thinking, e.g. the sub-vocalization of a sentence expressing what one it thinking, precisely unfolds in a processive fashion. They conclude this mismatch in temporal profile clashes with regarding any phenomenology here as irreducibly cognitive, as opposed to as an aspect of attendant imagery etc.

It seems to me Tye and Wright are too quick to reject a non-processive aspect to cognitive phenomenology. Consider, as a case of conceptually infused perceptual phenomenology, a hunter out to kill two rabbits with a single shot (she would be mortified to harm ducks, her feathered friends). She now gets an impression as of two rabbits overlapping in her aim. Arguably, this impression has to arrive all at once, in the sense in which a judgement that P has to. A process in which one first has in mind merely the one duck, then only to the other, and finally the relation of overlap, or any permutation thereof, would not suffice for the impression our hunter is having; the whole duck1/duck2/overlap complex has to

be before her mind 'all together'. (It is of course vague just when she first gets the impression – as it typically is vague just when someone made a given judgement.) Is there not a static aspect to the phenomenology here, from moment to moment, of the rabbits apparently being in overlap, as long as they apparently are? Furthermore, when one's interpretation of an ambiguous sentence such as 'I'm hot' flips, is it not apt to think of the new construal as not only arriving 'all together' but also having the phenomenology of doing so? Is it really to one as though the new interpretation only emerges in a process of one's developing suitably sexy/high-temperature imagery?

The conservative top-down argument developed at greatest length in the collection is in Carruthers and Veillet's essay. They argue a mental state, *E*, has phenomenology only in so far as it is conceivable that *E*'s phenomenology remains fixed whilst its functional/representational role varies, or vice versa, as in spectrum inversion scenarios; that such conceivability presumes having some 'phenomenal concept' of *E* that does not obviously imply something about its functional/representational role; that such concepts are unavailable for mental states qua conceptual content-involving, precisely because conceiving of them qua such obviously implies something about that role. Without purporting to do justice to their complex argument, I will gesture at one concern. One might think, on grounds of transparency, that even for perceptual states we lack any characteristically first-personal concept of their phenomenological type other than in terms of how our surroundings appear to us as being, when we are those states, and thus in terms of how they represent things as being.

On the liberal side, a central plea, unsurprisingly, developed at length in the essays by Charles Siewert and by Galen Strawson, is this. Although the incontrovertible phenomenal contrast cases may be associated with relevant "low-to-intermediate level" sensory/affective

differences, they need not be, and, in any event, those differences leave out some key experiential differences, in particular those the specification of which essentially involves deploying concepts specifying what it is that is being thought, understood, of found emotionally significant in some way.

However, if liberals are right about this, why does the further phenomenological dimension systematically elude recognition by a non-negligible number of theorists? We noted Strawson's suggestions as to why this dimension is 'simultaneously obvious and elusive' (p. 320) above. Siewert also responds at length to the same question. Among much else, he charts a history from Ryle onwards through which any notion of consciousness aptly thought of as experiential, phenomenal, and 'qualitative' has become firmly linked in the minds of many theorists with such sensory paradigms as pains and colour impressions. Reliance on these as paradigms may not strictly rule out liberalism, but encourages the thought that any cognitive phenomenology must somehow be akin to that of the sensory paradigms, and thus the conservative idea that any phenomenology here is exhausted by that of associated sensory/affective states.

Siewert (pp. 243-7) responds by offering another route to the notion of phenomenal consciousness. He uses the familiar gloss thereon in terms of there being something it is like for someone to be in a certain state, *E.* He then elucidates this condition of there being something it is like for someone to be in *E* in terms of the possibility of having, or sensibly seeking, a certain special, subjective and non-theoretical, knowledge of what state *E* is. The special knowledge in question is 'subjective' in requiring that one either oneself is in state *E* or can imagine being in it. It is 'non-theoretical' in not requiring being able to explain what being in *E* consists in. Siewert argues such special knowledge of a state, *E*, can be derivative, in the

sense that it can be obtained by having similarly special knowledge of some other states, that that are suitably associated with *E* but could be had without *E*. His paradigm example of derivative knowledge of the relevant kind is that whereby you know what it is like to eat durian through knowing what it is like to be in such-and-such gustatory states associated with the eating. Phenomenal states, he proposes, are just those for which *non-derivative* special knowledge is to be had, or sensibly sought. He argues that cognitive states of delayed, sudden comprehension, inter alia, meet this condition.

Siewert may be right to posit the availability or sensible seekability of the indicated special knowledge as necessary for phenomenal states, but seems wrong to make it sufficient. For most concepts, say that of justice, the state of possessing it is not plausibly phenomenal (nor does Siewert (p. 250, nt. 13) suggest otherwise). Yet an ordinary, widespread form of knowledge of what having a concept of justice is (a knowledge people exhibit in, say, judging that six-months-olds lack and sixteen-years-olds possess this concept) is a knowledge only obtainable by oneself having a concept of justice (and thus being in the relevant state), and not requiring the (exceedingly rare) ability to explain what it consists in to have a concept of justice. The knowledge is, moreover, not obtained by having similar knowledge of what some other state is, where possessing the concept of justice is inessential to the latter state. (If you think *justice* has a reductive analysis, substitute one from the analysis. Repeat if necessary.) So this ordinary, widespread knowledge is subjective, non-theoretical, and non-derivative. What goes for *justice* here, seems to go for a wide range of other concepts. Siewert seems right to posit a deep link between phenomenal states and subjective knowledge of broadly the sort he is homing in on, yet such subjective knowledge nevertheless seems to extend to conceptual states beyond the phenomenal.

This review has touched only on a small subset of the rich variety of issues discussed in the volume. The remaining essays are generally sympathetic of liberalism. Two recurring themes are these. First, whether irreducibly cognitive phenomenology has some role to play in a good, or even best, explanation of our special, first-personal access to our occurrent thoughts. David Pitt defends his argument, developed in several earlier papers, that it does. The argument is critically examined in Joseph Levine's contribution. Second, whether irreducibly cognitive phenomenology can be discerned as an aspect of some other, perhaps harder-to-deny phenomenology. Terry Horgan agues agentive phenomenology is a case in point, particularly our sense of what we do as having some ulterior purpose. Michelle Montague proposes an account of the 'particularity' of perception, i.e., roughly, its character of being as of *this* particular thing over there, *that* particular thing over here, etc., according to which it turns out to be a form of cognitive phenomenology.

The volume is an important contribution to the debate on cognitive phenomenology. It should be of interest to philosophers of mind working on consciousness, cognition, and their intersections.