

Book Review

Philosophy of Mind and Phenomenology

Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Andreas Elpidorou and Walter Hopp (Eds.) (2015). *Philosophy of Mind and Phenomenology: Conceptual and Empirical Approaches*. (Routledge Research in Phenomenology). London and New York: Routledge. (346 pages)

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by **Bradford McCall**

Any study of the mind must negotiate how things appear to humans. Philosophical and scientific studies of the mind are heavily invested in the examination of how our surroundings, other people, things within our surroundings, mental episodes, and manifold other things present themselves to us, affording themselves to us in one manner or another, singly or collectively. We often relate these instances of phenomena in the first person. Far from removing these experiences, the study of the human mind is dependent, intimately, upon how these phenomena are experienced from a first-person perspective. These experiences have proven to be remarkably recalcitrant to the predominant reductionistic tendency in the biological sciences today. This fact should not really be surprising, for neurological and behavioral investigations that attempt to explain away these experiences rely upon a first-person account of them.

This volume, assembled from a group of internationally leading scholars, identifies and develops the intersections of philosophy of mind and phenomenology in a conceptual and empirically informed manner. The intersections identified, largely neglected in the literature heretofore, are crucial for future inquiries into the mind. The text's objective is to demonstrate that phenomenology, as the first-person study of the contents of our mentality, can provide us with insights into the inner workings of the mind and can complement strictly analytical approaches to the study of the mind. Insofar as phenomenology allows the mind to appear, this collection of essays shows how the mind can *reappear* through a constructive dialogue between phenomenological, analytical, and empirical ways of understanding mentality.

More precisely, this text focuses upon understanding experiences as they are presented to us in first-person terms, which belies a strict Cartesian paradigm of the mind. First-personal judgments about appearances are not espoused to be infallible, and they are not given priority over scientific findings either. Rather, the text insists that the first-personal perspective is ineliminable, nothing more and nothing less. In contemporary parlance, phenomenology at times denotes a specific movement in the history of philosophy, originally onset by Edmund Husserl in the 20th century. At other times, it designates whatever appears to someone in a first-person manner. In this text, the term phenomenology is used in a third, albeit related, sense to connote the sort of examination of existence that takes a first personal character to be fundamental to that examination. Pointedly, phenomenology in this sense is the study of the contents and structures of experiences as they are experienced in a first-person manner. As such, how things appear to us is part of the very subject matter of phenomenology, and hence such themes as subjectivity, world, and intersubjectivity lie

within its scope. The text, overall, aims at to make the case for the value, relevance, and the indispensability of phenomenology for the study of the mind by elucidating the multitudes of ways that phenomenology matters and contributes to our understanding of mentality.

The text is composed of 15 essays and is broken into six parts. The opening essay, “Cognitive Phenomenology,” written by David Woodruff Smith, addresses the crucial question of what exactly is the subjective (or phenomenal) character of experience and to what extent our conscious mental activities are invested with such a character. Smith reviews numerous different theories of what it is like have the experience of being conscious, and concludes with a sketch of a modal model of consciousness that differentiates the mode of presentation from the modality of presentation. In “For-me-ness: What It Is and What It Is Not,” Dan Zahavi and Uriah Kriegel defend a notion of for-me-ness from a number of objections; for example, they counter Humean objections to the notion of first-personal perspectives by stressing that for-me-ness neither occurs on its own, nor entails a reflective capacity to recognize one’s identity as the subject of various experiences. Dermot Moran, in “Lived Body, Intercorporeality, Intersubjectivity: The Body as a Phenomenological Theme,” argues that phenomenology has a long history of both recognizing and effectively explaining the pivotal role played by the body in the constitution of every sort of consciousness. In her contribution, “The Body and Its Image in the Clinical Encounter,” Dorothee Legrand focuses upon the relationship between the patient and the clinician as a form of ethical practice at the juncture of jointly irreducible experiences of the body. She highlights the essential nature of the clinician’s increasing reliance on visual imagery and its impact on the patient’s experience.

Several chapters within the text make mention of, build upon, or simply dialogue with Merleau-Ponty’s account of embodied perception and habituation. For example, in chapter five, “Merleau-Ponty: Actions, Habits, and Skilled Expertise,” Komarine Romdenh-Romluc turns our attention to the promise of Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of agency. A central contention of her revised view of Merleau-Ponty’s account is the insufficiency of standard distinctions between actions and happenings to capture the nuances of human agency. Merleau-Ponty succeeds, she contends, in giving an analysis of agency that does not reduce it to a subpersonal account of the mechanisms underlying it. In chapter six, “The Minds of Others,” Shaun Gallagher recounts the embodied character of mental life, as well as the differences between the access we have to our own minds and bodies and the access we have to those of others. He asserts that phenomenology has the distinctive capacity to hold together these two basic insights in a positive and productive tension.

One of the editors, Daniel O. Dahlstrom, contributes chapter seven, which is entitled, “Interoception and Self-Awareness: An Exploration in Interoceptive Phenomenology.” Therein, he makes the case for construing interoception (i.e., experiences that emerge in concert with internal states of the body) as a rudimentary form of self-awareness. Jonathan Webber contributes chapter eight, “Knowing One’s Own Desires,” which dialogues with Richard Moran’s theory of self-knowledge and Sartre’s account of phenomenological reflection and motivation. Webber’s analysis shows that Moran’s account of first-personal authority requires that we already have epistemic access to our own desires. Chapter nine, “Phenomenal Conservatism and the Principle of All Principles,” which is written by Walter Hopp, compares and contrasts Husserl’s Principle of All Principles and Michael Huemer’s Principle of Phenomenal Conservatism. He shows that the former grounds all justified belief in the experience of *fulfillment*, and the latter grounds all justified belief in *seemings*, which are distinguished by their forcefulness.

Dan Lloyd, in “Hearing, Seeing, and Music in the Middle,” explicates the ways in which the world of vision differs from the world of hearing. Vision affords a world of objects, whereas hearing affords a world of events. Chapter eleven, written by Nicolas de Warren and entitled

“Eyes Wide Shut: Sartre’s Phenomenology of Dreaming,” offers an original and constructive reading of Sartre’s *The Imaginary* with the aim of answering numerous questions about the nature of dreaming experiences. Lauren Freeman, in “Defending a Heideggerian Account of Mood,” after glossing over Heidegger’s account of moods, outlines four problems besetting it: its inconsistencies, its failure to attend to underlying neurological structures, its limitedness and questionable claims about the priority of moods, and its neglect of the body. In “The Significance of Boredom: A Sartrean Reading,” Andreas Elpidorou argues that boredom is not a problem, per se, but rather is a solution. Chapter fourteen, “Prospects for a Naturalized Phenomenology,” written by Jeffrey Yoshimi, takes up an important issue to the understanding of the nature of phenomenology as a philosophical endeavor and its potential connections to the empirical sciences of the mind. Herein, he examines and assesses the different manners in which phenomenology can be reconciled with the methods and naturalistic assumptions of the empirical sciences of the mind. Mark Rowlands, in closing the volume in chapter 15, contributes an essay entitled “Bringing Philosophy Back: 4e Cognition and the Argument from Phenomenology.” Therein, Rowlands argues in favor of what he terms vehicle externalism, which is a thesis regarding the constitution and location of mental processes. It holds that the vehicles of some mental states and processes can be located outside the subject’s central nervous system.

Overall, the volume is structured in such a manner as to address the traditional and persisting problems in philosophy, issues that are timely and subject of current philosophical debate, issues that are largely neglected by phenomenological research, issues of mind that may benefit from phenomenological research, and issues concerning the compatibility of phenomenological analyses of the mind with analyses based on cognitive and neurological sciences. By bringing together phenomenology, analytic philosophy of mind, and recent empirical approaches to the mind, this text is eminently designed to address pressing questions in the philosophy of mind in a systematic manner.

I recommend it unhesitantly to scholars working in the philosophical arena, particularly those who harbor interests in philosophy of mind.

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