

# FORUM

*A cura di Simona Chiodo*



Forum on

*The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*, by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, London-New York, Routledge, 2008.

*La mente fenomenologica*, trad. it. di P. Pedrini, Milano, Cortina, 2009.

Discussants

*Michele Averchi - Vincenzo Costa - Steven Crowell*

*Roberta Lanfredini - Luigi Perissinotto*

ABSTRACT. – *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*, written by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, is a precious occasion to discuss some fundamental philosophical topics, starting from the question about the fruitful relationship, and the mutual enlightenment, between phenomenology and cognitive sciences. So, both the authors and their commentators discuss the important notions of mind and body, consciousness and experience, added to those of imagination, memory, intentionality, self-experience, intersubjectivity, and empathy through a vivid debate that touches essential, and challenging, subjects of our days.

*Luigi Perissinotto (Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia)*

*The Phenomenological Mind* is an extremely interesting book full of important considerations and valuable analysis. In this brief intervention I will outline some general comments related to its overall approach.

1. Gallagher and Zahavi's goal is explicitly formulated: their book is a *philosophical* book on the mind but capable of systematically confronting itself with the sciences that are concerned with the mind. That is why the authors, as they immediately put forth, «will frequently appeal to the details of scientific evidence from studies in cognitive neuroscience and

brain imagining, developmental and cognitive psychology, and psychopathology» [p. 1]. The approach adopted is not meant to be «a *pure* philosophical approach – that is, [...] a philosophical approach that would ignore the other sciences» [p. 1], but still wants to remain a *philosophical* approach that does not surrender to the current prevailing naturalism that assigns exclusively to the neurosciences the study of the mind moving from the premise that «all human activity is dictated by the organization and laws of the brain» [p. 12, no. 1; this is a quote from an essay by Semir Zeki in which it is described what Gallagher and Zahavi in a polemic spirit call «neurologism»].

Clearly, one might ask whether this «*pure* philosophical approach» which our authors renounce remains, if not desirable, at least possible. What will be given up by those who would adopt it? What was lost by all those philosophers (including many phenomenologists), who have endorsed it so far? Actually, a different question seems to drive Gallagher and Zahavi's volume: what do sciences risk losing if they yield to any philosophical approach to the mind either out of lack of knowledge or because of pride fuelled by the very same naturalism-oriented philosophers? The question is not vague or allusive at all because here we refer not to an indistinct philosophical approach, but to a specific perspective, namely the European-originated phenomenological method that «includes the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and other more recent thinkers» [p. 1]. Thus, the assumption underlying the book is that neurosciences (and along with them the analytic philosophy of mind that has mainly accompanied their development) need phenomenology – primarily, though not exclusively [see p. 10] – as a method or set of methods. Still unresolved is whether and, if so, how phenomenology needs neurosciences.

Certainly, one might argue that the need for phenomenology emerged within the neurosciences themselves sets the phenomenological tradition free from the widespread suspect of anti-scientific attitude, a suspect fed by phenomenology's tendency toward a «non or even anti-naturalistic approach» [p. 4]. If Gallagher and Zahavi are right, science can not only live with but even thrive with phenomenological non-naturalistic and typical «first-person approach» [p. 7]. As an example, within neurosciences «the generation of images of neural processing using non-

invasive technology has made possible a variety of experiments that depend on reports about the experience of the experimental subjects. Both in order to design the experiments properly and in order to interpret their results, experimenters often want to know what the subject's experience is like» [p. 5]. But if this cohabitation can suit neurosciences, what can phenomenology learn from the «third-person approach» typical of those sciences? In the *Introduction* one reads that «phenomenology and science may be aiming for different kinds of accounts, but it seems clear that phenomenology can be relevant and useful for scientific work» [p. 10]. But is this appreciation also true the other way? May scientific work be relevant and useful for phenomenology?

2. Why and how phenomenology might be relevant and useful for scientific work is clearly explained in short by our authors in the *Introduction*, and more at length throughout the book. In short, the main idea is as follows: phenomenology describes and attempts to fully understand the experience that «the psychologists and neuroscientists are trying to explain when they appeal to neural, information processing, or dynamic models» [p. 9]. This is why phenomenological analysis can be a good (and maybe necessary) starting point for science: thanks to it «we know what we have to explain, and we may have good clues about how to design experiments» [p. 10]. In this sense, phenomenology «provides a more adequate model [for example] of perception for the scientist to work with than if the scientist simply starts with a commonsense approach» or «with a pre-established theory of perception» [p. 9]. The belief that drives those considerations is that whoever starts with a theory (i.e., according to the highly significant paraphrase by the authors, whoever let oneself be guided by one's own «theoretical prejudices» or by one's own «theoretical preconceptions») by that theory will get dogmatically entrapped. In contrast to this dogmatic attitude, phenomenology, which always seeks to remain critical, «asks us not to let preconceived theories form our experience, but to let our experience inform and guide our theories» [p. 10]. Now, in a sense, there is nothing dogmatic or accidental to begin with a theory (a scientific one). As the authors themselves recognize at last, it is so that «science often makes progress» [p. 10]. Who starts with a (scientific) theory does not (or does not necessarily) do so against or in opposition to the experience (or to the ex-

periments or to experimentation in general). It is not against theory so conceived that phenomenology engages in controversy, but rather against the idea that we should commit to some general and comprehensive theory (either to dualism or materialism or identity theory or functionalism or eliminativism, and further on) «[b]efore we even know for sure what we are talking about» [p. 6]. In this sense, the explicit reference is to the Husserlian tradition, for which one should not begin with theory, but with experience [see p. 6.]. It remains to be asked whether experience remains only at the beginning of phenomenology and not at its end. To put it differently: should the phenomenologist, at the end of his pathway, resume and attempt to respond to that kind of theoretical questions [i.e., see p. 6: «Does the brain cause consciousness?»] that had been suspended exactly because the starting point was experience? The attitude by the authors of *The Phenomenological Mind* is not entirely explicit. It is certainly true that they do not deny the theoretical claims and intentions of phenomenology: «It would be an oversimplification if we considered phenomenology as simply a set of methods for the pure description of experience. Using such methods, however, phenomenologists are led to insights about experience, and they are also interested in developing these insights into theories of perception, intentionality, phenomenality, etc». [p. 10]; but these are theories, so to speak, *internal* to the phenomenological horizon, and not theories in the same sense the so called Cartesian materialism is a theory on the relationship between mind, brain and body. Once again it is not entirely clear what kind of attitude the phenomenologist should assume against that kind of theories to which belong the aforementioned materialism or dualism. Should the phenomenologist as such: 1. keep a suspension attitude? 2. assess which of these theories best matches the phenomenological descriptions of experience? 3. move from phenomenology to metaphysics?

3. With reference to the foregoing considerations I would further note two points that seem particularly crucial in the phenomenological framework set out by Gallagher and Zahavi.

a. As highlighted above, in tune with Husserl our two authors argue that phenomenologists as such neither deny nor state, for example, that the brain causes consciousness. «They suspend these kinds of questions and all judgments about them. They start with experience» [p. 6]. In so doing,

they still do attribute, at least implicitly, *sense* to the questions that they suspend. However, one would immediately ask, are those questions really meaningful? What does to «cause» mean for those who ask themselves whether the brain causes consciousness? And what consequences would those persons draw or would delude themselves to draw from the response, whether positive or negative? Is there any sense of «causing» (a methodologically legitimate sense) that would allow one to resist the reduction of consciousness to the brain or, as many would like today, to foster it? Is not the very same idea of reduction in need of a conceptual clarification? It must be pointed out that all these questions cannot be resolved, as our authors recognize it after all [see p. 9], not even by the most detailed phenomenological description of consciousness. Is a phenomenological response to reductionism possible? Should there be one at all? Could we be satisfied with observing that adopting «a reductionist strategy» [p. 9] is not mandatory?

*b.* At the onset I wondered if early phenomenology has something to learn from the neurosciences. On this particular point the authors, certainly more concerned with recognising the contribution made by phenomenology to the neurosciences, are elusive. Of course, the problem does not only concern the specific relationship of phenomenology with the neurosciences, but more generally involves the question of the relationship (a relationship of contiguity, overlapping, difference in principle, strangeness, competition, and further on) between philosophy and science. There is a place in the book where the problem is explicitly formulated, although it does not find an equally explicit answer. In the chapter 8 on *Action and Agency* [pp. 154-170] the authors note that «[p]henomenologically (experientially) [...] intentions in almost all cases come already fully clothed in agency. [...] I don't experience actions without agents; I experience 'X's action' where X is either you or me». The same does not seem to apply to the brain which «in fact [...] can process information about intentions without assigning agency to the intentions» [p. 168]. Now, Gallagher and Zahavi believe that the difference that does or does not hold good «between the phenomenological level and the neuronal level» is a problem only for those arguing that the two levels should be isomorphic. But our authors remark that «there is no isomorphism necessary between the phenomenological level and the

neuronal level. If the neuronal processes can be defined as involving a step-wise process, this does not mean that a step-wise process needs to show up in phenomenology» [pp. 168-169]. Perhaps Gallagher and Zahavi are right on this particular aspect. But, then, I wonder whether the project underlying the whole book remains unchanged if the authors are right on this point. To put it differently: can it ever be that the neuronal level belies the phenomenological one?

*Shaun Gallagher (University of Central Florida) and Dan Zahavi (University of Copenhagen)*

We first want to express our thanks to the commentators for their close and critical readings of *The Phenomenological Mind*. We would like to treat their comments and challenging questions as a productive opportunity to clarify our views and to make our positions more precise.

In his comments, *Luigi Perissinotto* raises a question of paramount importance. Phenomenologists might heartily embrace the view that phenomenology can be of value to cognitive science, neuroscience, and biology and, more generally, to any empirical investigation of the mind, but to what extent does phenomenology need neuroscience? To what extent is scientific work more generally speaking relevant to and useful for phenomenology? In short, is it really correct to speak of mutual enlightenment – to pick this slogan – or is the truth of the matter, that the influence is more unidirectional?

As we tried to make clear in the book, phenomenology is not only engaged in fundamental transcendental philosophical clarifications, it also studies concrete phenomena that are open to empirical investigation, and insofar as phenomenology concerns itself with such phenomena our claim would be that it should be informed by the best available scientific knowledge.

To be more specific, the phenomenological credo ‘to the things themselves’ calls for us to let our experience guide our theories. We should pay attention to the way in which we experience reality. Empirical scientists might not pay much attention to the formal structure of phenomenality, but as empirical researchers they do in fact pay quite a lot of



attention to concrete phenomena, and might consequently be less apt to underestimate the richness, complexity and variety of phenomena than the average philosopher. To put it differently, even if the ultimate aim of phenomenology is to provide a transcendental philosophical clarification, there is more to phenomenology than this ultimate goal. Phenomenology also offers detailed analyses of various aspects of consciousness, including perception, imagination, embodiment, memory, self-experience, temporality, etc. In offering such analyses, phenomenology addresses issues that are crucial for an understanding of the true complexity of consciousness and might even offer a conceptual framework for understanding the mind that is of considerably more value than some of the models currently in vogue in cognitive science. But for the very same reason, it should also be clear that phenomenology deals with topics that it shares with other disciplines, and it would be wrong to insist that it should simply ignore empirical findings pertaining to these very topics. Does this entail that a phenomenological account of perception or action should necessarily be informed and constrained by, say, investigations of the neuronal mechanisms and processes involved in action and perception? In some cases, discoveries of the latter kind could motivate us to take another look at the phenomenology, in order to ascertain whether we got it right the first time, but generally speaking a phenomenological account of perception and action is an attempt to do justice to the first-person perspective, it seeks to understand the experience in terms of the meaning it has for the subject, and doesn't address the subpersonal mechanisms that might enable us to experience the way we do. However, we shouldn't overlook the fact that disciplines such as psychopathology, neuropathology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, anthropology etc. can provide *person-level descriptions* that might be of phenomenological relevance. The examples are legion, but if one were to mention a few, one could single out 1) neuropsychological descriptions of various disorders of body-awareness, 2) psychopathological descriptions of schizophrenic disturbances of self-experience and intentionality, 3) developmental descriptions of social interactions in early childhood.

To be more precise consider Jonathan Cole's careful analysis of Ian Waterman, who at the age of nineteen, due to illness, lost all sense of touch and proprioception from the neck down; compare Cole's analysis

of how dramatic and disabling this impairment was, with the classical phenomenological investigation of the lived body. Consider next the work by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists like Blankenburg, Parnas and Sass, who provide careful analyses of the disturbed self- and world-experience we find in schizophrenic patients; compare this to the phenomenological discussion of natural evidence and non-objectifying pre-reflective self-acquaintance. Consider, finally, the work by developmental psychologists like Trevarthen, Stern, Rochat, Reddy and Hobson, let us compare their careful analyses of primitive but fundamental forms of social understanding found in infants and young children to the work on empathy, pairing and intercorporeity we find in Scheler, Stein, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

So what we are proposing is in fact not merely that phenomenological analyses and distinctions might be useful for cognitive science. The point isn't merely that phenomenology might prove indispensable if we wish to obtain a precise description of the explanandum – a *sine qua non* for any successful attempt to identify and localize the relevant neurobiological correlate. It isn't merely a question of employing phenomenological insights in the empirical investigation of the mind. Rather, the idea is that the influence goes both ways, i.e., it would also be a question of letting phenomenology profit from – and be challenged by – empirical findings. This is why it is entirely appropriate to speak of *mutual enlightenment* [Gallagher 1997].

But it is one thing to talk about person-level descriptions, what about the insights from neurobiology and dynamical systems theory regarding various sub-personal mechanisms. Can they really help us to improve and refine the classical phenomenological analyses, as it has occasionally been suggested [Varela 1997 and Thompson 2007, p. 340]? Here is a proposal. Let us assume that our initial phenomenological description presents us with what appears to be a simple and unified phenomenon. When studying the neural correlates of this phenomenon, we discover that two quite distinct mechanisms are involved; mechanisms that are normally correlated with distinctive experiential phenomena, say, perception and memory. This discovery might motivate us to return to our initial phenomenological description in order to see whether the phenomenon in question is indeed as simple as we thought. Perhaps a

more careful analysis will reveal that it harbors a concealed complexity (obviously, one might also consider the reverse case, where the phenomenological analysis presents us with what appears to be two distinct phenomena and where subsequent neuroscientific findings suggest a striking overlap, unity, or even identity). However, it is very important to emphasize that the discovery of a significant complexity on the sub-personal level – to stick to this simple example – cannot by itself force us to refine or revise our phenomenological description. It can only serve as motivation for further inquiry. There is no straightforward isomorphism between the sub-personal and personal level, and ultimately the only way to justify a claim concerning a complexity on the phenomenological level is by cashing it out in experiential terms.

*Vincenzo Costa (Università degli Studi del Molise)*

*The Phenomenological Mind* is a very interesting book. All the most important issues of the philosophy of mind have been investigated with a very close phenomenological attention. I will focus on a single chapter of the book: the chapter 9, *How we Know Others*, and just try to raise some questions.

First of all I agree with the authors of the book when they refuse a theory of simulation as a theory that could explain how we understand other people. I think that such a theory must involve the idea that to understand other persons means to feel what they are feeling, i.e. that we have the same mental states as the others. Husserl criticised the idea that empathy means to have the same mental states of the other, «for when I feel empathy with your anger, I am myself not angry, not at all. Just as I am not angry when I imagine anger or merely recall it» [Hua XIII,188].

Yet, I think we have to make clear how we can understand what happens in the other minds. If I understand correctly your position, you have argued that «in seeing the action and expressive movements of other persons, one already sees their meaning» [p. 185]. But I did not understand *how this is possible*. As a matter of fact the problem is just to make clear why we experience a mere facial or bodily movement as an expression. This is my first question.

In other words, I wonder if we do not have to think that a gesture or a facial or bodily movement can be experienced as meaningful only if it has the same meaning for both the subjects. For instance, if someone shakes his fist in your face, this gesture would have for you the same meaning that has for the other. You can understand each other only because you both know how to interpret this gesture, because you have been taught how to understand its meaning. But this means: we can understand other people because we live within a common cultural world: a life-world. Therefore the meanings do not lay into the minds, but are originally social and public: they belong to a culture. For instance, the interpretation of a gesture requires, as Husserl says, an *ursprüngliche Interpretation* [Hua VIII, p. 63], and this can take place only if the two subjects live within the same life-world.

Hence the second question: do not we have reasons for thinking that the difference between primary and secondary intersubjectivity is a difference between 1) an interaction which takes place when one responds directly to the action of another without interpreting the meaning of this action (for instance when a child imitates the facial movements of a grown-up, see Meltzoff) and 2) an interaction which involves interpretation of the gesture and of the action?

This leads us to the third question. You write that «the idea that behaviour, considered in itself, is neither expressive nor significant, is unacceptable» [p. 186]. Yet the problem is why and how behaviour becomes expressive and significant. For instance, autistic children do not experience the behaviour as significant. I guess we have to clear phenomenologically why they do not do this, and this involves the explanation of what makes possible to see the behaviour as significant. I did not understand your position about what makes significant the behaviour and when this takes place.

What you write further is linked with this problem: «We should avoid construing the mind as something visible to only one person and invisible to everyone. The mind is not something exclusively inner, something cut off from the body and the surrounding world» [p. 186]. I am not sure I have understood what you mean. But I think there is nothing bad in thinking that the mind is visible to only one person. Husserl has always drawn attention on the circumstance that I can not have the ex-

perience of what is lived by the other. I think this impossibility is maybe the condition of the possibility of the social relation. As a matter of fact, if I do not have the experience of what happens in other minds, then I have to interpret the gesture or the bodily movement of the other, for the other can use his bodily movement to lie, or he can use it to control or guide the impression that I might make of him. I would say therefore: the impossibility to see the mind of the other is the condition of the possibility of interaction and furthermore of a communicative society [Hua IV, 194]. You write that «when somebody blushes because he is ashamed, the blush reveals and manifests the shame» [p. 186], but I think we should add other situations. For instance, somebody can laugh in order to produce in us a certain interpretation of what happens in his mind, in order to get some information or to give us false information. I think we can say that there is experience of others when and only when the other can use a gesture to deceive or to cheat. Further, I think we should not forget that in order to promise we must presuppose that the other might lie and that promising, as the fundamental structure of all human societies, involves the possibility of cheating.

Finally, I wonder if the authors of the book suggest that we should refuse Husserl's theory of otherness and embrace Scheler's theory. As a matter of fact Husserl's theory is a particular kind of theory of empathy as analogy and *Übertragung*. Yet in the book the authors do not mention Husserl's theory, but mostly Scheler's criticism of the argument of analogy. My last question is about how we have to interpret the position of Zahavi and Gallagher on this issue. We can read in the book that the argument of analogy runs as follows: «The only mind I have direct access is my own. My access to the mind of another is always mediated by his bodily behaviour. But how can the perception of another person's body provide with information about his mind?» [p. 181]. But I wonder: is not this Husserl's starting point?

*S.G. and D.Z.*

In his comments, *Vincenzo Costa* pinpoints a really important point, and provides us with a welcome opportunity to clarify some details of our proposal. Basically, *Costa* questions our reliance on *Scheler's* account of direct interpersonal understanding and our criticism of analogical reasoning. As he asks, are we not forgetting some of *Husserl's* insights, for instance the fact that the impossibility of actually living through the other's experience is the condition of possibility of a social relation, or the fact that the understanding of gestures and expressions involves interpretation? In fact, didn't *Husserl* himself explicitly argue that interpersonal understanding relies on some process of analogizing? *Costa's* points are well taken, but we suspect that the disagreement might be more apparent than real.

In several of his writings, *Scheler* defends the view that we are empathically able to *experience* other minds [*Scheler* 1954, p. 9]. It is no coincidence that he repeatedly speaks of the perception of others (*Fremdwahrnehmung*), and even entitles his own theory *a perceptual theory of other minds* [*Scheler* 1954, p. 220]. One could, however, ask whether we really enjoy as direct an access to the experiential life of others as we do to our own. This is precisely what other phenomenologists have disputed. *Husserl*, for instance, concedes that my experience of others has a quasi-perceptual character in the sense that it grasps the other himself or herself [*Husserl* 1973, p. 24]. But at the same time, *Husserl* also says that although the body of the other is intuitively given to me *in propria persona*, this is not the case with the other's experiences. They can never be given to me in the same original fashion as my own experiences. In short, empathy is both like and unlike perception. It is like perception in being direct, unmediated, and non-inferential. It is unlike perception, however, in not offering us the fullest presence of the empathized experience – that presence is only available to the subject of the experience. Even *Merleau-Ponty* would agree with the latter point. As he writes, although I can perceive the grief or the anger of the other in his or her conduct, in his face or hands, and although I can understand the other without recourse to any 'inner' experience of suffering or anger, the grief and the anger of the other will never quite have the

same significance for me as they have for him. For me these situations are displayed, for him they are lived through [Merleau-Ponty 2002, p. 415].

But does this entail that we have to choose between Scheler on the one side, and Husserl (and Merleau-Ponty) on the other? Not necessarily. One way to reconcile the different views might be as follows: when claiming that we are able to *experience* others, and as a consequence do not exclusively have to rely on and employ inferences, imitations or projections, this is not meant to entail that we can experience the other in precisely the same way as she herself does, nor that the other's consciousness is accessible to us in precisely the same way as our own is. Second- (and third-) person access to psychological states *do* differ from first-person access. But we shouldn't make the mistake of restricting and equating experiential access with first-person access. It is possible to experience minds in more than one way. When I experience the facial expressions or meaningful actions of another, I am *experiencing* an other's subjectivity, and not merely imagining it, simulating it or theorizing about it. The fact that I can be mistaken and deceived is no argument against the experiential character of the access. Moreover, the fact that my experiential access to the minds of others differs from my experiential access to my own mind is not an imperfection or shortcoming. On the contrary, it is a difference that is constitutional. It is precisely because of this difference, precisely because of this asymmetry, that we can claim that the minds we experience are *other* minds. As Husserl points out, had I had the same access to the consciousness of the other as I have to my own, the other would cease being an other and would instead become a part of myself [Husserl 1999, p. 109]. To put the point differently, in order to get at interpersonal understanding, we have to reject both claims: that everything about the other is invisible, and that everything is visible. Indeed, a more precise way of capturing what is at stake might be by saying that we experience bodily and behavioral expressions as expressive of an experiential life that transcends the expression. Thus, the givenness of the other is of a most peculiar kind. The otherness of the other is precisely *manifest* in his elusiveness and inaccessibility. As Levinas observed, the absence of the other is exactly his presence *as other* [Levinas 1987, p. 94]. There is, so to speak, more to the mind of the

other than what we are grasping, but this does not make our understanding non-experiential.

So again, when we have been emphasizing the importance of direct social perception, and the significance of expressive embodiment, this emphasis must be seen in the context of a debate with philosophers who suggest that we first consciously perceive mere movements, and only subsequently interpret those movements as psychologically expressive. In short, what we are rejecting is the suggestion of a stepwise procedure. Even Husserl seems to have reached a similar conclusion. As he writes at one point: «Actually, no empathy occurs [...]. Nor does any kind of analogizing occur, no analogical inference, no transferral through analogy [...]. Rather, the ‘apperception’ of the foreign psychic life takes place without further ado» [Husserl 1973, pp. 338-339].

Saying this, however, is not to deny that we have to distinguish different forms of expression, say, the difference between the expression of fear, exhaustion, temperament and personality [Husserl 1973, p. 76], and that the understanding of the precise meaning of many expressions might require culturally nested interpretations.

To give an illustration, just consider the following case which might be of particular interest to our Italian readers. In June, D.Z. was traveling in the Como area with his family. His wife was driving the car, and at one point had to traverse a very narrow road. A car coming from the opposite direction stopped in order to let us pass, and in order to express her gratitude, my wife made a hand gesture involving a circle of her thumb and index finger to the driver. In passing the car, we noticed that the driver looked very surprised, and we subsequently wondered whether she had made a *faux pas*. Subsequent inquiries revealed that the use of the gesture in question in Mediterranean countries is likely – as one webpage has it – to get you seriously injured. We were lucky that we were driving in the opposite direction ...

*Steven Crowell (Rice University, Houston)*

In the heyday of behaviorism, most philosophers would have answered my question either by appeal to ‘the brain’ or to ‘language’, but the situa-



tion is very different today. Thanks to the cognitivist revolution – the confluence of work in psychology, neurology, linguistics, computer science, and biology that makes up contemporary Cognitive Science – the notion of mind is once more at the center of philosophical debate. This interdisciplinary state of affairs provides the starting point for Gallagher and Zahavi's *The Phenomenological Mind*, a carefully reasoned and most welcome overview of how the phenomenological tradition can contribute to the very diverse projects that make up the cognitive sciences.

If, as the authors suggest on the first page, the question of «what the mind is and how it works» is *necessarily* the province of interdisciplinary research, since «no single discipline can do full justice to the complexity of the issues at hand» [p. 1], it is also true that these various disciplines have extremely diverse, and often contradictory, ideas about what belongs to an inquiry into mind. The authors convincingly criticize positions they find one-sided, but what concept of mind sustains these criticisms? The phenomenological approach does not begin with definitions but with descriptions of how things present themselves in experience, by means of reflection on that very experience. But any approach to mind will be guided by *some* conception of what the mind is and how it works, and in fact the book contains a robust, though not unambiguous, answer to our question. Here I will mention three closely related ambiguities, not in order to impugn the phenomenological approach (which I hold to be indispensable) but to nudge the authors toward further clarification of the «ontological or metaphysical status» of «the first-person perspective» [p. 222], a task to which they refer at the conclusion of their book.

The ambiguity can be expressed generally as that between a narrower, more 'Cartesian', conception of the mental – roughly equivalent to phenomenal consciousness – and a wider, more 'Hegelian' one that includes embodiment, history, and culture. Of course the authors do not think of this as an *ambiguity*, since the phenomenological concept of «an embodied mind or a minded body» is meant to «replace the ordinary notions of mind and body, showing them to be derivations of something more basic» [p. 135]. However, because empirical cognitive science operates with precisely these derived notions – for instance, by focusing on 'qualia' or 'brain states' – the phenomenological attempt to engage cognitive science on its own terms can yield ambiguous formulations that

tend to obscure the more 'basic' source of its insights.

1. *Is consciousness intrinsically intentional?* By 'consciousness' here I mean *phenomenal* consciousness. The authors assert that «consciousness is characterized by an intrinsic intentionality» [p. 116]. At the same time, it is a fundamental thesis of the book that all consciousness is embodied and embedded. But the claim that *phenomenal* consciousness is intrinsically intentional seems to entail that phenomenality as such – i.e., without reference to its embodied and embedded character – is sufficient for at least *some* intentionality. The authors assert the intrinsic intentionality of consciousness in order to deny the need to appeal to third-person *causal* accounts of object-directedness, but that is not the only question in the vicinity. To assert that consciousness is always embodied and embedded is to invoke circumstances that are no less extrinsic to the phenomenal character of consciousness than are causes. For instance, it is not the phenomenal character of my experience that makes it the case that I am trying to write a philosophy paper, even if the intentionality of my action necessarily involves *some* phenomenal character.

The point is that if the phenomenological mind is neither «soul nor body, neither inner nor outer, neither subject nor object» [p. 135], then it is hard to make sense of the claim that phenomenal consciousness is intrinsically intentional. What is intrinsically intentional is that «dimension» [p. 220] of which phenomenal consciousness is an aspect.

2. *Upon what does phenomenological reflection reflect?* The authors note that phenomenological insistence on a first-person approach is motivated by «transcendental philosophical concerns», namely, an interest in the way «objects are constituted, that is, experienced and disclosed» [p. 24]. But how are we to characterize the 'subject' that is responsible for such constitution? On the one hand, the authors claim that objects are constituted as they are «thanks to the way consciousness is structured» [p. 24]. On the other hand, «phenomenology is not just about consciousness» but about «how we are immersed in our everyday situations and projects» [p. 26]. To say that «phenomenology is not just about consciousness», however, produces an ambiguity when the authors claim that consciousness is both «our only access to the world» *and* is «world-disclosing» [p. 26]. Uncontroversially, *being conscious* is a property of that entity upon which phenomenology reflects. But does it follow

that being conscious is responsible for the constitution of objects? According to the authors, «for something to be an object is for that something to consciously *appear* in a specific manner» – namely, «to appear as transcending the subjective consciousness that takes it as an object» [p. 57]. Thus constitution requires a subject capable of *taking* something *as* transcending itself. It is not at all clear that consciousness alone – or even all kinds of embodied and embedded conscious beings – have that capacity. Is embodied consciousness really an adequate way to characterize the subject upon which phenomenology reflects?

3. Phenomenal consciousness is characterized by a non-objectifying self-awareness, the «unique mode of givenness [...] of experience» as such, «first-personal givenness» [p. 50]. Is this different from the «non-observational proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness of my body in action» [p. 143]? In a footnote, the authors claim that «primary body-awareness is not a type of object-consciousness; it is not a perception of the body as an object at all» [p. 150]. This is also how the first-person character of phenomenal consciousness is described. From a transcendental point of view it is clumsy to have to make a distinction here. The phenomenological mind responsible for world-disclosure possesses a non-objectifying awareness of itself, but because the authors characterize the subject as embodied mind or minded body, this form of self-awareness appears doubled. And it must do so since certain of the authors' arguments depend on retaining something like the ordinary dualism of mind and body. For instance, they argue that «embodiment entails birth and death» and so being «situated in both nature and culture» [p. 149]. But while this clearly follows from our ordinary (naturalistic, dualistic) notion of body, it is not clear that it holds for that dimension, prior to both mind and body, whose pre-reflective self-awareness takes the form of what Heidegger calls «care of self» [p. 63]. The authors hold that focus on «lived» embodiment «contest[s] a Cartesian view of the mind» [p. 149], since it shows that the structure of phenomenal consciousness cannot be abstracted from embodiment. But then, why are there two forms of non-objectifying self-awareness?

*Conclusion.* The ambiguities I've been tracking all point to the difficulty of trying to describe mind prior to the objectification of certain aspects of it as 'consciousness' and 'body', while *also* contributing to

third-person research projects that are generally committed to just such a fundamental distinction. I believe that the authors have been highly successful in criticizing the pseudo-problems that arise within these research projects because of the physicalistic or mentalistic assumptions that pervade them. But it is not yet clear to me how the phenomenological philosophy of mind can contribute *positively* to these projects without adopting some of those very assumptions – for instance, in the assumption that the ‘lived body’ is the *very same thing* that is studied in biology. I welcome the chance to learn further from the authors of this excellent volume.

*S.G. and D.Z.*

Steven Crowell asks for clarification on a set of issues in three questions. The first question is about consciousness, which he takes to mean phenomenal consciousness. He asks, *is consciousness intrinsically intentional?* He immediately quotes our answer to the question: «consciousness is characterized by an intrinsic intentionality». He then pushes a bit further suggesting that this thesis conflicts with the idea that all consciousness is embodied and embedded, which we also maintain. The conflict, as he sees it, is that embodiment and embeddedness are «extrinsic to the phenomenal character of consciousness» in the same way that causal factors such as brain processes are extrinsic. «For instance, it is not the phenomenal character of my experience that makes it the case that I am trying to write a philosophy paper, even if the intentionality of my action necessarily involves *some* phenomenal character». Clearly, it is not the phenomenal character of experience that makes it the case that I am trying to write a philosophy paper. It goes the other way. My bodily engagement in writing a philosophy paper – or whatever action I may be engaged in as I am in-the-world – has a certain phenomenal feel to it. To be clear, our claim is that the intentionality of consciousness, which is more fully understood as a way of being-in-the-world that is always and already embodied and embedded, always and already comes with a phenomenal character. Sitting at a computer writing a paper feels different than running in a marathon.

To think that embodiment and embeddedness are extrinsic causal

factors to consciousness is, we think, to stay with a certain traditional way of conceiving of the mind and its relation to the body: a physical change in the body causes me to experience pain or pleasure, which are purely mental phenomena, for example. What is external causally impinges on the internal. It's just such a conception that we are rejecting. Perhaps the term 'intrinsic' is the problem. We did not mean that term to signify anything 'internal', where its opposite 'extrinsic' would mean something external and causal. Rather, we meant that experience, in its very nature, just is intentional. We could equally say that that experience in its very nature just is embodied and embedded since we never find experience simply floating around in thin air, or even in a vat of chemicals.

Crowell's second question is: *upon what does phenomenological reflection reflect?* He poses it in an alternative way that suggests both the answer, and what he is concerned about: «Is embodied consciousness really an adequate way to characterize the subject upon which phenomenology reflects?». For us it would be better to say 'embodied subject in-the-world', or 'enactively engaged agent', or perhaps a 'consciously engaged subject'. We see no other viable alternative. We even take phenomenological reflection to be a certain form of enactive engagement, rather than a stance of disengaged observation. Unlike Crowell, we see no opposition in the claim that, on the one hand, objects are constituted as they are «thanks to the way consciousness is structured», and on the other hand, «phenomenology is not just about consciousness» but about «how we are immersed in our everyday situations and projects». Rather we would say that we are immersed in our everyday situations and projects precisely because our conscious engagement with the world – our intentionality – is structured the way that it is. Again, Crowell sees tensions and ambiguities where we do not. Precisely because consciousness is 'world-disclosing' and 'our only access to the world', phenomenological reflection cannot equate the subject with consciousness as a pure abstraction. It's not phenomenology that reflects (as suggested by the question), but an embodied and embedded phenomenologist, who is motivated to engage in phenomenological reflection just because he is so much in-the-world.

Crowell's third question is this: phenomenal consciousness is characterized by a non-objectifying self-awareness, the «unique mode of

givenness [...] of experience» as such, «first-personal givenness». Is this different from the «non-observational proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness of my body in action?». Our answer is: not necessarily. Non-observational proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness is a form of pre-reflective self-awareness. Crowell suggests that this means a doubling of pre-reflective awareness. It is not clear that this is the case. Perhaps he thinks that there is an internal pre-reflective awareness that belongs to consciousness; and then a proprioceptive self-awareness that belongs to the body. And this is so because he takes us to endorse an «ordinary dualism of mind and body». This follows, according to Crowell, because we argue that «embodiment entails birth and death» and so being «situated in both nature and culture». But while this clearly follows from our ordinary (naturalistic, dualistic) notion of body, it is not clear that it holds for that dimension, prior to both mind and body, whose pre-reflective self-awareness takes the form of what Heidegger calls care of self. While it is true that phenomenology is limited by the boundaries of our experience, and that our own birth and death fall outside of those boundaries, it is not true that our knowledge of birth and death is limited to an «ordinary (naturalistic, dualistic) notion of the body». Birth and death, in both their natural and cultural instantiations, are encountered through others, who are born and who die and who elicit a sense of our own finitude. Birth and death are not simply scientific facts, even if a pure phenomenology of our pure individual experience cannot find a trace or premonition of them.

One could certainly complain of a phenomenological dualism if we insisted on a complete distinction between the *lived body*, that is, the body-as-subject, the agentive body which is us as we engage in action and interaction with others, and the *objective body*, or body-as-object, which is studied by biology. But there is no dualism of bodies; only a multiplicity of perspectives, of which phenomenology and biology are two. Each perspective comes with its own irreducible vocabulary. The task is not to translate one to the other, but to be multilingual and to give an account of embodied experience in as many languages as we can master, with the aim of gaining a more adequate account than can be had in only one language, even at the risk of ambiguity. Ambiguity is a problem only if one is looking for a translation with no remainder.

*Roberta Lanfredini (Università degli Studi di Firenze)*

My view is phenomenological and sticks completely to the motivations and reasons of Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi. Nevertheless, I would like to focus on two problems just starting from this common perspective. The first methodological; the second theoretical. The first problem, the methodological one, concerns the legitimacy to eliminate the natural attitude from an authentically phenomenological perspective. The second problem, the theoretical one, concerns the role that the body plays in phenomenology.

Let's start from the first problem. I am completely in agreement: it doesn't exist a sharp distinction between third-person, objective data (reaction times, brain images) and first-person data (what does it feel like). There is a link between the two ones and this link is intentionality. Furthermore, it does exist a sort of *epistemological* priority of the first-person data: when the investigation is about consciousness, the first person data are supposedly about the subject's first-person experience and «the only reason brain states or functional states assume the relevant importance they do is through their putative correlation with mental states identified on other, experiential grounds. Without experiential classification and subsequent correlation, we would simply have a description of neural activity, and it would not be informative in the way we want it to be» [p. 16].

It is completely true: «there is no pure third-person perspective, just as there is no view from nowhere» [p. 19]. But it is further true that the absolute priority of the consciousness has value above all if we adopt an epistemological or knowledge based point of view. From an ontological point of view, it would seem to be different. In this case, it seems reasonable to suppose that such a priority is due to the cerebral states, without which the first person experience would not probably have any play. Phenomenology, if put in front of this statement, would in turn object that such an ontological perspective in reality is out of the purely phenomenological method. It implicitly means as a matter of fact the referral to something of absolutely 'external', but an absolutely external point of view is not a phenomenological point of view. The mind-brain problem, so to say, is a problem that makes sense only if we assume a natural atti-

tude, but the natural attitude is subjected to phenomenological reduction.

The counter-objection of phenomenology raises anyway a further problem: is it really legitimate for phenomenology to adopt a *pure* phenomenological attitude? My answer to this question, that sounds a little provocative, is negative: if we want to stick to an authentically phenomenological perspective, we have to adopt a method that is not purely phenomenological to involve, at least in part, the natural attitude. The *natural* term does not have to be confused with *naturalistic*. The naturalistic attitude implicitly means a conversion of something (the consciousness) to something else (for example a natural scientific theory). The natural attitude implicitly means the need of an immersion of consciousness in the complex context of the nature. They are two profoundly different conceptual movements. Deleting the first would mean to substitute what is primary (the first person attitude) with what is derived and secondary (the object towards which that attitude is intentionally addressed). Deleting the second would mean to dry the plenty, integrity and soundness of the consciousness from its not-intentional, material, affective, iletic dimension to give back an only intentional consciousness that is constitutional, functional, noetic. In other words, to exclude the natural attitude would mean to put into the same phenomenology that problem of the qualitative states that will obsess later all the philosophy of mind. The point is that the feeling, as Descartes had caught very well in distinguishing human essence and human nature, is composed of something that does not depend on me. The essence of mind is a merely intellectual function; the nature of mind implies the complex, the union, the intersection of mind and body. The problem is that the distinction between an intentional content, the formal structure of every intentional state, and qualitative content, the material, sensitive filling of every intuitive state implies body.

We have so introduced the theoretical problem to which we were referring at the beginning: the natural element of which the phenomenological analysis has to take account is the body. In this case too, Husserl could easily object that phenomenology is also and in essential measure a description of a bodily-consciousness. The problem is, nevertheless, in the meaning that we attribute to the body term. In fact, the



body which we refer to is not exactly the alive body [*Leib*] by Husserl, the cynesthetic, situated, extended, localised body. In other words, it is not a body that ‘wears’ the stream of consciousness like the colour wears the spatial extension, so offering to the consciousness the concrete possibility to operate noematic synthesis and constitute the intended object.

The central point here is the crucial notion of the *flesh* at the place of the notion of body. It is not a mere semantic sliding, but a profound change of paradigm. That change of paradigm that Merleau-Ponty operates towards Husserl, though remaining in the field of phenomenology. In Husserl’s phenomenology, the concept of body is strictly connected with the notion of extension, then, ultimately, with a material and *a priori* link. On the contrary, the concept of flesh includes the crucial presence of a real *transcendence* in the stream of consciousness and, from a methodological point of view, the introduction of a natural attitude in phenomenology. The mind is inherently embedded or, better, *embodied*. Then, the crucial point here is that the new phenomenological notion of body is largely natural, material, concrete. Not only a moving, intentional body, but a strict intermixture (*chiasma*) of mind and body.

And the new paradigm that describes this new phenomenological reality is not unidirectional (intentional) but an interactive and interlaced (chiasmatic) model that implies ‘internal’ and ‘external’ elements at the same time.

*S.G. and D.Z.*

*Roberta Lanfredini* is certainly right to maintain that the phenomenological reduction brackets the natural attitude. In doing this phenomenological analysis sets aside causal analysis. One can ask, however, does the phenomenological train run in only one direction? Let’s say that we do our phenomenological transcendental analysis, and let’s say that we really do a good job. We think, following Husserl, that we then have accomplished something quite important. Now the question is: what should we, and specifically, we as phenomenologists, do with this analysis? Here is one answer: «every analysis or theory of transcendental phenomenology – including [...] the theory of the transcendental constitution of an ob-

jective world – can be developed in the natural realm, by giving up the transcendental attitude» [Husserl 1999, §57]. What motivation might there be for giving up the transcendental attitude? We argue that whatever phenomenology discovers may be of some relevance to science and that as phenomenologists we have a responsibility to travel with our results – that is, to cross the frontier that takes us out of pure phenomenology back into the impure environments of labs, clinics, and maybe even back into the attitude that informs science. One might argue that the phenomenologist should stick to transcendental analysis and let the scientist worry about using phenomenological insights. But there are two reasons why, as we say, the phenomenologist should travel along. First, scientists need help. They don't always understand phenomenological distinctions, and they don't always operationalize them properly. Phenomenologists, like philosophers of mind in general, can guide their interpretations and try to keep them on track. Secondly, as phenomenologists, we may discover something in the lab or the clinic that we would need to take back for further phenomenological interrogation. Unless you are of the opinion that phenomenologists never make mistakes, or that they always provide a complete and finalized analysis of experience (something that would certainly go against the practice of Husserl himself), then it makes no sense to ignore science. Indeed, that brings us back to the starting point, that is, to a natural attitude about something that we need to bracket and to pursue further. Lanfredini seems to realize just this in stating that «The natural attitude implicitly means the need of an immersion of consciousness in the complex context of the nature».

This same return ticket covers the question about the body. As Lanfredini suggests, one needs to move from Husserl's concept of *Leib*, from which Merleau-Ponty learned so much, to a more comprehensive and 'fleshed out' view of the body that recognizes that the *Leib* is not just the experiencing body, but also the experienced body, and also the biological body that we are (even if not the biological body that appears in scientific textbooks).

Michele Averchi (Università degli Studi di Milano)

*The Phenomenological Mind* provides the reader not only with a brilliant introduction to various phenomenological issues, but also with a useful insight into a number of topics and discussions in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science. The value of the book is thus twofold: the cognitive scientist can discover the phenomenological approach as a complementary or alternative framework on mind *vis-a-vis* the analytical ones he is most likely familiar with, and the phenomenologist can eventually 'get his hands dirty' with empirical researches, in a true neo-Merleau-Pontyan spirit. As I move from the second perspective, my question is how such 'getting one's hands dirty' is to be properly understood.

Zahavi and Gallagher make the following statement as the overarching claim of *The Phenomenological Mind*: «phenomenologically based theoretical accounts and descriptions can complement and inform ongoing work in the cognitive sciences». How? I found two different versions of the claim in the book. Claim 1: anyone interested in consciousness should appreciate a very careful description of it, and this is what phenomenology does. This holds true even for the hard-core reductionist: he needs first to know *what* to reduce. Claim 2: phenomenology helps us to overcome the naive idea that science gives us things as they are, and our mind is just another brick in the wall of the world. The hard-core reductionist may not appreciate the second answer as much as the first. Are the two answers disjoinable? I suppose Zahavi and Gallagher's answer to be affirmative: one can take profit from a careful phenomenological description, let's say, of perception, even if abstaining from general ontological commitments on the nature of the mind and the world. A cognitive scientist, for instance, might enrol the phenomenological notion of *Abschattung* into the computational level of his account of perception. Here Claim 1 would work even if the cognitive scientist should endorse some form of naturalistic commitment by rejecting Claim 2.

My feeling, however, is that somebody rejecting Claim 2 would also find the notion of *Abschattung* greatly uninteresting. The question at stake with cognitive sciences is not which philosophical framework can provide us with the best account of our conscious experience, but rather

if conscious experience is an interesting source at all for consciousness-studies. Gallagher and Zahavi show convincingly that phenomenology is not an introspectionistic account of experience, but the real question is if cognitive sciences are interested in experience as such or not. My answer might sound *tranchant*: in a sense, they are not<sup>1</sup>. Cognitive sciences are not interested in *experiences*, but in *experiments*. Let's consider the classical debate on the rotation of mental images<sup>2</sup>. Do we actually rotate mental images, if needed? Of course we do, everybody's experience says. But what if the numerical data from an experiment on mental rotation say beyond doubt that we do not rotate images at all? Who is right, so to speak? In my view, phenomenology is committed to the view that experience is always right, and that experience is emended only by experience (as in the case of optical illusions). But many cognitive scientists rotate images in their mind every time they look at a city map and still deny the possibility to do it. In their view, it is my experiment, and not my experience, that tells the truth about my experience. My experience is only, in the best case, a source of inspiration for experiments<sup>3</sup>. Is this phenomenologically acceptable? I would say no. And in my opinion the only way to contrast such a dismissal of experience is to endorse Claim 2. To put it differently, I think that Claim 1 and Claim 2 are not disjointable. Precisely here could phenomenology get its hands dirty, by cleaning the mud away from the experience-blind eyes of many cognitive scientists. My question is whether Zahavi and Gallagher would agree or not.

*S.G. and D.Z.*

*Michele Averchi* zeros in on a very contentious issue – an issue that requires careful negotiation rather than declarations from either side. This

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<sup>1</sup> I am discussing here not the *ontological* status of consciousness (not every cognitive scientist is a strict physicalist) but rather its *epistemological* status.

<sup>2</sup> I am thinking here to Shepard and Metzler's seminal work *Mental Rotation of Three Dimensional Objects* (1971).

<sup>3</sup> Of course my claim is not that cognitive sciences simply ignore experience. My point is that cognitive sciences usually dismiss experience as a source of *validity* for their explanations, as the case of mental rotation suggests.

is the question of different levels of explanation – at least in the way the problem is usually thought of from the perspective of reductionistic science. In *The Phenomenological Mind* we take a non-reductionistic perspective. Phenomenology is not simply one level of description or one level of explanation that science should seek to eliminate or reduce to a set of neuronal processes or functionalist operations. For us, phenomenology offers a different but complementary account that can be integrated with the other cognitive sciences. The problems that are addressed by the cognitive sciences – how the brain works, what counts as cognition, all the extremely difficult ‘easy’ problems, and the ‘hard’ problem of consciousness – are so complex that they require multi-dimensional studies from perspectives offered by many different disciplines, including neuroscience, artificial intelligence, psychology, and phenomenology. The idea is not that phenomenology delivers the phenomenon, which neuroscience, for example, then reduces to neuronal processes for the real, scientific explanation. This is the wrong view of science. What we want to explain – and what we want to convince our scientific colleagues of – is that an adequate account of the phenomenon cannot be given by only one discipline. A complete neuroscience (even if that were possible) would not be a complete explanation of cognition; an exhaustive psychology would not exhaust what we can know about human nature; a perfect linguistics would not be a perfect account of everything we need to say about language. Cognitive science is not (or should not be) interdisciplinary for purposes of eliminating all but one discipline. Rather, the best account of cognitive science is that it consists of the cognitive *sciences*, and that these sciences have to stand together in order to develop the fullest account possible. It’s not reduction, but multiplication – taking multiple perspectives on the problem – that characterizes the idea of the cognitive sciences that we defend in *The Phenomenological Mind*. This means, as Averchi puts it, getting our hands dirty, by attempting to work with those in other disciplines, who often use vocabularies that are not translatable because they are capturing something about the phenomenon that cannot be captured by phenomenology alone, or by neuroscience alone, etc.

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