

***Review of Shaun Gallagher's and Dan Zahavi's  
The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science***

Huei-Ying Cheng  
PhD Candidate  
Department of Philosophy  
National Cheng-Chi University Taiwan  
No. 64, Sec. 2, Jhihnan Rd., Wunshan District  
Taipei City 11605, TAIWAN (R.O.C.)  
cognitivism@yahoo.com.tw

***The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science***  
**Shaun Gallagher & Dan Zahavi**  
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One might interpret the locution “the phenomenological mind” as a declaration of a philosophical thesis that the mind is in some sense essentially phenomenological. Authors Gallagher & Zahavi appear to have intended it, however, to refer more to the phenomenological tradition and its methods of analysis. From the subheading of this book, one gains an impression that readers will see how the resources and perspectives from the phenomenological tradition illuminate various issues in philosophy of mind and cognitive science in particular. This impression is reinforced upon finding that many analytic philosophers’ names appear throughout the book. That appearance notwithstanding, as well as the distinctiveness of the book as an introduction, the authors do not sufficiently engage with analytic philosophy.

As Evan Thompson wrote in the back matter, this book is “[o]ffering a fresh new approach.” Indeed, it is quite different from the introductions of Heil (2004) or Kim (2006) with their general foci on ontological issues (especially scientific reduction and mental causation), or Braddon-Mitchell & Jackson (2007) with their general foci on issues of language (especially the Kripkean conception of reference) and functionalism, among others. If anything, the book is more similar to Chalmers’ (2002) introduction with its emphasis on consciousness. The structure of this book reflects this distinctive approach. In their introductory chapter, a brief history of the philosophical inquiries into the mind is outlined, and the content focuses on both the analytic as well as the phenomenological tradition (e.g., the work and impact of Husserl and Dreyfus are discussed early on). Moreover, in chapter 2 they introduce the “phenomenological method,” including a comparison between phenomenology and introspection (pp. 19-21) and the basic idea of the “phenomenological reduction” (pp. 21-26). In addition to chapters on relatively familiar, even core, issues such as perception (chap. 5), intentionality (chap. 6), and knowledge of other minds (chap. 9), there are some chapters rarely seen in other introductory books about the mind, such as the embodied mind (chap. 7) and time-consciousness (chap. 4). Arguably, time-

consciousness is a topic exclusive to the phenomenological tradition. The embodiment of mind and cognition has now become much more important in analytic philosophy; nevertheless, it is frequently overlooked, particularly in introductory volumes. What's more, even in those core chapters, for example, on perception and intentionality, the authors expend much effort on bringing phenomenology into the picture. In this respect, Gallagher & Zahavi successfully live up to the first half of the overarching premise of their book: It is, truly, an introduction based on a phenomenological approach. Nevertheless, as I alluded to at the outset, I think they fail to live up to the second half of that premise: that is, that the book is an engagement with philosophy of mind and cognitive science. I'll focus primarily on the former, and, in particular, on the chapters on consciousness and self-consciousness (chap. 3), intentionality (chap. 6), and perception (chap. 5).

Consciousness has always been a central notion in the phenomenological tradition and has become a heated topic in analytic philosophy in recent decades. Since the authors intend to confront philosophy of mind with the tools of phenomenology, clarity about how theories in the analytic tradition use the term "consciousness" is vital. This is particularly the case given that what the authors want to offer is an introduction to philosophy of mind and cognitive science. Unfortunately, their use of consciousness is often equivocal, which potentially thwarts communications between different traditions. For example, the authors declare that they will talk about "phenomenality" (p. 9; see also p.119), but they use it and "phenomenal feature" interchangeably (presumably, then, it's also interchangeable with "phenomenal character," "qualitative character," and similar cognates), which suggests that they intend a close conceptual link between it and consciousness: that is, the "what it is like" aspect of the mind (p. 9). Moreover, the chapter opens with Armstrong's "long-distance truck driver" problem (p. 45), which is often understood as a case of dissociation between intentionality and phenomenal consciousness. The authors, however, are not always consistent with their usage of these terms. At one point, they tell us that "[p]henomenologists refer to the idea that our consciousness is *of* or *about something* as the intentionality of consciousness" (p. 46). Yet, intentionality is one aspect of the mental, consciousness is another; while some mental states, events, or processes are both intentional and conscious, it seems possible that these properties do not always covary with one another. The phenomenologists' thesis is that all conscious states (alt., events, processes) are simultaneously intentional ones. This is interesting and possibly true, but to express it with phrases like "the intentionality of consciousness" may be misguided: if one means consciousness as a synonym of "phenomenal feature," as the authors do, the locution in question in effect means "the intentionality of phenomenal feature." This is awkward, because what is at issue is whether states like pain have phenomenal features as well as intentionality. Perhaps it would be clearer to have used the "intentionality of conscious / phenomenal state"? Similar considerations apply to the authors' remark that "[t]here are basically two sides to consciousness: intentionality and experience" (p. 108). Here, they seem to intend to equate phenomenal feature with the term "experience"; but this is also misguided, as normally we use experience to refer to mental episodes and events, rather than to features thereof. Worse still, their meaning of consciousness isn't clear. If consciousness is intended to refer to the class of mental state, the usage is highly idiosyncratic and probably false, for in all likelihood, there are many unconscious mental states. If it is intended to refer to the class of conscious states, then they appear to be begging the question, since whether intentionality is a basic side of conscious states is at issue. The trouble is although we can probably guess what they mean by those terms and have charitable interpretations, their usage is too prone to generate questions and confusions. This is not a trivial

issue, given the introductory nature of the book. I doubt that newcomers to this field will be able to carefully bear various provisos in mind or have the knowledge not to be misled. For a more delicate discussion of some relevant matters, I recommend Siewert (2006).

Troubles occur not only with consciousness but with intentionality. As mentioned above, phenomenologists generally regard intentionality as the mark of the mental, following Brentano; this thesis has often been called *representationalism* or *intentionalism* (I'll follow them in adopting the latter label). As the authors note, a main motivation for it is G. E. Moore's "*diaphanous* quality of experience: when you try to focus your attention on the intrinsic features of experience, you always seem to end up attending to what the experience is *of*" (p.117). They go on to mention Michael Tye and Fred Dretske but do not really assess the thesis. Yet, one should note, this thesis has become increasingly controversial, as exemplified by reflections on the experiences of blurriness. When nearsighted persons see without help from glasses or contacts, their visual fields are blurry all the way out. Is blurriness a feature belonging to "what the experience is *of*?" Arguably, no. The debate is a heated one, and it's central to considerations concerning intentionalism. Nonetheless, the authors simply leave the relevant issues utterly untouched. (Readers may refer to Crane (2006) for a nice discussion of the transparency and the example from blurriness.)

The considerations about transparency lead us to perception. The authors open their chapter on perception by declaring that "*The Primacy of Perception*, the title of one of Merleau-Ponty's most famous talks, gives us a hint as to how most phenomenologists view perception. It is considered fundamental" (p. 89). Similar declarations can be found throughout the chapter. Unfortunately, the claim about the insight to be gained from Merleau-Ponty's title becomes the guiding principle of that chapter. For starters, it does not obviously address what many analytic philosophers say about perception; for another, whether it's suitable for an introductory book is questionable. For my part, I concur with phenomenologists that perception is, in a significant sense, primary. This stance, however, needs arguments, both positive and negative. Smith (2002, 2008) provides abundant discussions concerning various issues about perception in both the analytic tradition and the phenomenological tradition. Although, unlike Smith, Gallagher & Zahavi are offering an introductory book, it does not follow that one-sided discussions are thereby acceptable.

I'll conclude with a general observation derived from the above discussions. Gallagher & Zahavi intend to approach many issues in philosophy of mind and cognitive science from a phenomenological point of view, and the motivation is well taken. My worry is that most of what they are doing is only to envisage what phenomenologists would say about those issues in philosophy of mind and cognitive science, as opposed to applying their actual research. One may wonder whether this fits the book's subheading and also how significant it is, philosophically speaking. Philosophers in the analytic tradition can certainly benefit from phenomenologists' research, but it seems to me that this particular book comes up short as an introductory work based thereon. Above, I referred to some other authors' works for the readers to compare, but my intention is not that Gallagher's and Zahavi's efforts should be simply set aside, quite the contrary. This review proceeds with a critical voice only because I treasure exchanges between philosophical traditions, and I think both clarity and depth are necessary conditions for real communications and improvements. In the case of consciousness, I suggest that the authors present a more focused terminological discussion in order to be clear about what they have in mind; in the cases of intentionality and perception, I suggest the authors deepen their discussions.

More with analytic philosophy would be appropriate, for the latter has provided many intricate and useful distinctions concerning consciousness, the relations between intentionality and qualia (if any), and the status of perception and its relation to thoughts.

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