Thinking and Phenomenal Consciousness

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by Marta Jorba-Grau

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Marta Jorba-Grau
PhD student. University of Barcelona
LOGOS – Logic, Language and Cognition Research Group
GEF – Grup d’Estudis Fenomenologics
http://www4.ub.edu/grc_logos/marta-jorba/
e-mail: jorba.marta@gmail.com

Abstract:
The topic of this paper concerns the relation between thinking and phenomenal consciousness as it is discussed in the Philosophy of Mind. Thus, I am addressing the following questions: does the domain of phenomenal consciousness include thinking? And if so, is the phenomenality of thinking (PT) proprietary or not? I will firstly present the debate and the main notions involved in it, by contrasting a certain mainstream picture of the mind with the one offered by Phenomenology. Second, I will consider the particular question of a proprietary phenomenology of conscious thought through the examination of the reductionist and antireductionist positions, concluding with a sceptical remark towards this dialectics.

Key words: consciousness, phenomenality of thinking, dialogue, reductionism, anti-reductionism.

1. Introduction: the topic and some historical remarks
A legitimate question when it comes to the study of experience is precisely which is the domain of our investigation. There are various interesting philosophical questions regarding experience, but if we want to set what experience amounts to and which structures underlie the mental episodes of our conscious life, then it would be a good starting point to know which kind of mental states fall under the umbrella of ‘experience’.

It is a common place in the contemporary Philosophy of mind that a person who undergoes a perceptual experience or is in pain has a certain subjective feeling, that there is a ‘what it is likeness’ or what does it feel like for the subject to be in pain (Nagel, 1974). The ‘what it is likeness’ talk has become a standard use to refer to the phenomenal consciousness or to the phenomenal character of our mental states. The phenomenal character of consciousness is meant to consist of the way in which the mental states are experienced. The important question for our problem is to notice that phenomenal consciousness usually appears as restricted to sensory mental phenomena while many intentional states do not seem to involve phenomenal consciousness. Cognitive states such as thoughts do not seem to involve a phenomenal character, at least without the mediation of sensory experiences. The term ‘experience’ is thus normally used to refer to sensory experiences. Whereas it is commonly agreed that sensory states possess this qualitative character, some philosophers cast doubt on the fact that there is something as a phenomenal character related to thinking, something like a phenomenology of thought (PT) or cognitive phenomenology1.

A first reasonable way to approach the relation between thinking and phenomenality is trying to define which is the domain of thinking, which kind of mental states we are talking about. A significant number of the philosophers involved in the debate primarily have in mind propositional attitudes when theorising about thought. Among the defenders of a proprietary PT for instance, Horgan & Tienson (2002), Goldman (1993) and Pitt (2004, 2009) explicitly consider propositional attitudes. Among the deniers, Robinson (2005), and Carruthers (2006) rely on

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1 ‘Cognitive phenomenology’ is the expression used in the literature and I have followed this to introduce the topic, but I prefer to talk about the phenomenology of thinking or thought (PT), as it points to a more restricted phenomenon.
the same framework for understanding thought. The sense of thought which seems to be at stake and taken as an assumption is the concept-involving character. It must be clear, however, that the ontological category apt to thought in the relevant sense for our question is an \textit{occurrent episode of thinking} (Pitt, 2004, 2009; Smith, forthcoming) rather than a dispositional state such as belief.

The question of a cognitive phenomenology came up within Philosophy of mind as a quite controversial question. The issue was absent from the current discussions in the field for some decades, so as to lead to the situation in which many authors take it to be definitional that phenomenal or ‘what it is likeness’ is exclusively applied to sensory experiences. Other authors have a more permissive position – Goldman (1993, p.365–366): “The terms \textit{qualia} and \textit{qualitative} are sometimes restricted to sensations (percepts and somatic feelings), but we should not allow this to preclude the possibility of other mental events (beliefs, thoughts, etc.) from having a phenomenological or experiential dimension”. In any case, it is difficult to pick up clearly defined positions with respect to the reach of phenomenal consciousness and it may be better described as a cluster of loosely related approaches (see Bayne, forthcoming). From holding that only low-level perceptive properties (being an edge, being red?) enter phenomenal consciousness to claim that all propositional attitudes enjoy phenomenal properties (Pitt, 2004, 2009, Klausen, 2008), there is a wide range of theoretical positions.

From the recognition of such different takes and positions on consciousness, how should we decide on the reach of phenomenal consciousness? Operating with the restrictive sense of phenomenal consciousness by definition without an argument seems an \textit{ad hoc} position, as well as taking the non-restrictive sense beforehand. Both moves seem like holding an extension fixed, then picking a concept and a name for it and excluding (or including) all other phenomena from (or in) the extension just by definition. It is \textit{ad hoc} when it comes to the case of phenomenal consciousness and I believe that the problem at hand is not only terminological, since it concerns the metaphysics of mind and the reach of phenomology as an important feature of the mind\textsuperscript{2} How should we decide on the issue, then?

This contemporary use of experience and phenomenal consciousness may sound incredibly striking to phenomenologists or to someone familiarised with Phenomenology\textsuperscript{3} as a philosophical tradition. The study of experiences and the objects given in them gave rise to Phenomenology as a philosophical discipline, founded and developed by Edmund Husserl. For Husserl as well as for the phenomenologists who followed him – Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty...– the field of experience in the mental realm was so broad as to include perception, imagination, memory, emotion, thought, and all those mental episodes present in the stream of consciousness. Experience in a broad sense was the starting point and equated to consciousness, and intentionality was understood as a determining feature of consciousness\textsuperscript{4}. From this starting point, it is obvious that states like thoughts have phenomenality. By saying that it is obvious I mean that for phenomenologists the question of whether there is a phenomenology of thought would sound very striking\textsuperscript{5}. Phenomenology as the study of different kinds of experiences would lead to the phenomenologies of perceptual experience, emotions, memories, thoughts, and so on.

Phenomenology was not the only one in conceiving the field of experience as broad as to include thought. A little earlier than Husserl, William James (1890) also uses a notion of consciousness that infuses thought. His notion of ‘stream of consciousness’ means also ‘stream of thought’ in a very liberal sense. A contemporary philosopher of Husserl, G.H. Moore, also includes understanding, a paradigmatically thought-involving state, as an event in consciousness: “something happens in your minds -some act of consciousness – \textit{over and above} the hearing of the words, some act of consciousness which may be called understanding their meaning” (Moore, 1962, 281–3). The contrast between this late nineteenth/early twentieth century way of thinking about consciousness and the latter

\textsuperscript{2} Here we enter into the relation between phenomenology and metaphysics, and which of both approaches should restrict the other one.

\textsuperscript{3} I distinguish ‘Phenomenology’ as the philosophical tradition from ‘phenomenology’ as the phenomenal character of experience, the normal use in contemporary debates of Philosophy of mind.

\textsuperscript{4} All conscious states are intentional for Brentano, but not for Husserl.

\textsuperscript{5} More about this on the following section.
half of the twentieth century philosophy of mind becomes evident.

What has happened in-between? One author who may have had influence on this development is Gilbert Ryle with his book *The Concept of Mind* (1949), where he can find no use of the phrase stream of consciousness, unless that it perhaps refers to a “series of *sensations*”, which, by they very nature, are incapable of being correct or incorrect, and manifest no quality of intellect (1949, 203–5). From Wittgenstein (1953) on, it became a commonplace for philosophers to contrast the sensory with the conceptual, sensed qualities with propositional attitudes, relating the first with the “qualitative domain”. With functionalism as a popular and important view on the mind, mental states are “functionally” individuated and sensory experiences preserved the “qualitative aspect” of Ryle’s “logical geography”. From then on, many philosophers educated in the Anglophone philosophy since the 1950’s find the following picture familiar: the division of the sensory and the cognitive and the equation of the first with the phenomenal domain and the latter with the intentional one (focusing on propositional attitudes). The mind is thus divided between the “qualitative aspect” which is purely sensory, and some behavioural/functional aspects, related to intelligence and the use of concepts. And it is a very common view to hold that the latter is all there is in the mind, since the former happens to be reducible (representationalist theories), or illusory and eliminable. With this picture of the mind, then it is understandable why questions such as “does your conceptual thought have phenomenal character?” are quickly answered negatively. It seems, however, that the fact that this is a plausible understanding of the history cannot provide a justification for this picture of the mind.

Before going to the second part, let me explain briefly why this topic might be of importance in the philosophical stage. First of all, it is a topic in the interface between analytic Philosophy and mind and Phenomenology and its study can contribute to shed light on the similarities and differences among these two traditions, often thought to be completely strange one to another. At the same time, approaches in both sides can illuminate the topic, with the difficulty of finding a common ground besides different methodologies. Second, if a permissive view of phenomenal consciousness is right, then this would cast doubt on the contemporary picture of the mind, which could have consequences for explanatory frameworks. Third, it can shed light on the concept of ‘phenomenal consciousness’: the mere existence of this debate underlines the claim that we have a clear-cut conception of ‘what it is likeness’. Fourth, it points to the issue of whether we can account for thought by leaving aside the experiential aspect or not. And finally, it is a topic related to other philosophical important issues such as the relation between intentionality and phenomenal consciousness (treated by Horgan & Tienson, 2002; Loar, 2002; Farkas, 2008, among others), the debate about introspection (Schwitzgebel, 2008) or the relation of cognitive phenomenology and the internalism/externalism debate (Horgan & Tienson, 2002; Loar, 2002; Farkas, 2008).

2. Proprietary PT and reductionism

A particularly important question within the cognitive phenomenology debate is whether, once we accept that there is conscious thought, whether one does something more than acknowledging that thinking is a conscious activity when one talks about a PT. In this sense, one may ask whether there is a further question about the nature of the PT which may require further elaboration and specification: if there is any PT, is it specific? Or can it rather be reduced to the phenomenal character of other kinds of mental states? This question addresses the possibility of a proprietary PT (Pitt, 2004, 2009), which is one of the cores of the contemporary debate. That the phenomenology is proprietary means that there is a specific phenomenal character for conscious thought, which can not be accounted with different kind of phenomenologies (sensory-affective, emotional, etc.). A proprietary PT would allow us to distinguish a type phenomenology for conscious thought among other kinds of

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6 I follow Siewert (forthcoming) for a brief explanation of the development of philosophy which lead to the current situation.

7 Perception is a domain that exhibits both features.

8 We do not examine here whether ‘consciousness’ and ‘phenomenality’ might have different extensions, which would amount to the possibility of non-phenomenal conscious thought and non-conscious phenomenal thought. If successful, both possibilities would lead to cast doubt on the attribution of both terms to thought.
states. In front of this position, the reductionist about the PT would claim that conscious thoughts are conscious and phenomenal but its phenomenal-ity is not specific, it can be accounted for with the phenomenality of other kinds of mental states.

2.1. The case in Husserl's Logical Investigations (LU)

One clear position with respect to the question of thinking and phenomenality seems to be the Phenomenological one. Before we mentioned that for phenomenologists the question of a cognitive phenomenology as it is stated in the contemporary debate would sound striking. Why is this so? If we look closer to a particular phenomenological theory of intentionality, the one Husserl defends in the Logical Investigations (LU), we can get an answer to this question.

In the first edition of the LU (1901), Phenomenology, understood as descriptive psychology, investigates certain phenomena, namely, experiences (“Erlebnisse”). The point is to describe them and not causally explain them, because this is something other kinds of explanations pursue. What do we refer to when we talk about experiences? Husserl refers to the modern psychologists (like Wundt) to introduce the term, and psychologists state that experiences are those changing events that constitute the unity of consciousness: “In this sense, experiences or contents of consciousness are perceptions, representations of fantasy and image, the acts of conceptual thinking, suppositions and doubts, joys and pains, hopes and fears, desires and wills, etc., as they occur in our consciousness” (LU, V, § 2). Within the experiences that are events in consciousness, Husserl distinguishes the category of ‘acts’ (‘Akte’) as ‘intentional experiences’. Conscious thoughts are among the category of acts, because they are intentional insofar as they are about something, as they are directed towards something, which is the object of the thought. Inso-far as thoughts are considered from the point of view of their experiential character, the experience we have of them, it seems obvious that they enjoy phenomenal character or consciousness. Conscious thoughts fall under the category of intentional episodes, which are considered a ‘lived phenomenon’ (‘erlebtes phenomenon’) and thus enjoy phenomenal character.

Moreover, the question of a proprietary phenomenology of thought also seems to be clear for phenomenologists. When Husserl (LU, V, § 14) considers the phenomenological difference between understanding (a paradigmatic case of consciously thinking) and not understanding, he asks: which is the difference between the two states? Where does this plus of the understood expression over the articulated sound empty of meaning lie? Husserl’s answer is that the difference lies in the “character” of the mental state. “Character” is the general term which covers what he calls the “Quality” and the “Matter” of an act. The Quality, or what we could call the “style of presentation” of the act, is the type of act – a thought, an imagination, a perception, a desire, etc., – (what in analytic terminology are propositional attitudes), whereas the Matter is the aspect under which the object presents itself. Both aspects constitute an intentional experience or act, according to Husserl. Both are moments (dependent parts) of the act as a whole, and when it comes to psychic phenomena, to experiences, if the whole is experienced, so are the parts (principle of ontological homogeneity).

9 Some defenders of a proprietary phenomenology of thought hold that it is also distinctive and individuative (Pitt, 2004, 2009). That the phenomenology is distinctive means it is not generic, that is, that it is not shared by all mental states within the same genus -thought- but that it allows to distinguish different thoughts-types. The further thesis of the individuative character of the phenomenality claims that it is what allows the subject of experience to determine all properties of a thought relevant for picking out the thought as the thought it is just by its phenomenality. This third thesis makes the view stronger. In addition to distinguish thoughts from non-thoughts, type-thoughts x from type-thoughts y, the phenomenality of thought is meant to be constitutive of its content. In this paper I only consider the feature of proprietariness. We should note that the phenomenology could be not proprietary but distinctive, for the distinctiveness could come from the accompanying states of thought. And the other way around: it could be proprietary but not distinctive (if it was not sufficient to distinguish among thought types).

10 The understanding experience is also put forward by Strawson (2010), Siewert (1998) and many other defenders of a proprietary PT.

11 I am writing ‘Quality’ and ‘Matter’ in capital letters to distinguish Husserl’s technical terms from other senses these words have (like ‘quality’ as the qualitative character of consciousness).
That the Matter of the act is experienced means that the way the object is given to us is experienced, and the way the object is given to us is the meaning. According to Husserl’s theory of species and particulars (analogous to the type/token distinction), the Matter is the particular where the meaning as a species instantiates itself. Thus, the meaning of the act belongs to the experienced content. If experienced contents are qualitative contents, and if the meaning is of conceptual nature, it corresponds to them conceptual qualitative content, what can be called “conceptual qualia”. Analogously, that the Quality is experienced means that there are experiential differences between different Qualities: whether a certain act or intentional mental state is an imagination, a perception, a thought, a judgement, etc., it is recognised because they are experienced differently, they are different types of experiences which instantiate themselves in token experiences.

One of the upshots of the phenomenological approach to our topic is that once one accepts that intentionality is a lived phenomenon, it follows that intentional mental episodes have phenomenal character. Moreover, the difference between them is an experiential difference (see also Zahavi, 2005). The very fact that we experience a thought as a thought and not as an imagination or as any other kind of mental state. These experiential differences make the phenomenal character of thinking specific, not reducible to the character of other experiences. This approach defends that the experience of understanding or of thinking in general is given in a different way as sensory experiences. The idea is that the thinking experience can -and maybe should- be given through images or other accompanying elements, but we undergo it and properly speak about it as such when these elements are not there.

It is important to note, then, that the question of the phenomenal character of cognitive states is something obvious for Husserl’s phenomenology or, in other words, it is not a thesis to be defended but part of his central point of departure for his theory of intentionality, that is, part of the primitive notion (intentional experience) which sustains the theory. Maybe this is so because of the descriptive character of the phenomenological approach to intentionality, which aims to show what we find when we reflect upon our mental lives, without pronouncing itself on the possible reduction of intentionality to a more basic phenomenon (physically speaking). The fact that one can object that Husserl’s approach is question begging for our topic is revealing of the character of this approach: I think it should be presented as a way to present a theory which has as a consequence that there is a specific experience of thought rather than an effective argument against the denier of the phenomenology of thought. One who does not accept Husserl’s characterisation of intentional experiences, and thus the intimate connection between the intentional and the phenomenal character, must not be in a position to accept Husserl’s position.

2.2. Reductionism

How should we consider the claim that ‘there is no phenomenology of thought’? We can understand it as an eliminativist claim, à la Dennett, who denies the existence of phenomenal character altogether, not only for the cognitive domain. We won't consider this position here. We can also understand it as a reductive claim about thought’s phenomenal properties. In this sense, we have two states, the thought state and some other kind of accompanying state (be it sensory, emotional, etc.,) which is the bearer of phenomenal properties. Among what we have called ‘reductionists’, there are those who argue that the phenomenology of thought is to be accounted for in terms of only one type of phenomenology, and others argue that it is either one type or a disjunction of other non-cognitive phenomenologies. This is the position of Lormand (1996) mentioned above, also defended by other authors (Tye & Wright, forthcoming, Robinson, 2005). The opponent of a PT would certainly accept that there is a PT but argue that it is reducible to other kinds of phenomenology. This is one prominent strategy against a proprietary PT.

We will go through some examples to try to shed light into the question, leading to a rather sceptical result about the very dialectics of the reductionism/non reductionism positions when they appeal to examples and cases.

12 It can be question begging only from the perspective of the nowadays discussion, having in mind that this was not a question posed by Husserl himself.
The most discussed example in the literature is the case of understanding (Husserl, 1901; Strawson, 2010; Siewert, 1998, forthcoming; Pitt, 2004, 2009; Tye & Wright, forthcoming, and others). The crucial point is to know what accounts for the phenomenological change between understanding what someone tells you or something you read and not understanding it. Proponents of a proprietary PT claim that the difference is not due to sensory-affective accompanying states, while reductionists claim that these elements do suffice. Let’s see the question in more detail.

One major candidate for being the case of the reductionist is linguistic phenomenology or the phenomenology of inner speech. Carruthers (2005) and Jackendoff (2007) are proponents of this kind of reductionism. Inner speech is meant to point to the inner process when language is produced but not uttered, to the phenomenon of “thinking in words”. The following passage from Jackendoff (2007, p. 82) illustrates this position: “I conclude that phonology is necessary and sufficient for the presence of linguistic qualia, and meaning is neither necessary nor sufficient… if we pay attention to the phenomenology of ‘conscientious thought’, we find it most often has the form of linguistic images—‘inner speech’ or a ‘voice in the head,’ a Joycean stream of consciousness…The form of the associated thought, a semantic/conceptual structure that is capable of driving inference, is not at present in experience”. Robinson (2005, p. 540) refers to the ‘subvocalisation’ process: “to affirm that for most normal cases, subvocal saying of ‘p’ is all the phenomenology there is that is distinctive of having the thought that p”.

In order to assess this kind of reduction we would have to examine the possible relations between inner speech and conscious thought, namely, whether inner speech is constitutive of conscious thought or not, for example. This goes beyond the scope of this paper, because the question which concerns us now is the possibility of a PT in the absence of inner speech, which could decide the question of a proprietary phenomenology.

An example used in the literature to solve the proposed reduction to inner speech is the tip-of-the-tongue (TOT) phenomenon: the frustrating situation in which one is unable to say a word despite knowing what she wants to say, or the situation in which one is searching the right words to express a train of thought. We find, however, diverging interpretations of the phenomenon. On the one hand, Goldman (1993, p. 365) takes the phenomenon to show that there is non-sensory cognitive phenomenology: “when one tries to say something but cannot think of the word, one is phenomenologically aware of having requisite conceptual structure, that is, of having a determinate thought-content one seeks to articulate…. Entertaining the conceptual unit has a phenomenology, just not a sensory phenomenology”. On the other hand, Lormand (1996, p. 247) commenting on Jackendoff, interprets it in the opposite way: “Jackendoff uses the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon to ‘demonstrate’ that ‘conceptual structure is excluded from [phenomenological] awareness’ (1987, p. 290). He distinguishes the aspects of what the experience is like into a soundless ‘form’ and an ‘affect’ of effort, so that ‘one feels as though one is desperately trying to fill a void’ (1987, pp. 290 and 315). Neither of these aspects seems attributable to nonsensory attitudes…. [T]here is something sensory that having the ‘void’ is like, akin to what hearing silence (as opposed to being deaf or asleep) is like…. [T]here is something sensory that the feeling of effort is like, namely, what feeling physical effort is like” [italics original].

What they both agree on is that it is a cognitive phenomenon. It seems to me that Lormand’s interpretation can’t account for the specificity of the phenomenon: is the feeling of physical effort what specifically accounts for the phenomenology involved in the TOT phenomenon? If not, what does then account for what seems to be phenomenologically specific of this phenomenon? Or are we forced to say that there is nothing phenomenologically specific of it?

It could be objected that the TOT phenomenon is not a phenomenon cohesive enough to take a stand on the PT. Then we look at the case of multilingualism, as a test for evaluating the relation between phonological structure, semantic structure and cognitive phenomenology. Imagine a person who masters different languages and thinks a thought which she expresses in those different languages. The phonology will be very different.
It is more difficult to determine whether the meaning would be the same or not, due to the indeterminacy of translation and the various particularities of different languages. What does account for the phenomenological differences? The reductionist would say that the syntactic, phonological and orthographic differences are responsible for the phenomenological differences. And the proponent of a proprietary PT would say that the phenomenological differences between the expressed thought in different languages would not be so extended as the proponent of inner speech is committed to predict.

The proponent of a proprietary PT may insist on the idea that when we consciously think our so doing does not necessarily involve any of the accompanying states. There is no co-variation between understanding and not understanding and the elements in the phenomenological cluster referred to: there may be cases in which the sensory and emotional states are not present and still the thought goes through. One may think that perceptual thoughts (visual thoughts) and imaginative thoughts are more intimately connected with the mechanisms of perception and can thus somehow “inherit” their sensory elements but the more abstract we go, the sensory associated phenomenology becomes sparser, up to the point of becoming extinguished altogether. No sensory elements are possible for those abstract thoughts. When we consciously think our so doing does not necessarily involve any of the accompanying states.

An answer that the reductionist has at this point is appealing to the experience of trying or to the effort involved in consciously thinking (as we have also seen with Lormand before). Tye & Wright (forthcoming, p.4) mention “the experience of trying” as a valid bearer of phenomenology: “from a phenomenological perspective, thinking a thought is much running a sentence through one’s head and/or (in some cases) having a mental image in mind together with (in some cases) an emotional/bodily response and a feeling of effort if the thought is complex or difficult to grasp (my italics)”. I take the point to be: for the case of abstract thoughts considered above, for which no sensory phenomenology is possible (and, assume for the sake of the argument, that also emotions can not account for this phenomenology), then there is always the sense of effort left, the experience of trying. Neither conceptual nor cognitive phenomenology is involved in trying, according to them: a rat can have an experience of trying when it makes desperate efforts to free itself, for example.

The natural movement to be made at this point by the defender of a proprietary PT is to appeal to cases of spontaneous thought (Siewert, 1998), namely, instances in which a thought occurs to you, without words nor images or an abrupt shift in the direction of thought. While you are engaged in some activity, you suddenly remember or it comes to your mind an appointment you had, for example. Sudden wordless thoughts occur to you without the need of imagery and they can be formulated in words, but only after they occurrence. The reductionist defends herself here saying that this may not really be a case of conceptual thought; you might not have the thought before being able to say the sentence to yourself.

If all these cases do not seem conclusive to decide the question, we could still thing of a case in which besides all sensory-affective accompaniments, there was neither the sense of trying or effort. These cases would be 'pure abstract thoughts'. Are they possible? If it is possible to consciously entertain a pure abstract thought without any of the mentioned accompanying states being present, then this would be a counterexample for the reductionist and it would allow the proponent of a PT to say that in other cases of thought there is also this kind of phenomenology. What would the reductionist say in those cases? She would probably deny that there is any phenomenology involved in such cases, were they possible. Some authors, like Robinson (2005) have taken the cases in which there is no possible sensory-imagistic accompaniment as evidence for the claim that there is no phenomenality to thought. This holds, however, only if they operate with the restricted (by definition) sense of phenomenality. But if phenomenal consciousness has a broader sense (as reductionists accept), then what would it mean to consciously entertain a pure abstract thought without phenomenology?

As concluding remarks for this section, I would like to point out that we find diverging interpretations of some phenomena, the TOT, multi-
lingualism, spontaneous thought, abstract thought, and so on. But I take the discussion of reductionism/antireductionism to show two main things. One the one hand, the proponent of a proprietary PT seems to be right with respect to “particular reductions”. That is, if a reductionist defends that the PT is reducible to only one kind of accompanying states, then it seems easy for the antireductionist to find other cases without the presence of this particular accompanying state. There seem to be counterexamples for each proposed particular reduction. From a phenomenological point of view it seems more appropriate to describe the PT as specific, since each proposed reduction does not seem to pick out the relevant phenomenal character of the experience of thinking in front of the phenomenality specific of a non-cognitive state. Thus, the antireductionist is able to distinguish thought from other kind of states (partly) because of its phenomenology, which might be a strong intuition among phenomenologists.

On the other hand, the reductionist can adopt a sort of “disjunctive reduction” to find non-cognitive phenomenology to account for the PT (either sensory states or emotional or the effort of trying, etc.). This strategy is difficult to refute inasmuch as the reduction has a wide range of possibilities open. This does not settle the question, however, in favour of the reductionist but it just points out a certain force of her argumentation, because she still has to show that a potential reduction might succeed, namely, might be sufficient to account for what it is like to think. A case which would solve the problem would be, to my mind, the case of pure abstract thought. If such case is sound, then the reductionist is forced to say that there is no phenomenology, and therefore she has to give an explanation of why such thoughts are conscious but not phenomenal appealing to a different strategy than the reductionist one (which is her position with other kinds of thoughts). Her initial position of accepting a PT is then undermined. In this case I think it would be more coherent to defend that there is no PT at all, as for the eliminativist, and give independent reasons for that. In any case, the case of pure abstract thought would have to be shown, maybe with the help of empirical data.

A moral to be extracted from that is a certain scepticism about the dialectics present in the reductionism/antireductionism discussion. I would say that the issue of a proprietary PT has to be decided on other grounds rather than on the reductionist/antireductionist dialectic, maybe by way of general arguments or general theories or with possible empirical investigations, even if some interpretations may seem more plausible than others. My sceptical result with respect to this dialectics has to be understood within its scope, namely, it does not mean that the authors involved do not have independent arguments to put forward, but I have only focused on the dialectics of presenting cases in order to decide in favour or against a proprietary PT.

3. Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper has been to present the cognitive phenomenology debate we find in the contemporary Philosophy of Mind. In the first section I tried to draw the map of the situation in the topic with the help of some historical remarks, turning the attention to the contrast we find with respect to phenomenologists and other authors of the beginning of the 20th century.

In the first part of the second section, I presented Husserl’s approach in the LU as an example, within Phenomenology, of a theory whose point of departure are mental states in the way they are experienced, lived experiences (‘Erlebnisse’), and thus it makes the case for a PT to be sound. Moreover, PT is characterised as proprietary, precisely because it is experiential differences which make different kinds of mental states just the kind of mental states they are. I noted some assumptions of this approach for our present topic.

In the second part of the second section I presented some reductionist approaches, mostly focusing on Lormand’s (1996) and Tye & Wright (forthcoming) and I have contrasted it with the defender of a proprietary PT, both sides of the discussion appealing to the phenomenology of particular cases. On the one hand, I concluded from this that the proponent of a proprietary PT seems to be right with respect to particular reductions and she seems to be able to account for the phenomenological differences between thought and other kinds of states from the point of view of their way of being experienced. On the other hand, the reductionist of the disjunctive sort is in a position that is difficult to refute, even if her proposed reductions
do not seem to do the work. I concluded with an sceptical remark with respect to the dialectics presented.

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