

EXTENDED COGNITIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

The Continuous behind the Discrete

'Does it exist at all?' is the central question in *Cognitive Phenomenology* by Tim Bayne & Michelle Montague, an interesting array of 'supporters' and 'rejecters' of this question. I choose the article by Jesse J. Prinz, *The Sensory Basis of Cognitive Phenomenology*, as he presents us with a well-wrought negative answer. He calls his view *restrictivism* as opposed to *expansionism*, the latter allowing for a form of non-sensory cognitive phenomenology. I intend to show that his restrictivism is wrong, bottom-up by arguing for the opposite view, namely that cognitive phenomenology forms the basis of all phenomenology, indeed all science, and top-down by extending the reach of cognitive phenomenology even beyond the limits that expansionists usually set themselves. I will do this by using a technique called 'Observing One's Thinking', which is closely related to but extends what a cognitive phenomenologist like Christopher Shields calls: "I now step back and reflect in a second-order sort of way on my entertaining of that proposition".

Prinz follows Jackendoff in opting for a hierarchical structure of perception in three layers: Pure perception responses, feature integration and widely invariant application. Consciousness is supposed to arise at the intermediate region, that of feature integration (compare with the notions of pure perception, *Verstand* and *Vernunft*). In opposition to Jackendoff and Prinz, I argue that consciousness arises at the lowest level, but yes, it is a momentary, fleeting consciousness (Damasio's proto-self); myriads of perceptions enter our organism, but as they are not structured by our thinking (which would give rise to Damasio's core-self) they cannot be remembered and will furthermore remain unconscious. It might already be clear that, if Jackendoff and Prinz say that they *observe* this as a perceptual structuring, I will ask: "Structured by what, by whom?". I *observe* my thinking to 'enter my cognitive space from a different direction than perceptions', there to be intertwined with and structuring my perceptions. We can observe this every morning when we wake up, and in minutes or even split-seconds traverse the four developmental stages of consciousness that Piaget describes for our first 18 years. The first stage of pure perception is characterised by the question "What is...?", the second stage arises when the question is completed into "What is...that?", where the 'that' heralds the onset of our thinking whereby we *create* what Prinz mentions as edge-detection (not yet contour-detection), and Dretske in *Seeing and Knowing* as 'differentiating from its immediate surroundings'.

This leads me to the following three remarks. First: In this view it appears to be 'obvious' that the basic question "What is...that?" of (my interpretation of) cognitive phenomenology lies at the basis of all phenomenology, in fact all scientific endeavor. Second: Restrictivists and computationists seem to be unaware of the fact that, by using the word *re-presentation*, they postulate beforehand what they are trying to prove, namely that objects **exist independent of our observations**. Ontologically that might be so (**although this is denied by quantum mechanics**), cognitively there is just a chaotic multitude, so from the outset they create a circularity. The word *presentation* or the German word *Vorstellung* ('placing before one') fits my view better, so... Third: My thinking, by means of these successive stages that I would describe fundamentally different as *edge-formation* and *contour-formation* and so on, cognitively *creates* objects.

This was the bottom-up part, now the top-down. Mathematical thinking – of which even convinced materialists say: "We don't know what consciousness is, we don't know what mathematics is" - provides us with the best possible gate towards extending cognitive phenomenology. And although algebraic exercises have a definite cognitive phenomenology of their own, it is (projective) geometry in its *anschauliche* form that most easily shows it.

Imagine a complete projective triangle, all three sides going through infinity. Then 'widen' the angles of the standing sides, in order to let the top go upward, up, up and away to infinity when the standing sides become parallel. Widening the standing sides still further, the top of

the complete triangle reappears from the opposite side, which is by definition one and the same infinite point.

Now a mathematician will simply accept this (or not) and get to work with it.

A sensory phenomenologist will deny the infinite, because 'there is no sense-impression of it'.

A cognitive phenomenologist will partly follow the same track by stating that in the first stage of widening he will have the impression of almost haptonomical contact with the top, almost 'grabbing it'. Then, progressing further, this ebbs away, but the contact will still be visual. Then comes a stage that one cannot 'see' the top, but one can still think it. And this stage has a very peculiar cognitive phenomenology. Through these progressive stages an almost bodily increase in strength is needed to keep thinking, the more so if one concentrates not so much on the widening, but on following the top. In that case, keeping one's attention with the top, it becomes harder and harder to hold the sides straight as the top goes upward, they start to wiggle and bend, one can feel a slight swindle or even a 'snapping' of one's consciousness when the top goes through infinity and comes back at the other side. And we become aware of another cognitive phenomenon: Where one's consciousness is concentrated, with the top, it is light, where the top returns, one experiences darkness.

What does this mean. Well, you have just performed an act of observing your thinking, of cognitive phenomenology. Repeating this or these kinds of investigations will convince you that you have, in inner empirism, observed a law of thinking of which you were unaware before.

Generalising this experience leads to the observation, that under your concentrated inner gaze your cognitive space or field of inner observation will widen, will expand. You will begin to become aware of the fact that between the stepping stones of your (re-)presentations, your *Vorstellungen*, much more has happened than you noticed before. Underneath or amidst your conventional scientific **discrete** consciousness a second layer will slowly emerge, a **continuous** layer of exact images. You will learn to discern between the sensory images that you are accustomed to and these new, exact images. The first kind we could call *reactive images*, reacting to external stimuli, the second kind *creative images* (note the anagram). Science is gradually discovering this second layer, the first layer of our *Smart Unconscious* (*Het Slimme Onbewuste*, Ap Dijksterhuis). In Dijksterhuis his investigations these creative impulses come to the surface in propositional or emotional or action-oriented form. But my survey indicates that beneath the layer of our usual propositional thinking weaves a second layer with a distinct exact imagistic character that is closely related to the multitude of Archetypes that Carl Gustav Jung describes. And by means of observing one's thinking as described here, we can lift these up at least one level into the scrutiny of our extended cognitive phenomenology.

What does this survey show? Using the technique of observing our thinking makes it clear that all perception is conceptually structured, sensory phenomenology in its strongest, restrictivist, exclusive form is wrong. This same technique leads us beyond the *argumentative* proofs of the existence of cognitive phenomenology, it forms an *ontological* proof, it creates and lifts into our **usually discrete** consciousness an entirely new, clear and distinct **continuous** field of exact images that, in their purest form, have no sensory content. Nothing against sensory phenomenology, but the evolution of our philosophical and scientific thinking requires something stronger.