

Lund mini-symposium on the concept of phenomenality:

What is what-it-is-likeness like?

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Titles and abstracts

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Phenomenality as a Ground for Perceptual Intentionality

According to a common theme in modern philosophy of mind, the representational character of an experience is either identical to or the ground for the phenomenal character of the said experience. In this paper this notion is criticized for failing to account for various cases of perceptual constancy. It is to the contrary argued that the relationship between the representational and phenomenal character of the experience is one where the latter grounds the former.

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The Puzzle of Cognitive Phenomenology

What is the nature of conscious thought? Answers to this question cluster into two groups. According to a position that I dub ‘phenomenal conservatism’, the phenomenal character of thought is restricted to that of the sensory and affective states that accompany thought. According to a view I dub ‘phenomenal liberalism’, thought is characterized by a distinctive range of phenomenal properties – what we might call ‘cognitive phenomenological properties’. The debate between conservatives and liberals generates a puzzle, for we cannot account for it without rejecting one (or more) prima facie plausible claim about consciousness. I argue that this debate is best explained by supposing that conservatives and liberals are operating with different notions of ‘phenomenal consciousness’. This result is an important one, for it calls into question the widespread assumption that there is a unitary notion of phenomenal consciousness at work in the philosophy of mind.

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Phenomenality that Necessarily is Background Phenomenality

Most, perhaps all, conscious perceptions contain a foreground-background duality. That is, something in the perceptual field, the foreground, is more focused on than

the rest, the background. Let it be added that there need be no definite discontinuity between them. In ordinary visual perception, the foreground is in the center of the perceptual field, and what is at first only periphery and background can easily later be made the foreground. Thereby, what is at first an un-determinately perceived object can later on be a determinately perceived object.

The view I will put forward for discussion is that the perceptual field also contains background entities that cannot possibly be turned into a foreground entity. In other words, there is a kind of phenomenality that necessarily is background phenomenality. I will present what I take to be five possible such cases. My talk will have the following structure:

0. Preliminaries: certainly, there are peculiar phenomenal phenomena.
1. Phenomenal space: there is emptiness between perceptual objects.
2. Phenomenal ego-pole: there is something in the corner of the visual field.
3. Phenomenal determinables: there can be perceptual identity in perceptual differences.
4. Phenomenal time: there is perceived time flow in the perception of changes.
5. Phenomenal action: there is something in the corner of proprioception.

In all probability, a denial of the existence of necessarily-background phenomenality has repercussions on the rest of a philosopher's web of beliefs. Entities that are necessarily-background entities are by such a denial much too easily deemed to be reducible to relations between, or classes of, entities that can be foreground entities. For instance, space is often regarded as *trivially* being nothing but relations between objects, and determinables often regarded as *trivially* being nothing but classes of determinates. Such possible repercussions, however, will not be touched upon in the talk; I mention them here only in order to show the importance of the view I will defend; be it true or not.