



# Consciousness and Thought: Wrap-Up Talk

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# The Critique of Pure Thought

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# Golden Square

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# Questions

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1. Is there a phenomenology of thought?
  2. Which is prior: phenomenology or intentionality?
  3. What is perceptual/thought content?
  4. How might thought content be grounded in phenomenology?
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# Cognitive Phenomenology

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- Q: Is there a (nonperceptual) phenomenology of thought?
  - I.e., is the phenomenology of thought reducible to (nothing over and above) the phenomenology of perception, imagery, affect, action, etc.
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# Formulating the Issue

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- Q: Does the phenomenology of thought *supervene* on sensory phenomenology?
    - I.e. Could there be two (human?) subjects with the same sensory phenomenology, different phenomenology of thought?
  - If yes: proponent of CP wins
  - If no: opponent of CP (probably) wins
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# Arguments for CP

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- Arguments for CP are arguments from
    - 1. Epistemology
    - 2. Phenomenology of cases
  - Arguments against CP are based on rejecting 1, explaining away 2, and appealing to simplicity (and empirical evidence).
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# Epistemological Arguments

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- Key premise: A certain epistemological feature of thoughts requires phenomenology
  - Introspective knowledge (David)
  - Subjective knowledge of type (Charles)
  - Internalist justification (Declan)
- Basic premise: phenomenal model of introspective justification?
  - But opponents will appeal to alternative models of first-person epistemology.
- Crucial to develop the support for this premise.



# Arguments from Cases

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- Proponents of CP argue that in certain cases there are phenomenological differences that aren't grounded in sensory differences
    - Understanding foreign language, getting a joke, interpretive shifts, etc.
  - Opponents exhibit sensory differences in these cases.
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# Sensory Differences

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- Q: Does it suffice for opponents to exhibit sensory differences in these cases?
  - 1. The differences must *explain* the phenomenological differences (cf. method of phenomenal contrast)
  - 2. Differences may arise from reliable *causal* rather than constitutive connections between cognitive and sensory phenomenology.
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# Familiar Situation

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- A familiar situation:
    - Cf. materialism vs. dualism
      - Physical properties should explain phenomenal properties
      - Need to distinguish constitutive from causal relations
  - Calls for a good old-fashioned conceivability argument!
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# Argument 1: Thinko

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- 1. We can conceive of a subject, Thinko, with no sensory phenomenology but some phenomenology of thought
  - E.g. a pure mathematical thinker, without sensory processes
- 2. If Thinko is conceivable, Thinko is possible
- 3. If Thinko is possible, phenomenology of thought does not supervene on sensory phenomenology

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4. Phenomenology of thought does not supervene on sensory phenomenology

# Responses

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## ■ Possible responses

- 1. Deny that Thinko is conceivable
  - 2. Hold that Thinko is conceivable but impossible
  - 3. Hold that Thinko might be possible but is irrelevant, by restricting the claim to human cognizers:
    - In humans, cognitive phenomenology is grounded in sensory phenomenology.
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# Argument 2: Understando

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- Take a human subject S who understands a sentence.
- 1. There is a conceivable subject, Understando, with the same sensory phenomenology as S, who doesn't understand the sentence.
- 2. Understando doesn't have the phenomenology of understanding
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- 3. The phenomenology of understanding doesn't supervene on cognitive phenomenology

# Responses

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- 1. Understando isn't conceivable
  - 2. Conceivability doesn't entail possibility
  - 3. Understando is humanly impossible so irrelevant
    - I don't think (3) is effective, as anti-CP requires that sensory phenom *necessitates* cognitive phenom, not just nomologically.
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## 2. Phenomenology vs Intentionality

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- Which is more fundamental: phenomenology or intentionality?
    - Reductive intentionalism: P derives from I
    - Reductive phenomenism: I derives from P
    - Separatism: P and I are equally fundamental and separate
    - Integrativism: P and I are equally fundamental and intertwined
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# The Case Against Separatism

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- Separatism: suggested by Howard's two faculties.
  - Problem for separatism: could there be an experience phenomenally identical to these without intentionality?
    - E.g. without representing (or acquainting one with) certain properties?
  - If not, there are necessary connections between phenomenology and intentionality that require explaining.
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# The Case Against Reductive Intentionalism

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- Reductive intentionalism requires a level of non-phenomenally-characterized intentional properties in which phenomenal properties are grounded
- But there will always be an explanatory gap between such intentional properties and phenomenal properties
- To explain the phenomena, intentional properties need to have phenomenology built in.

# The Case Against Reductive Phenomenism

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- Reductive phenomenism requires that there be some complete/adequate characterization of phenomenal properties in nonintentional terms
  - But plausibly there is no such characterization
  - To explain the phenomena, phenomenal properties need to have intentional properties built in.
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# Integrativism

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- Hence, integrativism: explaining phenomenology requires phenomenal/intentional properties
  - E.g. phenomenally representing such-and-such content
- N.B. all intentional properties are plausibly relational, so phenomenal/intentional properties must be relational
  - Terry: nonrelational intentional properties?

# Factorial Integrativism

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- Benj: Phenomenal properties are factorizable:
    - P-property = phenomenally having intentional property
  - Kati Farkas: Phenomenal properties are factorizable into sensory core plus intentional interpretation
  - Integrativism, but quasi-separatist: phenomenal properties involve combination of distinct phenomenological and intentional features
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# Non-Factorial Integrativism

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- Alternative view: phenomenally intentional properties are not analyzable as a combination of distinct phenomenal and intentional features
  - Rather, intentionality is fundamentally phenomenal, and phenomenology is fundamentally intentional
- Q: How do we settle the issue between factorial and nonfactorial integrativism, and what turns on it?

# 3. The Nature of Content

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- What is the nature of perceptual content and thought content?
    - Such that they are appropriately grounded in phenomenology (David, Terry/Matjaz, Susanna)
    - Such that they are appropriately related to the external world and to each other (Susanna)
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# Two-Dimensional Account

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- Experiences and thoughts both have multiple contents:
  - Fregean content (1-intension, evaluable at centered worlds)
  - Russellian content (2-intension, evaluable at ordinary worlds)
- Fregean content covaries with phenomenology
- Russellian content covaries with external objects



# Explaining the Phenomena

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- The 2D account is well-suited to explaining
    - Indexical thought (David)
      - Similar I-thoughts have similar 1-intensions
    - Representational/relational phenomena (Susanna)
      - 1-intension mirrors phenomenology, 2-intension mirrors object
      - Enriched intension mirrors both at once
    - Vagueness (Terry/Matjaz)?
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# Explaining Vagueness

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- There is a real issue about explaining vague contents on a picture where phenomenal intentionality is fundamental.
  - Fundamental phenomenal/intentional properties involve relations to contents. What contents?
    - Vague properties, vague propositions
    - Then: vagueness in the world.
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# Ways Out

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- Alternatives:
    - Hold that (phenomenal) intentionality is not fundamental but derivative
    - Hold that the fundamental intentional properties involve relations to non-vague contents
    - Hold that the fundamental intentional properties involve relations to wimpily (precisely specifiable) vague contents
    - Hold that fundamental intentional properties can involve relations to robustly vague contents
  
  - No option is free of problems.
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# 4. Grounding Thought Content in Phenomenology

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- Tempting view: phenomenology (or phenomenal intentionality) plays some constitutive role in the intentionality of thought
  - This is plausibly so for perception
  - Thought may be analogous

# Three Models

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- Cognitivism: Intentionality of thought is grounded in the phenomenology of thought
  - Perceptualism: Intentionality of thought is grounded in the phenomenology of perception
  - Separatism: Intentionality of thought is grounded in non-phenomenal factors
  - Combined views: More than one of the above.
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# Cognitivism

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- Intentionality of thought is wholly grounded in the phenomenology of thought
  - Problem 1: Requires very rich and fine-grained phenomenology of thought
  - Problem 2: At least some thought content is plausibly derived from perceptual phenomenology:
    - e.g. phenomenal concepts, perceptual concepts, etc.
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# Perceptualism

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- Intentionality of thought is wholly grounded in the phenomenology/intentionality of perception (Jesse?)
  - Problem 1: Abstract concepts: logical, mathematical, social, moral, etc
  - Problem 2: Thinko/Understando: Thought contents that don't supervene on sensory contents
  - Problem 3: What is the grounding relation?
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# Combined View

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- I'm tempted by a (partially) combined view
  - Contents of thought are grounded in perceptual content plus inferential role
    - (Or narrow contents are; wide contents grounded in narrow content plus environment)
  - The appeal to inferential role helps deal with abstract concepts, with Thinko/Understando, and with the grounding relation.
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# 2D Thought Contents

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- On the epistemic 2D account, one can specify thought contents using
    - certain basic concepts (to specify scenarios)
    - a priori entailment
  - Basic concepts may include: phenomenal, perceptual, spatiotemporal, causal/nomic, logical, mathematical?
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# 2D Account and the Combined View

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- Some basic concepts are plausibly grounded in perceptual phenomenology
  - Phenomenal, perceptual, spatiotemporal, causal?
- Others are plausibly grounded in inferential role
  - Logical, mathematical, causal?
- A priori entailment is a matter of inferential role
- So: Thought content grounded in perceptual content plus inferential role?

# Whither Cognitive Phenomenology?

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- Q: Is there a role here for cognitive phenomenology in grounding thought content?
- Perhaps in grounding
  - Causal concepts (Kant?)
  - Cognitive phenomenal concepts
  - Normative concepts?
  - Relation of thought to basic concepts?
  - Justification (of a priori entailment)?
  - Attitude to contents?
- Diagnostic question: Could a creature with perceptual phenomenology but no cognitive phenomenology have contentful thoughts, and if so which?

# Naturalizing the Contents of Thought

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- Suggests a route to “naturalizing” thought content: proceed by naturalizing
    - (i) the phenomenal intentionality of perception
    - (ii) a priori inferential relations
  - Likewise, insofar as naturalizations of (I) and (ii) are unavailable, naturalization of thought content may be unavailable too.
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# Concluding Critique

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- The road to (an understanding of) thought may well proceed through (an understanding of) consciousness