

# BOOK REVIEWS

## **Mental Representation and Consciousness**

Towards a phenomenological theory of representation and reference

Eduard Marbach. (1993). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Written by a research professor in philosophy and former collaborator with Piaget, this work helps students of existential phenomenology know what Husserl actually focused on in the relations between mental processes and their objects. Even the most serious student can be mystified by Husserl's writing and teasing mentions of method and will be hard-pushed to identify his hermeneutic stance on lived experience. This work explains some of the most basic forms of intentionality and serves to correct the influence of Derrida who has relegated Husserlian phenomenology and existentialism to the "dustbin" of modernism. What it shows is that Husserlian analyses of the structure of mental processes have a precision in excess of what psychoanalysis, cognitive science and cognitive therapy can provide. Instead of vague statements about nonconscious processes somehow forming preconscious and conscious objects, phenomenology has its worth in furthering the interpretation of lived experience as it appears in therapy, or understanding attachment as intersubjective (not within the orbit of evolutionary psychology), or ultimately even promoting clarity about unconscious communication. The natural scientific starting point denies everyday experience rather than explicating it. Allow me to explain.

As a previous collaborator in the *Husserl Archives* at Louvain for 10 years, Marbach has intimate knowledge of Husserl's manuscripts which enable him to pick out the most salient details. There are many forms of intentionality, modes of representing or mentally referring, to the manifold of objects (ideas, persons and social practices). The term "representation" means presentation, or more clearly re-presentation, in the type of appearing where an object is not perceptually present (preconscious) but is given back by imagination, recollection, anticipation or by a picture or in other ways. Marbach's contribution is to provide a notation for how any one embodied consciousness is involved in basic ways with different types of object. It has to be noted that despite the didactic and introductory rhetoric concerning phenomenology as description, what is more accurately the case is that a basic interpretative stance is occupied and that is that intentionality of the modification of processes and the intentional implication between them is the target to be unravelled. Human beings are capable of reflection, a meta-intentionality, about how they are aware.

Consciousness, at base, is world-bound. The methodological beginning is to compare and contrast different manners in which objects of different sorts are given or appear. The basic idea is that sense is given to objects within different horizons of sense, ultimately the worldly horizon. What appears to Husserl is that there are many types of non-perceptual givenness, the quasi-presence of appresented sense of a three-dimensional perceptual object that has sides, a back, cultural senses, use-sense, value, aesthetic sense, for instance. The interpretative horizon in which reflection and analysis takes place is one of a degree of non-actuality through the psychological reduction where what appears for oneself is compared with what is implicitly there yet which only is quasi-present. The point is to explicate the ways in which specific sorts of mental processes are connected and involuted with each other.

The results are in understanding the family of mental processes. That most fundamental are the pre-reflexive non-egoic work done by temporality and perceptual presence without identity; next comes perception with identity, more closely connected to the ego; next higher are the pure presentations such as recollections, anticipations and imaginings by the ego; next comes the presentation of the sort involved in visual art, and finally higher forms like the conceptual intentionality of speech, thought and reading and writing. These findings are the “eidetic structures” of “noesis-noema correlations”. All that appears does so from a “bodily occupied point of view”, (p 176). Overall, mental activities can be divided into the genus of the presentations of perceptual things, within time and with sensation that connect to their first acquisition and their retention and capability to act as associations for other perceptual presences; there is also the genus of presentation. The latter genus breaks down into forms of intentionality that “imply or modify perception” such as the aforementioned imagination, recollection and anticipation where intentionality and givenness are nested or convoluted, one within another. Whereas picturing presentation is a form that requires a “vehicle or support that is actually perceived” in order to depict the scene or event that the picture is about (p 177).

This book stands as a counter-argument to Heidegger because it is asserted that reflection on intentionality, and one’s quasi-awareness of how one is aware, is not a Cartesian mistake but necessary for the pre-empirical psychology and the pre-philosophy of understanding how human beings are related to objects. Contrary to Heidegger (1927/1988, §8a, p 46-7), appresentation, the adding of additional senses to what is perceptually present, is how consciousness can be interpreted to work. In criticism, cause reappears despite the intention to be acausal. There could also be more on how intentional implication and modification are given and how appresentation can be distinguished from perceptual givenness.

Marbach has also carried out some experimental work where he has investigated how children understand pictures where there is a picture within a picture. This is to find out how forms of non- or pre-linguistic intentionality become modified (1996). The point being that consciousness is not a theoretical entity but related to tangible qualia or sensa and linked to “observable... behaviour and action”, (p 138). With the help of *Mental representation and consciousness* it should no longer be a mystery how “each soul also stands in community with others which are intentionally interrelated, that is, in a purely intentional, internally and essentially closed nexus, that of intersubjectivity”, (1937/1970, §69, p 238). Or what it means when consciousness transcends in correlations “between the *phenomenon of knowledge* and the *object of knowledge*” and the task is “to track down... *all correlations and forms of givenness*, and to elucidate them through analysis”, (1907/1999, p 68).

## References

- Heidegger, M. (1988). *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1999). *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Marbach, E. (1996). Understanding the representational mind. *Human Studies*, 19, 137-152.

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### Psychotherapy and Counselling in Practice

A Narrative Framework

Digby Tantam. (2002). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A must for all trainees and therapists; this book is a valuable resource for those embarking upon or currently in clinical practice. The book is presented in a straightforward and accessible way, with plenty of examples from both clinical and theoretical perspectives. The clinical vignettes are not just taken from sessions between psychotherapists and clients, but include the medical profession, doctors, nurses and other health care professionals as well, which enhances appeal of the book.

Digby Tantam skilfully brings together the mental health profession as a whole, emphasising the importance of the therapeutic relationship rather than one particular ‘treatment’.

Tantam refers to a variety of practitioners from different approaches: Existential, psychodynamic, cognitive behavioural and group therapy