53.0 Straw man

The main argument in Tye’s response is that Gertler is attacking a straw man – it is not the view that Tye defends in his earlier paper.

53.1 Phenomenal concepts refer directly.

“the referent is presented without the assistance of associated features distinct from the referent which the thinker a priori associates with it”.

This entails that there can be no conceptual analysis of the concept of the kind needed for step (1) in the standard analysis of ‘water is H2O’. Step 1 is listing all those features distinct from H2O which the thinker a priori associates with H2O.

53.2 How?

The answer of HOW this is accomplished is a simple ‘causal’ or ‘tracking’ theory – the states in question are representational – they occur in optimal conditions iff and because the thing they are about or of is present. They are like the beeps made by a metal detector, or the ‘violated’ state of a burglar alarm. They are set to ‘track’ metal or burglars, and in optimal conditions, enter that state iff and because metal or burglars are present.

53.3 In virtue of what is a concept phenomenal?

A concept is phenomenal iff it functions in the right sort of way (roughly: it is poised, abstract, non-conceptual intentional content) Part of that definition involves the fact that it is conceptually irreducible – no a priori definition or analysis is possible in non-phenomenal terms.

53.4 But this does not entail...

That nothing can be said of interest about such states.

A concept is phenomenal just in case “it is laid down in memory as a result of undergoing the appropriate experiences, it tends to trigger appropriate images in response to certain cognitive tasks, and it enables its possessors to discriminate the referent of the concept directly and immediately via introspection.”

53.5 And it does entail...

That phenomenal concepts are inherently perspectival.

To be a phenomenal concept is to play such-and-such a role, and part of that role is being acquired through experience. Being acquired through experience is that which allows a concept the status of being perspectival.

Therefore, Gertler’s instance that Tye thinks of a phenomenal concept’s being perspectival is a brute fact is simply unfounded.

And if we look back, Gertler’s argument turned crucially on that misstep.

53.6 Lastly,
The second half of Gertler’s argument seems to make the same misstep. Part of what makes a concept a phenomenal concept is the role it plays in our mental life. Therefore, part of its role is, upon being applied to a phenomenal state, being available to introspection. This mechanism (which Tye explained as ‘when I think of brain state B under a phenomenal concept, the activation of that concept entails that I enter brain state B) is reliable (as if it wasn’t, the state wouldn’t be phenomenal), and therefore constitutes genuine knowledge.