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CONSCIOUSNESS AND COGNITION. THE COGNITIVE PHENOMENOLOGY DEBATE

abstract

According to a position which has dominated the theoretical landscape in the philosophy of mind until recently, only sensory states exhibit a characteristic phenomenal dimension, whereas cognitive states either utterly lack it, or inherit it from some of their accompanying sensory states. This position has recently been challenged by several scholars who have stressed the irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology to a merely sensory one. The aim of this introductory paper is to provide a general overview of the debate on cognitive phenomenology in order to give the reader a flavor of the richness of the themes that surround this area of investigation centered on the relationship between consciousness and cognition.

keywords

cognitive phenomenology, sensory phenomenology, irreducibility, consciousness, cognition

The main aim of this special issue of *Phenomenology and Mind* consists in promoting a reflection on the relationship between consciousness and cognition, by focusing in particular on the question whether there is (and, just in case, how should be conceived) a phenomenology characteristic of the cognitive level of our mental life. According to a position which has dominated the debate in the philosophy of mind and in the cognitive sciences until recently (that we shall call “the conservative position”, exemplified among others by Tye 1995, Carruthers 2005, Braddon-Mitchell & Jackson 2007), only sensory states exhibit a characteristic phenomenal dimension, whereas cognitive states either utterly lack it, or inherit it from some of their accompanying sensory states. The conservative position has recently been challenged by several scholars (Strawson 1994, Siewert 1998, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Pitt 2004), who have stressed the irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology to a merely sensory one. Those philosophers have thereby promoted, within the ongoing debate on phenomenal consciousness in the analytic philosophy, a theoretical approach that is sympathetic and consonant with the way in which the issue has been dealt with within the phenomenological tradition.

Even though this debate is very lively and attended on the part of the international philosophical community (one needs only look at the several recent publications on this topic¹), in Italy it is still widely ignored. Thus, we decided to devote a special issue to this topic. Our hope is that it helps to convey to the Italian philosophical community the main theoretical views driving the ongoing debate and the main critical lines of reflection that it opens up. We think that this can provide a valuable help in improving the philosophical understanding of the nature of the conscious mind.

Part of the material collected here originated from a workshop, *Mind and Consciousness: Some Issues in Cognitive Phenomenology*, organized at the Faculty of Philosophy of San Raffaele University on 8th January 2016². Besides the organizers, Elisabetta Sacchi (San Raffaele University, Milan) and Alberto Voltolini (University of Turin), the other speakers of that workshop were Clotilde Calabi (State University of Milan), Tim Bayne (Monash University,

1 Among the main works on this topic see Bayne and Montague 2011; Smithies 2013a, b; Chudnoff 2015; Kriegel 2015 (ch. 1); Breyer and Gutland 2016; Montague 2016 (ch. 8).

2 This workshop has been supported by the funds of the local PRIN/MIUR national research project “Realism and Objectivity”.

Melbourne), Anders Nes (University of Oslo) and Gianfranco Soldati (University of Fribourg). The other papers collected in the issue have been selected through a call.

In this introduction we would like to give a general overview of the debate on cognitive phenomenology, in order to provide the reader with a sufficiently comprehensive framework in which the more specific points addressed by the papers here collected can be properly located. Let us start by considering what is meant by “cognitive phenomenology”. Since there is much disagreement among philosophers as regards what the debate is really about, we deem it crucial to start working with a characterization of the main notions at stake as neutral and less theoretically laden as possible. So, let us start by saying that the debate is about *phenomenology* and *cognition* or, more precisely, about the phenomenology of cognition. To claim that a given domain of mental phenomena has a phenomenology amounts to saying that “there is something it is like for the subject” to entertain those mental phenomena. By indicating the subjective/qualitative aspect of our mental life with the phrase “phenomenal character”, we can say that a mental phenomenon has a phenomenology if it has a phenomenal character. Many mental states are claimed to have phenomenal character. Paradigmatic and non-problematic examples of such states are perceptual states in all their different modalities, including bodily sensations. For example, pains present themselves to their subjects with a characteristic “feel”, and the same goes for all the other sensory states, such as seeing a red rose in a vase, tasting a glass of aged Cognac, smelling the aroma of fresh toasted coffee, feeling by touch the softness of a silk fabric, and so on.

Yet, that there is a red rose in the vase is something that not only can be perceived, but also thought about, judged, believed. In such cases, what we are referring to are mental phenomena (acts, states, processes) categorized as *cognitive*. That there are cognitive states and that such states do differ from the sensory ones are two widely accepted points. Instead, as to the two related questions, (i) what does exactly qualify a given kind of state as cognitive and (ii) what relation is there among cognition and sensibility, we have to register a widespread disagreement among philosophers. Someone believes that there is such a thing as a “mark of the cognitive”³; others are skeptics about the possibility of providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the cognitive. Some claim that there is a clear-cut distinction between sensibility and cognition; others claim that there is no neat divide between the two domains, because each is intimately compenetrated by the other.

Important as it surely is, settling these issues exceeds the scope of this introduction. For our purposes here, it is enough to introduce an intuitive characterization of the cognitive domain, which we can take to be the domain to which states such as the following do belong: judging, thinking, believing/disbelieving, accepting, suspecting, surmising, conjecturing, being confident/sure, doubting, remembering, expecting, predicting, realizing, speculating, deeming, assuming... that p (or: that something is the case, that something is thus and so⁴). Such states can be considered the products of activities and processes also belonging to the cognitive domain. Smithies (2013a, p. 744) provides a list of such activities, including among them: considering a hypothesis, judging that a hypothesis is true, recalling a fact learned in the past, recognizing that the conclusion of an argument follows from its premises, inferring the conclusion of an argument from its premises, calculating the solution to a

³ Kriegel, for example, provides the following criterion for demarcating the cognitive: “For any mental state M, M is a cognitive state iff (i) M exhibits the attitudinal property of representing-as-true and (ii) M is not produced by any sensory system” (2015, p. 46).

⁴ See Kriegel 2015 (pp. 38-39) for this list.

problem, deliberating about what to do, grasping a metaphor, getting a joke, understanding a sentence, having an articulated thought on the tip of your tongue, having a suspicion or a hunch. Bringing all these elements together, we can say, with Smithies himself that “*Cognitive phenomenology* can be defined as the experience that is associated with cognitive activities, such as thinking, reasoning, and understanding” (2013, p. 744).

Having clarified what belongs to the cognitive domain of mental phenomena, we can now say that what people in the debate at stake do query about is the supposed phenomenology of items in that domain. The leading questions in the present debate are therefore the following: Do cognitive activities and their products have a phenomenology? How could they have it? A very natural reaction one may have as a start is of puzzlement. For one thing, no one seems (seriously) to put into question that sensory states have a phenomenology, that is, that those states are associated with phenomenal properties that account for the state’s phenomenal character (for what-it-is-like to entertain those states⁵). No one seems to put into question that this phenomenology exists and that it is proprietary (i.e., that it is irreducible to other kinds of phenomenology). Even though the so called “Intentionalists” claim that the phenomenal properties of sensory states are identical to (or supervenient upon) their intentional properties, they take it for granted that the former exist and are irreducible to other, more primitive, phenomenal properties. This point is worth stressing in order to avoid misunderstandings: what intentionalists deny is not that there are phenomenal sensory properties, nor that these properties are phenomenally primitive. They deny that such properties are basic, by claiming that phenomenal properties reduce to (some kind of) intentional properties. Thus, if the existence and the phenomenal irreducibility of sensory phenomenology are both taken as unproblematic, why should not the same attitude be taken toward cognitive phenomenology? In other words, why should cognitive states, unlike sensory states, raise a problem as to their phenomenology? As Bayne and Montague rightly put it, “one of the striking features of the cognitive phenomenology debate is that it exists at all” (2013, p. 4).

To make this puzzlement even more vivid, it is instructive to consider the impression that this issue could have made on philosophers in the past, within both the phenomenological and the analytic tradition⁶. One first point that stands out in making this confrontation is that very few scholars, if any, in the past would have found problematic the idea that thoughts or other mental states and activities can be conscious. From Descartes to Moore, we can find a plethora of philosophers who applied the notions of experience and of consciousness both to sensory episodes and to thoughts (in the wide sense of “*cogitatio*” which includes judging, entertaining a given kind of conceptual content in some intentional modality, understanding, and the like), and who assigned to these notions a crucial role in the characterization of the mental nature of an entity. According to Descartes what qualifies a given kind of state as mental is its occurring within us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it. This point is also explicit in Husserl who says that “Percepts, imaginative and pictorial representations, act of conceptual thinking, surmises and doubts, joys and griefs, hopes and fears, wishes and acts of will etc., are... ‘experiences’ or ‘contents of consciousness’” (1900/01 V, §2). In the same vein, Moore claims “[S]omething happens in your minds – some act of consciousness – *over and above* the hearing of the words, some act of consciousness which may be called understanding their meaning” (1910/1953, p. 57). The examples can be multiplied by considering other

5 Even though this way of characterizing the notion of phenomenal character is quite widespread and common, it has to be stressed that there is no general agreement as to how the “what-it is-like” locution should be understood.

6 On this point see Siewert (2011) and Robinson (2011).

authors such as Kant, Brentano and James. In their writings, the central notion of “experience” is used so as to encompass any occurrent mental episode.

In the light of these considerations, an important issue to consider is what prompted the change of our notion of the mind in a guise so substantial to put into question something that for the philosophers in the past was obvious. A close examination of this topic would of course deserve much more space than it is available in this introduction. Here we limit ourselves to mention some of the main aspects that have played a crucial role in shaping a conception of the mind that has opened up the possibility of a phenomenally unconscious cognitive domain of mental phenomena.

A very influential role in this connection was played by the so called “two-separate realms” conception of the mind. This conception got rid of the idea of the mind as a unitary domain of phenomena and fostered a picture according to which the mind is constituted of two separate domains: the purely cognitive and the purely sensory. The former is the domain of propositional attitudes, mental states endowed with content (that have intentionality); the latter is the domain of states that feel like something to the subject who entertains them (they have phenomenal qualities). Phenomenality, in this framework, is a feature pertaining only to states of the latter kind; intentionality only to states of the former. As a consequence, the idea that the mental domain is unified under a common feature or mark is rejected. An important role in shaping this conception has been played by a number of very influential philosophers in the last century. To name just some of the many, consider C. Lewis (to whom we owe the very label we used to refer to this conception) who claims that no cognitive state can figure in consciousness, since to figure in it a state must have an experiential nature, and yet nothing experiential can be conceptual and nothing conceptual can be experiential. Other important contributions come from Gilbert Ryle (who in his attack to what he calls the “Cartesian myth of the ghost in the machine” ends up reducing the life of the conscious mind to its sensory residue), and Sellars to whom we owe the distinction between *sapience* and *sentience*. What these philosophers passed on to future generations is a sort of schizophrenic conception of the mind, according to which it is constituted by (at least) two irreducible and unconnected compartments – the phenomenal and the cognitive one. The influence that this conception of the mind had both in the philosophy of mind and, more generally, in the sciences of the mind, is a point that can hardly be overestimated. Another important feature that played a crucial role in putting into question the equivalence between being mental and being conscious is the “discovery” of the unconscious, both in psychoanalysis (the psychoanalytic unconscious) and in the cognitive sciences (the cognitive unconscious). The (somewhat unpalatable) idea that an occurrent mental state can be unconscious has subsequently been made more appealing by the claim, originally championed by Block (1995), that consciousness can come in many different varieties, and that phenomenal consciousness is only one among many others. Last but not least, one more aspect to consider is the impact of theories of phenomenal consciousness, such as those put forward by Dretske (1995) and Tye (1995), which characterize it in such a way as to rule out the possibility that it can extend beyond the sensory domain. This is due to some restrictions build into the theory itself such as, for example, that only states with non-conceptual content or only states that can serve as input to the cognitive system can be phenomenally conscious.

Having clarified what is meant by cognitive phenomenology (CP) and what the corresponding debate is taken to be about, let us now consider the main parties that contend for the scene. The divide is between those who take a negative stand and those that take a positive stand towards CP. To refer to these two parties different labels are used, in particular: Exclusivist/Inclusivist (Siewert 2011); Frugal /Liberal (Robinson 2011); Restrictive/Expansive (Prinz 2011); Conservative/Liberal (Bayne & Montague 2011). Here we shall make use of the last one.

The conservative stance comes in two different versions: one radical and the other moderate. The radical version (endorsed by a small minority of scholars) denies that anything cognitive can be phenomenally conscious. Phenomenality, according to the radical version, only pertains to the sensory domain. Cognitive states and activities, it is claimed, can be conscious only in some non-phenomenal sense of this notion. Those endorsing this position appeal to the idea, originally put forward by Block (1995), that there are different kinds of consciousness which, while normally co-instantiated, can in some cases come apart. This is the distinction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness which leads to the claim that cognitive states, if conscious, can be so only in the latter sense of the notion⁷. Paradigmatic advocates of this radical position are Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson according to whom “Cognitive states are prime examples of states for which there is *not* something it is like to be in them; of states that lack a phenomenology” (2007, p. 129). The moderate position instead acknowledges that cognitive states can be phenomenally conscious, but claims that this phenomenology is reducible to the phenomenology of sensory states, that is, to the phenomenology of: (i) perceptual experience in any of its modalities; (ii) conscious bodily sensations (pain, itches); (iii) imagistic experiences of a non-linguistic sort; (iv) conscious linguistic imagery⁸. According to Tye, for example “insofar as there is any phenomenal or immediately experienced quality to the above states [cognitive states], this is due to their being accompanied by sensations or images or feelings that are the real bearers of phenomenal character” (Tye 1995, p. 4). On the same vein, see Carruthers who claims that “Our thoughts aren’t like anything, in the relevant sense, except to the extent that they might be associated with visual or other images or emotional feelings, which will be phenomenally conscious by virtue of their quasi-sensory states” (Carruthers 2005, pp. 138-139).

Unlike conservatives, liberals defend the two following claims: (i) there is a phenomenology that pertains to cognitive episodes and activities; and (ii) this phenomenology is *sui generis*, or *proprietary*, that is, it is irreducible to sensory phenomenology. Irreducibility is characterized by Chudnoff as the claim according to which “Some cognitive states put one in phenomenal states for which no wholly sensory states suffice” (2015, p. 15). If the irreducibility thesis is what everyone in the liberal camp defends, there are other claims, stronger than irreducibility, that only some liberals endorse. One such claim is independence. To defend independence is to acknowledge the (logical and metaphysical) possibility of pure phenomenal cognitive states, that is of phenomenal cognitive states occurring without any sensory phenomenal states. Independence is stronger than irreducibility since the former entails the latter, but not vice versa (Chudnoff 2015, pp. 17-18). Besides defending the proprietary character of cognitive phenomenology, some people in the liberal camp also maintain that this phenomenology is *distinctive* and *individuating*. Pitt (2011), for example, as regards our occurring thoughts, claims that their phenomenology is not only distinctive in the sense that what it is like consciously to think a particular thought is different

⁷ It is worth stressing that even if Block’s distinction has encouraged the idea that there are non-phenomenal varieties of consciousness, it is far from obvious that he would subscribe to that conception. It is true that Block (1995, p. 232) cites sensations as paradigmatic examples of states that are phenomenally conscious and propositional attitudes (states with representational content expressed by “that clauses”) as paradigmatic examples of states that are access conscious. Moreover, it is true that he claimed that there are cases in which only one variety of consciousness is instantiated and, therefore, that the different notions of consciousness can come apart. Nevertheless, he does not deny neither that cognitive mental phenomena can be phenomenally conscious nor that sensory states can be access conscious. As far as thought is concerned he seems to stay neutral and limit himself in saying the following: “One possibility is that it is just a series of mental images or subvocalizations that make thoughts P-conscious. Another possibility is that the contents themselves have a P-conscious aspect independent of their vehicles” (1995, p. 232).

⁸ See Lormand (1996, pp. 242-243). Tye and Wright (2011) add a further item in the list, namely: primary emotional experiences such as feeling anger or fear.

from what it is like consciously to think any other thought, but also individuating, in the sense that the phenomenology of a thought constitutes its representational content. The individuating claim is connected with what in the ongoing debate in the philosophy of mind is called “the phenomenal intentionality thesis” according to which there is a kind of intentionality, or a kind of content (phenomenal content), grounded on phenomenal character⁹. Even though there is a close connection between the phenomenal intentionality thesis and the cognitive phenomenology thesis (one that is not always easy to articulate), one must acknowledge not only that they are different, but also that neither implies the other.

People involved in the debate feel the need to take a stance as to whether cognitive episodes have a proprietary phenomenology that attains either to their attitudinal mode (different attitudinal modes are associated with different phenomenal characters – attitudinal cognitive phenomenology) or to their intentional content (different intentional contents are associated with different phenomenal characters – content cognitive phenomenology) or to both. As regards to the attitudes, an important question to consider concerns the individuating role of their phenomenal character: is a given state the kind of state it is, say a belief rather than a desire, because it has the peculiar attitudinal phenomenal character that it has? And, in the positive case, how are attitudinal modes to be characterized? In particular, can they be characterized only in terms of functional roles given that functional roles are merely dispositional properties if they are associated with phenomenal character? As regards the contents, the main question concerns how their impact on the phenomenology of a cognitive state should be conceived. Does any difference in content determine a difference in the phenomenal character? Is there a particular kind of content (phenomenal content) that has such an impact? What characterizes such a content (is it non-conceptual, is it narrow...)? Some of the advocates of the liberal position are Strawson (1994), Siewert (1998), Pitt (2004), Horgan and Tienson (2002). According to Strawson, “[T]he experience of seeing red and the experience of now seeming to understand this very sentence, and of thinking that nobody could have had different parents... all fall into the vast category of experiential episodes that have a certain qualitative character for those who have them as they have them” (1994, p. 194). On the same vein, Horgan and Tienson claim that

Intentional states have a phenomenal character, and this phenomenal character is precisely the what-it-is-like of experiencing a specific propositional-attitude vis-à-vis a specific intentional content. Change either the attitude-type (believing, desiring, wondering, hoping, etc.) or the particular intentional content, and the phenomenal character thereby changes too (2002, p. 522).

With the exception of the radical version of the conservative position, everyone in the debate acknowledges that cognitive states and activities have a phenomenology. On this ground we can say that the main bone of contention is not so much the existence, but rather the *nature* of cognitive phenomenology. What are then the main issues concerning the nature of cognitive phenomenology? According to Smithies (2013a, p. 745), there are two macro issues to consider: the *intentionality* and the *reduction* issue. The former raises the question of the relationship between the phenomenology of cognition and the intentionality of cognition. The question as to what relation there is between cognitive phenomenal properties and cognitive intentional properties has, as Smithies emphasizes, important repercussions on the issue of the individuation of cognitive states and on the theoretical role played by cognitive

⁹ For a recent overview of the debate on phenomenal intentionality see Bourget and Mendelovici (2016).

phenomenal properties (do these properties play an individuating role? Is a state the kind of state it is because it has certain phenomenal properties or are those properties only accidentally associated with it?). The reduction issue raises the question of the relationship between the phenomenology of cognition and the phenomenology of sensory perception. Are all phenomenal experiences sensory in nature, as reductionists hold, or there are also non-sensory phenomenal experiences irreducible to those of the sensory variety? How can these issues be adjudicated? The first idea that very likely comes to one's mind, indeed a very natural and sensible one, is that the most adequate ground to start answering these questions is provided by what can be introspectively revealed. Given that we are here talking about phenomenal consciousness and given that phenomenal consciousness concerns a domain of our mental life towards which we seem to have an immediate (direct, non-inferential) first-personal access, should not introspection be our best guide in these matters? What role introspection can legitimately play in the present debate, and more generally in the theoretical attempt of understanding the conscious dimension of our mental life, is an issue on which there is a wide and deep disagreement¹⁰. Someone says that it is introspectively obvious that there is such a thing as cognitive phenomenology. Others deny this. The former reply that what we need is "attentive introspection" and that, if sufficient attention is paid to what is going on in one's "stream of consciousness", one cannot miss the presence of cognitive phenomenal properties (Horgan & Tienson 2002, pp. 522-523). The critics generally rebut saying that even by mobilizing "very attentive" introspection, nothing different "appears". This disagreement has had an enormous repercussion on the issue of the reliability of introspection¹¹ so as to lead most people in the debate to try to settle the issue on a different ground. So, even though there are arguments uniquely based on introspection (such as those aiming at showing the existence of thinking episodes unaccompanied by any sensory features – cases of thoughts occurring unclothed in any kind of linguistic or imagistic garment¹²), most people tend to strip down their appeal to introspection. Even those who do not endorse the radical pessimism about introspection (expressed for example by Carruthers (2011)), tend to be very careful in making use of introspection as a bedrock for their claims. At most, people say, introspection can play a role in giving us evidence concerning the existence of cognitive phenomenology, but not on its nature¹³.

As regards the arguments put forward by people in the liberal camp we can distinguish three main varieties: (1) arguments based on phenomenal contrast (so called "phenomenal contrast arguments"); (2) epistemological arguments and (3) content grounding arguments. The arguments of the first variety can be "pure", "hypothetical" or "glossed"¹⁴. These

10 For the several implications of this disagreement see Spener (2011).

11 The discussion concerning the reliability of introspective reports and their theoretical role in our theories of the mind is not new in the history of philosophy. A well-known antecedent is provided by the discussion on introspectionism that took place in the late nineteenth century and which saw the contraposition of two schools: the school of Würzburg with Külpe and Bühler and the school of Cornell with Titchener and his followers. While the former took a positive attitude towards the role of introspection, the latter were much more skeptical.

12 Siewert (1998, pp. 276-267) is replete with such examples of "non-iconic thoughts". More complex examples of imageless, dispassionate, languageless, conscious thoughts are presented by Strawson (1994, pp. 18-21) and by Siewert himself (1998, pp. 277-278) concerning complex chains of thoughts unfolding with such a speed and determinacy as to seriously challenge the possibility of explaining them in terms of the occurrence of verbal and non-verbal imagery.

13 A well-advised position on this regards is that of Smithies, according to whom "We cannot make progress in debates about the nature of cognitive phenomenology without relying on introspection at all, but we should nevertheless aim to avoid relying solely upon introspection insofar as it generates widespread disagreement" (2013, p. 751).

14 This terminology is due to Chudnoff (2015, pp. 44-45) who distinguishes phenomenal contrast arguments on the ground of the kind of premises they rely on. While arguments of the first kind rely only on premises about

arguments take as their starting point premises according to which there is some phenomenal difference between pairs of cases which otherwise present the same sensory experience. Moving from such premises these arguments take the form of an inference to the best explanation: cognitive phenomenal properties are what best accounts for the phenomenal contrast between the two situations. The first example of such arguments can be found in Moore (1953) and has been developed by Strawson (1994, pp. 5-9). In a well-known example devised by Strawson, the envisaged situation involves two subjects, Jacques (a monoglot Frenchman) and Jack (a monoglot Englishman), as they listen to the news in French. According to Strawson, “the difference between the two can be expressed by saying that Jacques, when exposed to the stream of sound has what one may perfectly well call ‘an experience (as) of understanding’ or ‘an understanding experience’, while Jack does not” (Strawson 1994, p. 6). Other examples of pure phenomenal contrast arguments involve the understanding of sentences or passages in a language that the subject masters, but whose meaning remains unclear until an appropriate parsing is provided (the contrast here is between the situation that precedes and the situation that follows the subject’s grasping the sense of the obscure linguistic material¹⁵), while others concern ambiguous sentences such as “Visiting relatives can be boring” (Horgan and Tienson 2002, p. 523) (here the phenomenal contrast concerns the two different readings of the sentence). The typical conservative reaction to this first kind of arguments consists in denying that the phenomenal contrast in question cannot be accounted for by merely appealing to sensory phenomenology.

The epistemological argument was presented originally by Goldman (1993) and recently developed by Pitt (2004). The starting point of this argument is the acknowledgement that just as we have direct, non-inferential, self-knowledge of our perceptual, sensory states, so we have of our occurrent cognitive states. Since in the first case such knowledge would not be possible if our sensory states did not have a phenomenal character, the same must be true of our cognitive states. What makes it possible for us to have a direct, non-inferential kind of self-knowledge of those states is therefore the fact that such states, like any other occurrent mental state, have their own distinctive phenomenal character that we introspectively experience. Thus, the argument concludes, there must be a cognitive phenomenology. This conclusion is disputed by the conservatives who, either claim, along with Carruthers (2011), that we do not have the kind of introspectively-based direct self-knowledge to account for which cognitive phenomenology is introduced, or, more moderately, that such knowledge can be accounted for without appealing to cognitive phenomenal properties and that to think otherwise is a symptom of a misleading theory of self-knowledge.

The arguments of the third kind conclude that there must be a cognitive phenomenology to account for the determinate content of our cognitive states. For, it is argued, since it is undisputed that our thoughts have a determinate content, and since only cognitive phenomenal character can ground such determinacy (no purely physical or functional relation can do that), it follows that we must admit not only that cognitive phenomenology exists, but also that it plays a crucial role in providing our mental content with the kind of determinacy that we introspectively ascertain. For example, from the first person point of view it is not indeterminate whether what we are thinking is that that rabbit is white or that undetached

the phenomenal differences between actual mental states and those of the second type only on premises about phenomenal differences among the mental states of hypothetical people that lack all sensory phenomenology, the arguments of the third kind are like those of the first one except for the fact of introducing also premises that provide glosses on the phenomenal differences involved. Here we shall confine our attention to pure contrast arguments. For the second variety see Kriegel (2015, pp. 53-63) and for the third variety see Chudnoff (2015, pp. 55-61).

15 Some examples of this kind can be found in Pitt (2004).

rabbit part is white. These two different contents are associated with different phenomenal characters which, it is claimed, are responsible for those contents being the contents that they are. To this argument (which appears in Horgan and Tienson 2002 and which has been recently developed by Horgan and Graham 2012) conservatives reply either by contesting that our mental contents do actually enjoy such a determinacy or by contesting that cognitive phenomenal properties are needed to account for it.

Even though the conservatives limit themselves for the most part in rebutting the liberals' arguments, it is possible to discern in the recent literature some positive arguments against the possibility of cognitive phenomenology. One such argument is provided by Tye & Wright (2011). According to them, cognitive occurrent mental states cannot be phenomenally conscious because they lack the kind of structure required in order for something to figure in the subject's "stream of consciousness". In fact, they maintain, what can so figure must be temporally structured so as to unfold over time. But thoughts do not have any temporal dimension because they are states and not events. Therefore, they conclude, thoughts cannot be phenomenally conscious. What we are phenomenally conscious of when we entertain a thought are only its sensory accompaniments. Another argument against cognitive phenomenology is the one provided by Carruthers and Veillet (2011). According to these authors, if cognitive phenomenology existed, explanatory gaps for thoughts would be possible. But, they argue, no explanatory gap exists for thoughts, because explanatory gaps need conceptually isolated phenomenal concepts and no such phenomenal concept exists for conceptual content. Therefore, they conclude, there is no cognitive phenomenology; and all phenomenology is sensory in nature.

Let us conclude this introduction with an overview of the material here collected. The issue begins with a paper by Bayne and McClelland that presents a challenge to cognitive phenomenology which has not been considered in the literature yet. This novel challenge, which the authors label the "matching content challenge", concerns how cognitive phenomenology advocates could account for the difference between the way in which a given fact, say that an alarm is sounding, is represented in thought and the way in which it is represented in perception. Those who deny that there is a cognitive phenomenology have no problem here, since they can claim that such a contrast is due to the fact that only perceptual representations have a conscious phenomenal character. Yet, this way of capturing the contrast is precluded to those who believe that phenomenology extends beyond the purely sensory-perceptual domain. Advocates of cognitive phenomenology have various options available in order to account for that contrast, but according to the authors each of them meets serious problems. That in the case of occurrent thoughts a dissociation could be claimed to exist between being conscious and being phenomenal is the focus of Jorba's paper, whose main aim is to argue for the co-extensiveness of these two properties. In her view, the most prominent attempts to refute the claim that conscious thoughts are phenomenal and that phenomenal thoughts are conscious, either by arguing for possible cases of conscious non-phenomenal thoughts or for possible cases of unconscious phenomenal thoughts, present several drawbacks that provide us reasons to resist them. On this ground she maintains that the assumption, that most people in the debate share, according to which there is a co-extensiveness of the conscious and the phenomenal, can be transformed into a grounded claim one can confidently believe. Nes' paper focuses on two main questions connected with the kind of experience that we enjoy when we hear people speaking in a language we are fluent in and register the vocalizations heard as having a certain meaning. The first question concerns which role our grasp of meaning has for what-it-is-like for us to take in a given utterance. Is grasp of meaning merely causally relevant to the phenomenal character of understanding

(as conservatism maintains) or is it constitutive of such a character (as the liberal view claims)? The second question concerns the nature, perceptual or extra-perceptual, of the experience of understanding. Is such experience a case of thought (as intellectualism wants), or is it a case of perception (as perceptualism wants)? What Nes argues for in his paper is that perceptualism is preferable to its negation and he does this by discussing and rebutting the main arguments put forward against it in the literature. A kind of experience very much discussed within the cognitive phenomenology debate is that of having a name on the tip of one's tongue. Even though many authors have dealt with such a topic by considering whether it speaks for or against cognitive phenomenology, the question of what kind of experience it is has been left almost unaddressed. To tackle it is Calabi's main aim in her paper. She considers three lines of answers, namely that such experience is a *sui generis* feeling, that it is a second order belief and that it is a perception. The position that Calabi ends up endorsing is a pluralist one which rules out the assumption (that many people discussing this kind of experience share) according to which they are *sui generis* experiences. That cognitive states and activities present a *sui generis* kind of phenomenology irreducible to sensory phenomenology is defended in the three papers that follow in the issue. Voltolini provides an argument for the claim that cognitive phenomenology is not only irreducible but also independent of sensory phenomenology. He discusses the phenomenology of having thoughts and the phenomenology of understanding thoughts and maintains that they instantiate different general kinds of cognitive phenomenology promoting in this way the idea that cognitive phenomenology can come in different varieties, against Pitt's claim that all cognitive phenomenology is proprietary, distinctive and individuating. Dorsch provides an argument in defense of the irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology by developing a case based on being in a state with presentational phenomenology of high-level content. He focuses mainly on a kind of understanding experiences called "Aha! Experiences", and claims that his case, based on such experiences, unlike other cases for cognitive phenomenology present in the literature, is able to withstand the main counterarguments that have been put forward against irreducibility. Sacchi's paper deals with the issue of irreducibility from a methodological perspective by considering how the irreducibility claim should be argued for. Sacchi's proposal is to integrate the phenomenal contrast methodology with a methodology that instead of contrasting couples of cases, compare them in order to disclose phenomenological commonalities not accountable for in purely sensory terms. This kind of methodology is in her view compliant with the claim she defends that cognitive phenomenal properties are factually inseparable from sensory phenomenal ones. Woodward's paper raises a criticism against the way in which participants in the cognitive phenomenological debate have shaped the discussion. In his view, the method that has been followed has failed to illuminate the commonalities and differences among conscious intentional states of different kinds. What is needed to that end is in his view a theory of the structure of these states. To put forward such a theory is thus Woodward's main aim. Soldati deals with the issue of deductive reasoning, in particular with the kind of reasoning involved in inferences in the first person. What he defends is the idea that this kind of reasoning is experientially based; our self-concept, he claims, has an experiential nature. This constitutes the phenomenological basis for the fact that we experience the beliefs involved in an inference as belonging to one and the same person, the person we think about under the concept <self>. Vitasovic's paper focuses on the relationship between the phenomenal intentionality thesis and the unconscious intentionality claim. After having argued for their compatibility, and having criticized the attempts to defend it by endorsing the idea that the intentionality of unconscious states derives from the intentionality of conscious phenomenal states, she suggests a revised version of Pitt's proposal for unconscious phenomenal intentionality. Lavazza's paper focuses on the concept of qualia of meaning that is

strictly connected with both James' and Husserl's accounts of the phenomenological aspects of consciousness. Qualia of meaning, according to Lavazza, have an intentional cognitive aspect strictly connected to their phenomenal aspect. To try to describe what qualia of meaning are is his main aim in this paper. The last paper of this issue deals with the phenomenology of occurrent thinking. According to Anderson, something is missing from the account of occurrent thinking in the cognitive phenomenology debate. What is missing is in his view the "dynamic" aspect of thinking whose structure he tries to clarify by also considering the several implication that his claims have on the cognitive phenomenology thesis.

We hope to have given the reader a flavor of the richness of the themes treated in this issue and of how large and fascinating are the questions that surround this area of investigation. The repercussions that these questions have on our conception of the mind are straightforward. One repercussion has to do with whether phenomenal consciousness can be taken as a plausible mark of the mental namely as the distinctive feature of mental states. Another important repercussion concerns the so-called hard problem of consciousness. If the liberals were right, it would follow that the hard problem of consciousness is not confined to the sensory qualitative aspects of our mental life, but it extends also to its cognitive aspects. Moreover, if they were right, it would follow not only that present accounts of phenomenal consciousness are incomplete (in so far as they only deal with sensory consciousness), but, what is worse, also that they would be wrong since, in most cases, they characterize phenomenal consciousness in such a way as to rule out the existence of phenomenal cognitive consciousness¹⁶.

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