
DARIA VITASOVIC

University of Milan, Doctoral School in Philosophy and Human Sciences
Centre for Philosophy of Time, Philosophy Department, University of Milan
Neurophilosophy Research Group, Philosophy Department, University of
Milan

daria.vitasovic@unimi.it

UNCONSCIOUS CONTENT: WHAT IS IT LIKE TO THINK THAT P WHEN THERE IS NOTHING IT IS LIKE?¹

abstract

Many have come to argue recently for the Phenomenal Intentionality Thesis (PIT). PIT can be best defined as a reduction of intentional properties to phenomenal properties. One of the challenges in construing intentionality in PIT terms is explaining unconscious thoughts. The issue comes down to the incompatibility of PIT with the claim of Unconscious Intentionality (UI), or more precisely, the claim that there are genuinely intentional unconscious states. There are two ways in which the proponents of PIT proceed. Most philosophers argue for some relation of derivation of unconscious intentional states from conscious phenomenally intentional states. Firstly, I argue that this option is abandoning the program. Thus, the only way one can proceed, if one wishes to remain within the PIT framework, is to argue for genuine unconscious phenomenal intentionality. Secondly, I consider Pitt's proposal for unconscious phenomenal intentionality. I argue that, while Pitt stays within the PIT framework, his model does not take into account the necessity of the self for phenomenal (un)consciousness. Lastly, I suggest an outline of a third approach, based on Pitt's proposal, that takes into account the necessity of subject for intentionality or what-is-it-like-for-me-ness.

keywords

intentionality, phenomenology, unconscious, for-me-ness

1. Introduction Many have come to argue recently for the *Phenomenal Intentionality Thesis* (PIT)². PIT can be best defined as the thesis according to which intentionality is constituted by phenomenal character, or more precisely, a reduction of intentional properties to phenomenal properties. Different proponents argue differently for the nature of this reduction. Some (Pitt 2004; Strawson 2008) argue for an *identity relation*; phenomenal and intentional properties are just the same kind of properties. Others maintain that the connection is of *asymmetric metaphysical dependence*. Namely, intentional properties at the very least supervene on phenomenal properties – but not *vice versa*³ (Horgan & Tienson 2002; Horgan & Graham 2012). The third option is a sort of stronger *anti-symmetric relation*, in which the phenomenal properties ground the intentional, or the latter obtain in virtue of the former (Kriegel 2011; 2013)⁴. One of the main intuitions for PIT is content determinacy that phenomenal properties secure; “...there is a determinate fact of the matter about what you are thinking and what you mean by your utterance, because *there is something it is like* to think a determinate thought and to make an utterance that expresses that thought” (Horgan & Graham 2012, p. 339)⁵. If PIT is true, then the phenomenal properties guarantee content determination. On the other hand, externalist theories are understood in terms of tracking intentionality to the features of the subject’s environment (Mendelovici & Bourget, 2014). There is a mapping relation between the subject’s mental state S and an object in the environment O, which serves as a stimulus that reliably causes S. However, there may be numerous stimuli that can cause S, beside O. For example, my representation of a lime can be caused by a lime or by an immature lemon. This inability to distinguish representations from misrepresentations in the subject’s inner mental state is the *disjunction problem*. However, the challenge is not just to explain why the representation is the representation

1 The title of this paper refers to David Pitt’s (2004) most significant article, “The Phenomenology of Cognition: What Is It Like to Think That P”.

2 Among others: Horgan & Tienson (2002); Horgan, Tienson & Graham (2004); Horgan & Graham (2012); Kriegel (2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2013); Loar (1987, 2003); Siewert (2011); Strawson (1994, 2008, 2011); Pitt (2004, 2011).

3 The same holds for the opposite claim, i.e. it is the phenomenal properties that are dependent on the intentional. Indeed, representationalists, for the most part, defend such a position (Dretske (1995); Fodor (1990); Lycan (1996); Tye (1995)).

4 Explanatory relations are generally considered to be anti-symmetrical, and I abide with this in what follows. Thanks to Giuliano Torrenzo for pointing this out.

5 This presupposes that the phenomenal properties in question are distinctive, that is, it is different to have a conscious occurrent thought that P from conscious occurrent thought that Q. While I am aware that this presupposition can be disputed, for the purposes of this paper I am taking it for granted.

of a lime, as opposed to immature lemon, but also why that particular representation has any determinate content. Thereby, if one accepts PIT, one avoids these externalist worries of tracking intentionality to something external to the mental state. Phenomenal properties are the decisive set of properties for content determination; what representations represent is determined by the what-it-is-like character when we experience them.

Regardless of the different stances on the specific nature of PIT, its proponents agree that phenomenal intentionality is the fundamental kind of intentionality in a twofold sense. First, it is fundamental because it is the intrinsic intentionality as opposed to the extrinsic, non-phenomenal construal of intentionality. Second, it is fundamental because it is the only genuine form of intentionality and other non-phenomenal kinds of intentionality derive their content from it.

Some terminological remarks are due. By “intrinsic” I simply mean non-relational. On the same note, being extrinsic implies relational properties. That does not imply that all mental states that are relational are fully and only extrinsic. For example, thinking that the Eiffel tower is in Paris is a relational property since it entails a relation to the Eiffel tower which is itself an external entity. However, the content of the thought itself is an intrinsic property as it never extends beyond your mind⁶. Similarly, a state has derivative intentionality if its intentionality depends on the intentionality of some other state; otherwise it has original intentionality. Thus, a genuinely intentional state, as I define it, is the one that has original and intrinsic intentionality, or, a genuinely intentional state has intentionality that does not depend on something external to the state and its intentionality is not a result of a relation to some other state, e.g. second-order thought, ascription of content, and similar.

One of the challenges in construing intentionality in PIT terms is explaining the content determination of unconscious thoughts. If intentional mental states are constituted by their phenomenal character, then explaining unconscious mental states is *prima facie* a serious issue for the view. The issue comes down to the incompatibility of PIT with the claim of Unconscious Intentionality (UI):

(PIT) – Intentional contents are reducible to phenomenal character.

(UI) – There are genuinely intentional unconscious states.

Thus, if one wants to preserve PIT, there are two ways, in which she can proceed when considering **UI**: (1) deny genuine intentionality to unconscious states, or (2) argue that PIT and UI are compatible.

(1) seems plausible. One can argue that unconscious states do not exhibit genuinely intentional content since they suffer from content indeterminacy which is fixed by phenomenal properties⁷. By accepting this view, one also accepts that:

(i) Phenomenology is necessarily conscious; hence

(ii) Intentionality is necessarily conscious.

While (1) is a tenable view, my primary goal in this paper is to bite the bullet and argue for (2), i.e. the compatibility of PIT and UI. Again, there are two ways one can proceed. Most biters

⁶ In that sense my phenomenal duplicate and me, when we think that the Eiffel tower is in Paris, are thinking the same thought. This corresponds to the distinction between broad and narrow content (see Horgan & Tienson, 2002). However, I will not go further in this matter.

⁷ Strawson (2011) holds this view for all mental states.

agree on (i), though they do not agree on (ii). More precisely, they argue for some relation of derivation of the intentionality of unconscious intentional states from that of conscious phenomenally intentional states. This is the claim of *derivative unconscious intentionality (DUI)* - unconscious states do not exhibit original phenomenally intentional content, but get their content determinacy from other phenomenally intentional states, hence they are intentional in the derived manner. Since phenomenal intentionality is the fundamental kind of intentionality and every other kind derives from it, they argue that this is sufficient for a state to be regarded as genuinely intentional within the PIT framework.

The other option is to deny both (i) and (ii). Phenomenology is not necessarily conscious; hence unconscious states are genuinely phenomenally intentional. The concept of unconscious phenomenology is not a contradiction. Denying (i) and (ii), on the other hand, would be the claim of *un-derivative unconscious intentionality (Un-DUI)* - unconscious states exhibit genuine phenomenal intentionality; hence they get their content determinacy directly from phenomenally intentional character un-derivatively.

I argue (§2.) that denying the Un-DUI, as the first option does, would amount to abandoning the phenomenal intentionality program; hence, I argue that the only way one can proceed, if one wishes to remain within the PIT framework, is to argue for unconscious phenomenal intentionality. In §3 I consider Pitt's proposal for Un-DUI; I call it the *awareness dualism* model, which rests on Dretske's distinction between object-awareness and fact-awareness. I argue that, though Pitt stays within the PIT framework, his model does not take into account the necessity of the self for phenomenal (un)consciousness. In section §4, I outline a third approach, based on Pitt's proposal, that takes into account the necessity of subject for intentionality or *what-is-it-like-for-me-ness*.

2. Compatibility of PIT and UI: DUI

If one believes in UI and wants to preserve PIT, then she has to explain the relation between phenomenology and intentionality of unconscious states. There are two courses of action she can take: either derive unconscious non-phenomenal intentionality from conscious phenomenal intentionality in some sense, or argue for unconscious phenomenal intentionality. I start with discussing Searle's *potentialism* (§2.1.) and Kriegel's *interpretativism* (§2.2.), two proposals for deriving unconscious non-phenomenal intentionality from conscious phenomenal intentionality⁸. In §2.3., I argue that any proposal of DUI is inconsistent with PIT.

2.1. Potentialism

Searle's (1991) central phrase, in discussing intentional states, is *aspectual shape*. "The link, then, between intentionality and consciousness lies in the notion of aspectual shape" (p.51). While he does not provide a clear-cut definition of aspectual shape, I read it as equivalent to

⁸ Pitt (*forthcoming*) clarifies the debate in more detail. He considers, in addition, Graham & Horgan and Smithies' position. Smithies (2012) develops a variation of Searle's proposal. However, Graham & Horgan (2012) offer three positions. Their first position is that the unconscious mental states do not have a determinate content since they lack PI (a position that they reject as incompatible with realism about the unconscious); the second one purports to potentially conscious states, which is essentially Searle's suggestion; and the third one: unconscious states get their content determinacy by being integrated in the cognitive system and, since some states of the system are phenomenally conscious, they provide "anchor points" from which non-phenomenal states get their content determinacy such that the system exhibits "high degree of internal rational coherence" (p. 341). Although Graham & Horgan opt for the third position, they do not expand on it nor provide arguments for it. In addition, while this proposal is interesting in its own right, it purports to derived forms of intentionality once again, so it shares similarities with the proposals I consider. Strawson (1994, 2008), on the other hand, offers a fourth position which does not hinge on conscious states in themselves, but rather on creatures capable of consciousness. In that manner, he derives intentionality of unconscious states from capacity of consciousness. Strawson's proposal is again a case of derived intentionality. It is also problematic, in my opinion, since it contends to dispositional properties, a point I will address later on. However, in the 2011 paper Strawson denies intentionality to non-experiential states altogether.

the notion of mode of presentation⁹. “Thought and experience and hence intrinsic intentional states generally, have a certain sort of aspectual shape. They represent their conditions of satisfaction under aspects” (p. 53). Different modes of presentation constitute different ways an agent might think about an object or state of affairs. As such, their referent and thus, conditions of satisfaction, remain the same. For example, it is not the same for me to think that the morning star is Venus and that the evening star is Venus, though the conditions of satisfaction are the same.

The aspectual shape makes a difference in my representations in terms of the subjective character regularly associated with it, i.e. “...the way that the aspectual shape matters is that it is constitutive of the way the agent thinks about the subject matter...” (ibidem). For Searle an aspectual shape is necessarily subjective, e.g. I love the taste water, but I do not have any feelings associated with the taste of H₂O. Thus, in Searle’s terms, the subjective nature of intentional states is crucial, since no third personal perspective can convene the aspectual shape. For Searle, content determinacy stems from first person perspective (Searle 1987). While I agree with Searle on the crucial relevance of subjective consciousness, the problem arises when one tries to ascribe aspectual shape to unconscious states. Since intentionality necessarily involves an aspectual shape, and aspectual shape necessarily involves the first person perspective, it is not clear how to account for the intentionality of unconscious states on Searle’s account, since it is evident that unconscious states have no subjective, first personal perspective to them. Searle seems to end up in contradiction, for he states that the ontology of unconscious states, while unconscious, is a “purely neurophysiological phenomena” (p. 57). And, since neurophysiological phenomena can be described just from the third person perspective, as one does not undergo first person experience of them, one cannot ascribe aspectual shapes to them which are central in regarding a state as intentional (and thus mental).

Searle’s solution to the contradiction is positing *potentially* conscious contents as the basis for genuinely intentional unconscious contents. “...any intentional state is either actually or potentially a conscious intentional state...” (p. 47). If unconscious states are to be regarded as “genuinely mental they must in some sense preserve their aspectual shape...but the only sense that we can give to the notion that they preserve their aspectual shape when unconscious is that they are possible contents of consciousness” (p. 57). The potentiality Searle has in mind is cashed out in terms of *causal capacity* of the unconscious intentional state to produce a subjectively intentional conscious state. The underlying brain state preserves its aspectual shape by having a causal capacity to produce a conscious state¹⁰. In effect, unconscious mental states derive their intentional content from conscious states, since, in principle, they are potentially conscious in virtue of their causal capacity to produce consciousness. However, positing potentially conscious states as ground for intentionality does not solve the contradiction¹¹. The relation between potentially conscious states and actually conscious states rests on two conditions: (i) the underlying neurophysiological processes must have a capacity

9 In this I agree with Coleman (*manuscript*, p. 5). Pitt, while puzzled as well on the notion of aspectual shape suggests that cognitive phenomenology “plays the role Searle assigns to aspectual shape” (*forthcoming* p. 3).

10 Note that Searle holds that, while unconscious, there is no difference between my unconscious belief that e.g. water is H₂O and my underlying neuronal activity of that belief. He makes no difference between purely informational states and simply subconscious states, which seems inconsistent with empirical findings (Kihlstrom 1987). The question how strictly unconscious states, e.g. dorsal processes, can be potentially conscious remains unclear in Searle’s writing.

11 See Pitt (*forthcoming*) who acknowledges same problems in Searle. Similar points were raised by Sam Coleman at “Yet Another Workshop on Phenomenal Intentionality” in his talk at CEU, Budapest and in his paper “Unconscious Qualitative Character as the Basis for Content” (*manuscript*, p. 7).

to produce the relevant conscious experience, and (ii) this relation is causal. Both of these conditions evoke talk of dispositions, and the problem with dispositions, as Coleman and Pitt point out, is that they are not identical to the properties they cause. If the neurophysiological state R has the causal capacity to produce a vivid experience of red and it is causally relevant for the conscious phenomenology of redness that is subsequently experienced, one would still not attribute the redness to the underlying disposition of the neurophysiological state (Coleman *manuscript*, p. 7; Pitt *forthcoming*, p. 5).

While Coleman and Pitt stress the fact that the properties and the dispositions causing them are not identical, which makes it either the case that the unconscious states lack intentionality altogether, or that there is no bridge between unconscious and conscious intentionality anymore, I would add that they are also not contentful in the appropriate manner. Certainly, the unconscious state can cause the conscious one, however the former cannot, by doing so, derive its content from the latter. The gap still remains. For example, if I throw an ill-proportioned stone in the pond and by doing so cause the waves to spread in even circles, that does not make the stone itself circular¹². In that sense, unconscious states do not have aspectual shapes that are in any way relevant to the aspectual shapes of the conscious states. At best, they have a different aspectual shape, which constitutes them as two distinct states with two distinct contents; one unconscious, the other conscious.

If these two aspectual shapes are different, then there is no bridge between them and, thus, no manner in which Searle can derive any content determinacy of unconscious states. In addition, it is not sufficient simply to have a theoretical notion of an aspectual shape without subjectively determined intentional content. And if qualitative character is to fix the content of a state, and by doing so, it fixes the intentionality as well, then the aspectual shape of the unconscious state that Searle has in mind, does no actual work. Either it is a different aspectual shape, in which case a bridge that narrows the gap between the two contents is missing, or unconscious states lack aspectual shape altogether since they do not have an inherently experiential, first personal mode of presentation that fixes the content directly. If it is a different aspectual shape that constitutes contents of unconscious states, then those states are fully intentional on their own and there is no need to derive contents anymore. On the second option, Searle ends up denying intentionality altogether¹³. The unconscious states are no longer genuinely intentional.

Phenomenal intentionality is intrinsic and narrow, meaning it does not depend on some other properties or states of the subject, and simply suggesting a systemic causal correlation between a neural state and a mental state does not give the former the inherently mental character of the latter, even if the neural state could possibly be a mental state with similar content¹⁴.

2.2. Interpretativism

Kriegel (2011a) adopts a proposal somewhat similar to Dennett's. Dennett's Intentional Systems Theory (IST) (Dennett 1971) states that everything is intentional in virtue of a subject taking an intentional stance towards it. An intuitive objection to Dennett, which, in addition, holds for all cases of dualism of original/derivative intentionality, is that deriving intentionality necessarily ends up in infinite regress (Dennett 1987). Hence, one needs to postulate some privileged entities or processes that stop the regress. Dennett's solution is that, since regress cannot be negated, it should simply be stopped by dividing the "intentional

¹² Coleman (*manuscript*, p. 7) makes a similar point.

¹³ See Pitt (*forthcoming*) and Coleman (*manuscript*) who acknowledge the same problem.

¹⁴ Similar, however not identical; since the states are numerically distinct.

system” into its constitutive subsystems that are slightly less intelligent, thus less intentional, and continuously repeat the process until we reach the level of individual neurons. The end result is a “finite regress” that denies that a property such as intrinsic intentionality exists, since one cannot account for it at the level of individual neurons. All intentionality is ascribed; thus, there is no mystery involved in giving a naturalistic definition of it, as well as no controversy in regarding intentionality as an extrinsic, relational property. Every intentional state gets its intentional character by ascription; the way the system has intentional states is grounded in the way the observer interprets it as being such-and-such.

Kriegel (2011a) adopts Dennett’s interpretivism, although with a substantial difference. He maintains, following Loar (2003), the actuality of original, un-derived intentionality; however it is reserved for conscious phenomenal states from which phenomenally unconscious states derive their intentional character. That is, “unconscious intentionality is grounded ultimately in a certain type of cognitive phenomenology, namely, the cognitive phenomenology of conscious interpretation” (Kriegel 2011a, p. 94).

“Interpretivism” appeals to the so called “web of intentional concepts” which we employ in order to produce the best possible explanations of behaviors of “intentional systems”. The idea is, the “intentional stance” of the interpreter, composed of his “web of intentional concepts”, ascribes a content based on the inference to the best possible explanation. This suggests that every intentional state derives its content from some other intentional state; hence infinite regress, an already familiar outcome.

Kriegel, to avoid this outcome, posits a class of “privileged intentional states”, in order to preserve original intentionality. These “privileged intentional states”, correspondingly, are conscious intentional states that are phenomenally constituted. What gives an unconscious intentional state the content it has is conscious intentionality, that is, the unconscious state is consciously cognitively interpreted in some manner. In other words, infinite regress ends in conscious cognitive intentional acts of interpretation which have their content underderivatively or “for any unconscious intentional state, there is some possible ideal interpreter who, under some conditions, produces an intentional interpretation of that state, and moreover does so consciously” (Kriegel 2011a, p. 84).

However, as Pitt (*forthcoming*) points out, the problem is that a state can have many, if not an infinite number of interpretations, meaning just “as many intentional contents”. Similarly and somewhat interconnected, this proposal, in my opinion, invokes the notions of an ideal interpreter and of indeterminacy. Since we are dealing with the ideal interpreters or “subjects who exercise the intentional stance perfectly under all conditions” (Kriegel 2011a, p. 84), he will not assign the interpretation if there are two equally applicable stances. Kriegel addresses this point, though he states that “this kind of content indeterminacy should be extremely infrequent, and to that extent harmless” (Kriegel 2011a, p. 88). Kriegel expects that in “standard cases” the best interpretation is always available, and the ideal interpreter should recognize it. However, I want to emphasize that there still is some room for indeterminacy, while in the case of original intentionality, if phenomenally constituted, one cannot be erroneous, since how something appears is how something is¹⁵. There is no stable interpretation and no limit to the variety of contents that the interpreter can yield, making those unconscious states, by definition, states with undetermined content, which, in return, makes them not genuinely intentional states. And if phenomenal intentionality is the

15 However, note that this does not imply that one possesses “infallible knowledge about what one’s first-order intentional states are” (Horgan & Tienson 2002, p. 528). As Horgan & Tienson point out further “Beliefs about one’s own intentional states are second-order intentional states...” and “...such beliefs are sometimes mistaken” (2002, p. 528).

sort of intentionality that is fundamental and grounds content on the basis of its determinacy through phenomenology, then one cannot accommodate *semi* determinate content. Pitt (*forthcoming*) points out, in addition, the fact that the interpretation does not, in any manner whatsoever, change “the intrinsic nature of the interpreted state”. Kriegel does not, by any means, disguise this fact as he states that, when examining unconscious states, a state *x* has content *C* because the interpreter *assigns* to the state *x* the content *C* (Kriegel 2011a). However, the third person, extrinsic perspective on an intentional state does not reveal anything of its nature. On this picture, unconscious intentionality is, as Kriegel names it, a kind of “response-dependent property”, which is characterized in terms of dispositions (Kriegel 2011a, p. 84). “...the unconscious item must have the disposition to elicit the right interpretation in the right interpreter, but not that the disposition must be manifested” (Kriegel 2011a, p. 88). The content-free unconscious states have a disposition to cause, under the right conditions for the ideal interpreter, determinate content by eliciting the best explanation in the interpreter. Strawson notes “...a disposition...is just not the kind of thing that can possibly be contentful in the way that it needs to be if it is to be an intentional thing – even if it can be identified as the particular disposition it is only by reference to the proposition (the content)..., which is itself an (abstract) intentional entity” (Strawson 2008, p. 303). The unconscious states themselves do not constitutively determine content, since they are content free. It is the interpreter’s conscious tracking of intentionality and ascription of content that gives these states the determinate content they have. This tracking is external to the state in question, however, and in that sense analogue to the naturalized, externalist intentionality theories. By defending such a view, Kriegel truly does accommodate unconscious content, however not fully within the PIT framework. And if one is in the business of deriving intentionality, why stop there? Perhaps there are more kinds of intentionality. Perhaps there are even numerous kinds, hundreds or thousands. The fact remains, only the intrinsic, narrow kind is the genuine kind of intentionality, and other kinds are simply not intentionality.

2.3. The issue of Any framework of ascription of content to intentional states, whether it is in Searle’s or
DUI Kriegel’s terms, is equally extrinsic as Dennett’s proposal; it presupposes that the derived intentional state gets its intentionality externally from the intrinsically intentional state of a genuinely intentional agent. The only genuine intentionality is that of the intrinsic kind and any form of derivation is simply not adequate to capture the intentional content of the state in the PIT sense.

One might argue that, since I am interested in the intentionality of our mental states, deriving unconscious from conscious is really a trivial issue. Phenomenal intentionality is the fundamental kind of intentionality and every other kind is reducible to it, including unconscious one. Granted, one could not leave any room for indeterminacy in the fundamental kind of intentionality. However, states that are derivatively intentional do not have intentionality as their intrinsic property: they receive it from somewhere else – i.e., genuinely intentional (phenomenal) states¹⁶.

On this reading, Kriegel accepts that the intentionality of unconscious states is quite different from the intentionality of conscious ones. His claim is precisely that derived intentionality is not genuine intentionality. He assumes that there is a difference between conscious and unconscious states, and hence between conscious and unconscious intentionality, and accounts for this difference in terms of phenomenal intentionality. Yet, he does not attribute phenomenal intentionality to unconscious states.

¹⁶ Thanks to Davide Bordini for pointing this out.

However, if we invoke such dualist notions, we are simply not talking about intentionality anymore. Why should we accept two kinds of intentionality in the PIT framework considering the emphasis on the importance of the phenomenally constituted kind? Especially, why should we accept a derived kind of intentionality that rests on third personal, external ascriptions of content? This solution seems inconsistent with the program. The state has the content that it has precisely because of the what-it-is-like character to have that particular content. An extrinsic ascription of any kind does not make the state causally or informationally different in any relevant sense. And by relevant sense, I simply mean the intrinsic nature of the state. If one derives intentional content from other phenomenally constituted contents, there is a gap in individuating the former in terms of the latter, since the latter is inefficacious in the two aforementioned senses. It is inefficacious causally since the interpretation is extrinsic to the relevant state¹⁷; it is inefficacious informationally because what is represented on a conscious level and ascribed as content to the unconscious state need not be consistent with the intrinsic nature of the state¹⁸.

This issue is especially intuitive when we consider that most would agree that there is no such thing as derivative phenomenology. Simply, how something is like is how something is experienced. If phenomenology constitutes intentionality, then accepting two kinds of intentionality seems inconsistent. One kind, on this view, is the phenomenal one grounded in the what-is-it-like character, while the other is grounded in the conscious interpretations of what-is-it-like character. This does not amount to genuine intentionality but is simply treated as-if it is genuine intentionality. We would not allow as-if phenomenally conscious character of a mental state; either I experience the bitterness of my coffee or I do not. There is no experience as-if of bitterness. By accepting as-if intentionality, we are accepting as-if intentional contents; which are again indeterminate under the PIT framework¹⁹.

In other words, on this reading of Kriegel, one can accommodate unconscious intentional contents by deriving them from conscious phenomenally intentional contents, but one does not intuitively call such derived contents intentionality. Certainly, one can always define intentionality* or intentionality1 that pick up the relevant properties of unconscious states, however these do not amount to intentionality and there is a tension in such dualist approach that seems counterintuitive to the PIT framework.

There is another possible course of action left for a proponent of PIT: to argue, in some manner, for Un-DUI, or, genuine unconscious intentionality. One possible path is to argue for intrinsic phenomenal properties of unconscious states; argue that the concept of unconscious phenomenology is not a contradiction. Cases of e.g. blindsight, dorsal visual stream, achromatopsia, and priming, can be regarded as such cases. If there is such a thing as unconscious perceptual phenomenology, then there is no *prima facie* problem for unconscious phenomenal thought as well. While there is no apparent contradiction in regarding them as genuinely phenomenally intentional unconscious states, these cases are highly debatable and most cognitive scientists would not interpret them as cases of unconscious phenomenology in the manner that proponents of PIT have in mind.

A second option is to explore the notion of un/consciousness being an intrinsic property of mental states. On this view, a state can be conscious in itself but not for the cognizer²⁰. Thus, a

17 Coleman (*manuscript*, pp. 9-10) also recognizes this problem.

18 Pitt (*forthcoming*, pp. 11-12) presents an argument of this sort.

19 Although Kriegel does not use this term, I am not alone in thinking that unconscious states end up having *as-if intentional contents* under his view. Pitt and Coleman come to the same conclusion.

20 Whether the opposite holds - a state unconscious in itself but conscious for the cognizer - is a more complicated issue. One cannot ever be conscious of some mental states, e.g. the processes of the dorsal stream, no matter how

state has an intrinsic property of being conscious; however it is unconscious for the cognizer²¹. This is the course of action that Pitt takes, hence I will consider his view next.

3. Compatibility of PIT and UI: Un-DUI or Awareness Dualism Model

Pitt (*forthcoming*), defends Un-DUI. His proposal rests on Dretske's model of awareness of things and awareness of facts (1993). Roughly, the idea is that a mental state M can be conscious *in* itself, without being conscious *for* the cognizer, where this means that M is conscious but below the cognizer's awareness threshold. The intuition can be best illustrated by using Armstrong's famous driver example (Dretske 1993). The driver, after a long and tiresome drive realizes, at some point, that he has been driving for quite some time without being aware of the actions he was performing. It is safe to say that the driver did indeed perceive the road and was, in some sense, conscious of his actions as he would have otherwise crashed. However, he has no recollection of the actions performed or the perceptual stimuli from the road²².

Dretske (1993) distinguishes between "consciousness of things" and "consciousness of facts", and since he takes consciousness and awareness as synonyms, the same distinction can be made between awareness of things and awareness of facts. By this he aims to distinguish "particular (spatial) objects and temporal (events) on the one hand from facts involving these things on the other" (Dretske 1993, p. 264). In that sense Dretske talks about "creature consciousness" which can be both "intrasensitive (of me)" and "transitive (of you)". Secondly, a creature has "state consciousness" if it is conscious of other things. "State consciousness" is relation of subject S towards some x. Although about external things, "state consciousness" is always intrasensitive as that is the sense in which "internal states... are said to be conscious", since it always involves some ground for consciousness (Dretske 1993, pp. 269-270). To be conscious intransitively is to simply be capable of conscious experience (as opposed to being in a state of coma, for example). But to be conscious transitively is to be aware of something in some way. Although one can be conscious of M transitively, e.g. one is aware of the stop sign in front of him, the mental state in virtue of which it is so conscious is not itself a kind of representation that suffices for it to be a conscious state. According to Dretske, being conscious of X is representing X, which makes being conscious a relational, non-intrinsic property of a subject.

Recall Armstrong's driver. Dretske's proposal is that the driver has "transitive creature consciousness of both things (the roads, the stop signs) and facts (that the road curves left, that the stop sign is red, etc.)" (Dretske 1993, p. 271). However the driver is not aware that he is aware of them. The driver lacks both thing-awareness and fact-awareness; or, more precisely, he lacks awareness of his occurring mental states, he is not aware that he is having the experience. For Dretske, that does not imply that the state itself is not conscious, it can be, but just not for the driver as it occurs. Dretske denies that consciousness is an intrinsic property of states. Conscious states are states that make us conscious (aware) of things (or states). But such states need not be themselves objects of consciousness. For Dretske, to be conscious

much one is attentive to them. Perhaps only some mental states and not others can have such detachable un/conscious properties.

21 Note that this is different from aforementioned states that have intrinsic phenomenal properties. In that sense we are talking about intrinsic unconscious phenomenology; a qualitative state that also has an intrinsic property of being unconscious (see Pitt (*forthcoming*) for some deliberations on this). While I regard the idea of this kind of unconscious phenomenology a coherent idea, I will not argue for it further in this paper.

22 An alternative way to explain this is by appealing to Block's distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness (Block 1995). While I acknowledge that this explanation is an option to be considered, Pitt rejects that distinction. Since I am considering Pitt's theory here, I will not address this point further. Moreover, my criticism to Pitt focuses on different problems of his account.

of something is to represent it in a particular sort of way. This does not imply that one is conscious of the representation, however. In order to be conscious of the representation, one must form a representation of it. It is not the awareness of the mental state that makes it conscious, but rather “what makes an internal state or process conscious is the role it plays in making one (intransitively) conscious – normally, the role it plays in making one (transitively) conscious of some thing or a fact” (Dretske 1993, p. 280).

Pitt (*forthcoming*), relies on Dretske’s model, yet unlike Dretske, he takes consciousness to be an intrinsic property of mental states. He construes his proposal as a thought experiment. The aim of the thought experiment is to consider whether a state that is conscious in itself, without me being aware of it, can be considered mine. Thus, he proceeds along these lines. Penelope is a distinct individual whose thoughts originate in her brain. However, future advancements in technology allow us to somehow interconnect our nervous and cognitive systems. Penelope and I are not consciously aware of each other’s occurring thoughts nor does the connection affect the point of origin of the thoughts. They remain divided as our bodies and brains remain divided; her thoughts originate in her brain, my thoughts in mine. However, we are interconnected in such a way that I am “directly aware” of Penelope’s conscious thoughts as they occur. In other words, I am aware of someone else’s internal mental states. And in that sense Pitt asks: Can Penelope’s thoughts be mine? In addition, let us assume that from time to time those thoughts affect my behavior. Thus, the best explanation of my subsequent behavior is by reference to Penelope’s thoughts and not mine.

It is easy to translate this case to unconscious states: imagine I am no longer aware of Penelope’s occurring thoughts; still they continue to affect my behavior. One can even, as Pitt notes, connect our brains in a fusionlike manner, so one can even more easily attribute the behavior to the same individual. So, Pitt argues, it is not conceptually incoherent that there can be similar cases in my mind as well, that is, thoughts that are “...simultaneously conscious and unconscious. They are conscious in the sense that they have phenomenal character (where this is thought of as entailing consciousness); but they are unconscious in the sense that I am not directly aware of them” (Pitt *forthcoming*, p. 38).

Pitt’s main question is whether these thoughts can be considered to be mine, or, more precisely, ‘Is a state of mine conscious if and only if it is conscious for me?’ (Pitt *forthcoming*, p. 34). Firstly, his proposal is problematic, because it does not involve any notion of the self as a ground for the thoughts in question. His proposal detaches the subject from the experience, making experiences linger in my mental life. Pitt acknowledges this, as he notes that perhaps the self and consciousness “are not intrinsically connected” (Pitt *forthcoming*, p. 39). The same holds for unconscious thoughts. I do not necessarily have to be aware of the occurring unconscious thought; however that thought must have some subjective relation to me in my overall cognitive life. Its affecting my behavior in the aforementioned detached sense does not make it causally or informationally connected to *myself* in any relevant way; it is inefficacious. Penelope’s thoughts have no narrow subjective relation to my overall cognitive life, narrow meaning here intrinsic. Moreover, it is not causally or informationally even relevant for my mental life since these thoughts are neither integrated in my neurophysiology nor my mental, conscious processing. For example, imagine that future advancements in science make it possible that my friend’s well-intended, however not taken, advice can be surgically implanted in my brain without me being aware of it. Is that thought mine? It is not, regardless of the origin of the thought²³.

23 An argument can be made from Personal Identity theory as well; however space does not allow investigating this issue further.

As a result, I do not have any immediate involvement in the mental state. Naturally, those thoughts can affect my behavior, but not my further conscious processing, as they remain detached. One can argue that they do affect my cognitive life in an indirect way: what I do, my behavior, based on Penelope's thoughts, has further consequences on my mental life. However, these consequences are external to my mental life. Me moving my arm based on Penelope's thought and, for example, by doing so spilling the coffee, makes me think of how I should act, and in that sense, Penelope's thought affects my further cognitive life. But that implies an explanation of my behavior in which I have no involvement whatsoever. And in that sense Pitt's proposal is subject to the very same worry he acknowledged against Kriegel: the extrinsic, third personal ascription does not change the intrinsic nature of the thought itself, even if that ascription explains my behavior in the best possible manner. And attributing interpretations to the states we are not directly aware of or have no immediate involvement in, is equally extrinsic to DUI and tracks intentionality to external factors outside our mental life. Simply, for a state to be conscious for me is *for me* to be aware of it, for a state to be phenomenal for me is *for me* to have a what-it-is-like experience of it, and for a state to be intentional for me is for it to represent some state of affairs *for me*. Penelope's thoughts are none of this.

The point comes down to this. In accepting Pitt's proposal we have a solution, but at a price. By accepting his solution, we give up on a clear notion of the self, which seems to be indispensable for phenomenal consciousness. We do accommodate unconscious states, but by postulating either multiplicity of the selves all of them grounds for mental states and exerting some influence over our behavior; or by postulating an un-unified notion of a single self. Either way, the reasoning requires additional premises for one to make the trade as Pitt proposes.

4. Intentionality and what-is-it-like-for-me-ness

I propose to take into consideration Pitt's proposal. I also propose that we further investigate un/consciousness as being an intrinsic property of mental states. However, I also propose to emphasize the notion of the self.

What I am interested in particular is intentionality of mental states or, more precisely, intentionality as a property of mental states and events that have the essential feature of being directed at something. What are the necessary conditions to regard a state genuinely intentional? Certainly, that there is an object towards which the state is directed to, seems to be a necessary condition. However, one can think of an object that does not correspond to anything in reality, hence I take object *qua* object of thought here simply as being identical with a representation, or more precisely, an object is a mental content with certain semantic properties, regardless of its causal history²⁴. What the proponents of PIT propose is to stop the chain of attribution of intentionality in phenomenology. In that sense, only when a state is phenomenal it is intentional, and phenomenology provides content determinacy. What I am proposing is that minimal *subjective* experience is taken as a necessary condition as well. Thus, the self seems indispensable for phenomenology, since it is quite inconceivable to imagine an entity experiencing without the *experiential entity* having that what-is-it-like of experience. Subjectivity is simply defined as *for-me-ness*²⁵. It is not just phenomenology but

²⁴ I acknowledge that the question of reference and conditions of satisfaction of phenomenally intentional states is a serious issue. Nevertheless, I will not go into that issue at this point, since I believe I can make my claim without such considerations.

²⁵ Zahavi & Kriegel (2015) have recently argued for a notion of for-me-ness that rests on conscious, 1st personal perspective, as a "universal feature of experience". My proposal is somewhat different, since I do not believe for-me-ness has a such a strong connection to consciousness.

rather *what-is-it-like-for-me*, hence it is not just directedness, but rather directedness of the subject to some object *x*, making the *what-is-it-like-for-me-ness* a rather important condition for intentionality. In that sense, phenomenology and *for-me-ness* seem jointly both necessary and sufficient for intentionality.

It is important to note that intentionality is a property of mental *states*, not mental *acts* (Searle 1983); this means that the subject acting on those states is not necessary for a state to be intentional. In the latter case we are rather talking about intention (directedness to act upon some underlying belief or desire). Therefore, I distinguish a wider notion of intentionality, which presupposes some form of agency, from a narrower notion that rests on Brentano's definition of intentionality that can be best illustrated by a quotation from Brentano himself:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself... (Brentano 1973, p. 88).

As I read Brentano, intentionality is directedness towards some content in a psychological or mental act. Therefore, while this directedness of *a subject X* towards an object *Y* is a necessary condition of intentionality, this relation merely consists in the directedness *to* the object of intention in some degree, not action *upon* the directedness to the object of intention. This directedness can be of passive nature, e.g. perceptual inputs towards which we are not attending.

Considering that the objects of my interest are mental states, a question immediately arises: is there a difference between the intentionality of my occurrent mental state while tasting an apple and that of my Facebook status stating "The apple I am currently eating is very tasty"? And, if there is, what constitutes that difference?

The majority of philosophers are consistent in insisting that some difference has to be made between "derived" and "un-derived" forms of intentionality and "intentionality" and "as-if intentionality". For example, a logic proof is a formal illustration of an ordered sequence of statements. It represents arguments made of semantic structures, i.e. sentences, as mathematical objects without regard to their meanings. Those sentences are represented in a formal character with various symbols, e.g. *P* and *Q*. Proofs are syntactic in nature and involve only rules of inference between the statements. The rules of inference or behavior of statements in a proof is, also, represented in a formal character, e.g. we symbolize the conditional with \rightarrow . The main point is that none of these symbols have the meaning of the sentence in them intrinsically²⁶. We, as a competent category of users of those symbols, agree that the symbols represent what they represent. If I write $P \rightarrow Q$, you immediately know that I mean "if *P* then *Q*" and if you know what *P* and *Q* stand for, you know that, e.g. if it rains, then the weather forecast was wrong. Some things, like logic symbols, get their meaning and reference from other things, i.e. us, as competent users. Since the symbols get their directedness towards the object of reference in a derived manner, those are cases of *derived intentionality*. On the contrary, *original or underived intentional* states and events get their meaning and reference narrowly *via* the mental state itself. They have the intentional content intrinsically.

²⁶ One could also question whether the sentences themselves have meaning intrinsically, but let us not complicate things further.

Nevertheless, intentionality is dependent on the subject of those states, because the directedness of the subject towards the object of intention is a necessary condition for any kind of intentionality. If intentionality is defined as directedness, then it is an asymmetric relation. In the PIT framework, that condition comes down to some minimal kind of subjective experience of a mental state. Hence, my proposal, in order to preserve PIT, is to ground both phenomenology and intentionality in *for-me-ness*. Certainly, phenomenal intentionality is the fundamental kind of intentionality, yet there is no phenomenal experience without someone experiencing it. *For-me-ness* is a notion with its own distinctive phenomenology, but not of a detachable qualitative sort, i.e. it is not a *quale per se*²⁷. In that sense, *for-me-ness* is a *sui generis* ground on which all mental life depends. The proposal is not just that the experience is *in me* as in Pitt's thought experiment, but something more, the experience is *for me*. Only the subjective kind is the source of intentionality, as the subjective kind, on this proposed account, implies the necessity, of either a stronger form of experience of the object of intention through awareness or consciousness; or a weaker form of experience of an overall change in the cognitive life as giving rise to a representation through cognitive integration of the state in the subject's overall mental life.

The same can be applied to unconscious states. Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference. One is an observer in relation to his unconscious, but one has the experience of the effect as giving rise to a representation in a subjective manner through a change in the subject's overall cognitive life. *For-me-ness* is by no means a robust notion, but rather a gradient one, and in that sense it can be attributed to unconscious states; nevertheless it is a necessary part of all our phenomenal and intentional representations. If a state is conscious in itself and has phenomenal character in itself, then it has some minimal subjective *for-me-ness* as well, even though I do not have to be aware of it. What does this proposal come down to? What is the necessary condition for a state to be genuinely intentional under this thesis? Simply, that the state is intentional *for me*^{28,29}.

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27 On this I agree with Zahavi & Kriegel (2015).

28 I acknowledge further arguments need to be made to clarify how the notion of *for-me-ness* fits in PIT, especially in relation to unconscious mental states (I plan to do so elsewhere). Some of the immediate challenges are to give a clear notion of *for-me-ness* that is applicable not just to conscious states, as well as how to account for the variety of phenomenology and intentionality in different mental states (thanks to Uriah Kriegel for pointing this out). Herein, I simply pointed towards it as a possible answer to the problems proponents of PIT seem to come by in trying to accommodate unconscious thought within the phenomenal intentionality program.

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