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# VARIETIES OF COGNITIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

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## *abstract*

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*In this paper, I first want to provide an argument (actually, a two-step argument) in favor of the claim that, qua primitive form of phenomenology, cognitive phenomenology is not only irreducible to, but also independent of, sensory phenomenology. Second, I want to claim that the two cognitive phenomenologies that the previous argument has respectively shown to be independent of and merely irreducible to sensory phenomenology, namely the phenomenology of having thoughts and that of understanding thoughts, also instantiate different general kinds of cognitive phenomenology, i.e., a merely proprietary phenomenology and a both proprietary and distinctive phenomenology respectively. Third, I gesture towards a generalization of this distinction: any independent cognitive phenomenology is merely proprietary, any irreducible cognitive phenomenology is both proprietary and distinctive. In order to do so, finally, I have to dismantle Pitt's (2004) argument to the effect that all cognitive phenomenology is not only both proprietary and distinctive, but also individuating.*

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## *keywords*

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*cognitive phenomenology, having thoughts, grasping thoughts, independence, irreducibility*

**Introduction** In this paper, I first want to provide an argument (actually, a two-step argument) in favor of the claim that, *qua* primitive form of phenomenology, cognitive phenomenology is not only *irreducible* to, but also *independent* of, sensory phenomenology. Second, I want to claim that the two cognitive phenomenologies that the previous argument has respectively shown to be independent of and merely irreducible to sensory phenomenology, namely the phenomenology of *having* thoughts and that of *understanding* thoughts, also instantiate *different* general kinds of cognitive phenomenology, i.e., a merely proprietary phenomenology and a both proprietary and distinctive phenomenology respectively. Third, I gesture towards a generalization of this distinction: *any* independent cognitive phenomenology is merely proprietary, *any* irreducible cognitive phenomenology is both proprietary and distinctive. In order to do so, finally, I have to dismantle Pitt's (2004) argument to the effect that all cognitive phenomenology is not only both proprietary and distinctive, but also individuating.

**1. The state of the art<sup>1</sup>** In the recent literature on cognitive phenomenology, several arguments have been provided in order to support the position according to which cognitive phenomenology is different from sensory phenomenology, the so-called *liberal* position<sup>2</sup>. Among such arguments, the one from phenomenal contrast, the so-called Moore-Strawson argument<sup>3</sup>, and the one from first-person knowability, the so-called Goldman-Pitt argument<sup>4</sup>, are the two main varieties. Recently, Kriegel has said that a new argument to this purpose is required. For, he holds, the two aforementioned kinds of arguments, though acceptable, suffer from a lack of elucidation of the target notions they involve, i.e., the notions of cognitive and of phenomenal. In this respect, he has put forward a new argument in favor of the same position whose starting point precisely consists in providing such an elucidation: "with the right characterization of the cognitive and the phenomenal [...] one can start to imagine the kind of scenario whose possibility would establish the existence of primitive cognitive phenomenology" (2015, p. 41). To be sure, this argument still is a phenomenal contrast argument (PCA). Yet unlike the standard arguments of this form, it does not rely on introspection. Notoriously, appealing to introspection is a doubtful move.

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1 This and the following Section are an elaboration of what originally appeared in Sacchi and Voltolini (2016).

2 Cf. Bayne and Montague (2011, p. 3).

3 Cf. Kriegel (2015, p. 40). One can find the argument in Moore (1953, pp. 58-59) and in Strawson (1994, pp. 5-13).

4 Cf. Kriegel (2015, p. 40). One can find the argument in Goldman (1993) and in Pitt (2004). See later in the text.

To begin with, says Kriegel, let us imagine the case of Zoe. Zoe is a sensory zombie of a very radical kind: she is devoid not only of any form of sensory phenomenology, both perceptual (linked to esteroceptive sensations) and algedonic (linked to interoceptive and proprioceptive sensations; in order to take into account the fact that such a phenomenology includes not only pains but also pleasures, one may perhaps better label it *alg/hedonic*), but also of any form of emotional phenomenology, which is for Kriegel grounded on sensory phenomenology at least. Yet, continues Kriegel, Zoe's life is not that boring as one may suspect. For, Kriegel stipulates, on the basis of some internal yet nonconscious processes that still take place in the sub-personal areas of her brain respectively implementing perceptual, alg/hedonic and emotional experiences, Zoe still entertains an interesting cognitive life entirely devoted to thoughts concerning mathematical calculations. In such calculations, she *inter alia* realizes some important mathematical proofs. Any such realization involves a contrast in her cognitive life. He argues that this contrast is phenomenal, thereby involving (different) phenomenal mental states, not by appealing to introspection, as standard PCAs actually do, but rather by mobilizing his characterization of what is phenomenal<sup>5</sup>. Since by hypothesis such mental states are not sensory, it follows that they are endowed with a cognitive phenomenology. Thus, he concludes, Zoe has a cognitive phenomenology while lacking a sensory one. As a result, Kriegel's argument allegedly supports not only the claim that cognitive phenomenology is irreducible to sensory phenomenology, but also the more radical claim that the former is independent of the latter<sup>6</sup>.

As some people have remarked, the immediate problem with this argument is that although we can conceive the previous story, this is no guarantee that the story amounts to a *logical* possibility. Indeed, we do not positively imagine that story<sup>7</sup>. Granted, Kriegel believes the opposite, for the story betrays no trace of a contradiction<sup>8</sup>.

Yet, his opponents may reply, even if this showed that the story amounts to a positive form of imaginability, hence to a logical possibility, why must we further endorse the claim that the story is also *metaphysically* possible? In such a case, does being logically possible entail being metaphysically possible? To this reply, Kriegel rejoins that "it is certainly highly plausible that some types of conceivability – including conceivability by an epistemically responsible agent in normal or favorable circumstances – provide *prima facie*, *defeasible* evidence for metaphysical possibility"; Zoe's case represents one of these types (2015, p. 62).

Yet can we be satisfied with the absence of any defeater? What if some defeater should eventually pop up<sup>9</sup>? In order to rule out such an option, it may be useful to look for another argument that strengthens Kriegel's credence in what he calls "cognitive-phenomenal primitivism" (2015, p. 38), by however displaying *another* case of an individual whose cognitive phenomenology is not only irreducible to, but also independent of, sensory phenomenology. (When suitably reconceived, Zoe herself may be such an individual). For if I am right, this case amounts to a genuine metaphysical possibility. To be sure, since the independence claim entails the irreducibility claim of cognitive phenomenology to sensory phenomenology<sup>10</sup>,

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5 Cf. Kriegel (2015, pp. 30-31). To be sure, unlike *pure* PCAs, Zoe's argument is a *hypothetical* PCA, that is, an argument in which the imagined case is not actual, as Chudnoff (2015, pp. 45-55) holds. Yet this does not undermine its non-introspective nature.

6 To put things in Chudnoff's (2015, pp. 15-17) terms.

7 Cf. Pautz (2013, p. 219). For the notion of a positive imaginability and its link to logical (and also metaphysical) possibility, cf. originally Chalmers (1996).

8 Cf. Kriegel (2015, p. 56).

9 Chudnoff's (2015, p. 54) criticism of Kriegel's argument may be taken to go along this direction.

10 Cf. Chudnoff (2015, p. 17).

to argue for the former is *eo ipso* to argue for the latter. Yet we will also see in the course of the argument that there is another instance of cognitive phenomenology that is merely irreducible to the sensory one.

**2. The Vita argument**

Let me start with focusing on the most general phenomenal contrast, the one between phenomenal life on the one hand, where what Kriegel calls “the highest phenomenal determinable” aka “*phenomenality per se* (what-it-is-like-ness as such)” (2015, p. 10) is instantiated, and the absence of such a life, where no phenomenality at all occurs. Needless to say, this amounts to the contrast between being awake and being asleep (in the further supposition that no dream occurs while sleeping; from now on, let us take this specification for granted). Passing from being awake to being asleep is precisely switching from having phenomenality *per se* to have no such thing at all<sup>11</sup>.

Once taken the most general phenomenal contrast into account, I can put forward another argument in favor of the independence of cognitive phenomenology from sensory phenomenology. The argument indeed starts by presenting a case that involves the above phenomenal contrast, the case of Vita. Vita is an addicted insomniac who tries all the possible techniques in order for her to fall asleep. While going to bed, she puts a black band on her eyes and she switches on a radio that obsessively repeats the same sounds; while lying in bed, she finds the most comfortable position for her body to stay; she covers herself with a very soft blanket so as to feel warm enough, and so on and so forth. In this condition, she manages to keep her sensory phenomenology stable as much as possible, so as to favor her falling asleep. She thereby manages to relax herself: she feels no anxiety, fear or anger. Yet as to falling asleep, no way. These practices notwithstanding, she goes on *thinking*. Indeed, she does not fall asleep precisely *because* she cannot stop thinking. This reason has not to do with any underlying processes in her body (her brain included), as if she did not fall asleep because her heart beats too fast. Such processes, if any, may *cause* her not to fall asleep, but they are no *reason* for the phenomenal switch from being awake to being asleep to occur. Rather, that reason has to do with the fact that she *experiences* such thoughts, that they are *conscious* for her. Clearly enough, generally speaking the reasons for Zoe (as much as for us) not to undergo that sort of maximal phenomenal switch must be phenomenal. Indeed, she might go on being awake in virtue of a variety of phenomenally relevant cases: e.g. because she were anxious, or she suffered from a terrible itch, or even her sight were hit by a ray of light. Yet, as we have seen before, it is not her sensory phenomenology that is responsible for her failing to pass into another state where she lacks phenomenology at all, as in all the above cases. Thus, another form of phenomenology must do that job. The *conscious* thoughts she entertains over and above that sensory phenomenology play this inhibitory role; phenomenal life goes on with her precisely because of them.

Let me now assess this first step of my argument. To begin with, this argument is a form of PCA, for it involves considering a phenomenal switch from being awake to being asleep. However, it has some features of its own. For, unlike standard PCAs and like Kriegel’s Zoe argument, the argument does not focus on different phenomenal states whose phenomenal difference is given introspectively. For there is no introspection as regards one’s being asleep: obviously enough, being asleep is not a mental state, hence *a fortiori* it cannot be something

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<sup>11</sup> In (2016, pp. 181-183), by relying on the contrast between conscious and unconscious perception, Montague remarks that a similar contrast occurs between conscious and unconscious thought. Yet I am uncertain whether, unlike the one I am pointing out in the text, this contrast can be straightforwardly meant as a *phenomenological* contrast. One might object that the difference between conscious and unconscious thought can be dealt with in functional terms.

one is introspectively conscious of. Thus, it would be better to conceptualize the phenomenal difference the argument points out as a difference between the existence of phenomenal awareness on the one hand and the lack of such awareness on the other<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover and more importantly for my present purposes, unlike Kriegel's argument, it is hardly disputable that the argument's story describes a *metaphysical* possibility. Not only there certainly are insomniac, but there *may* well be insomniac of the Vita kind. As a matter of fact, any of us may find her/himself in Vita's state.

If we put these two assessments together, we get not only that Vita's case is a genuine metaphysical possibility, but also that the overall *phenomenal* difference her case mobilizes involves her having (for her unstoppable) *thoughts*, not her having the sensory states she tries to keep at a minimum. Thus up to now, I should have managed to prove the claim that there is a cognitive phenomenology irreducible to a sensory one: over and above those sensory states, Vita has thoughts whose phenomenal character prevents her from switching from an overall phenomenal condition of being awake to the nonphenomenal condition of sleeping.

Obviously enough, detractors of the liberal view of cognitive phenomenology will immediately protest that I have not proved the above claim. For, they would say, even if one concedes that Vita has a cognitive phenomenology that exceeds her standard sensory phenomenology, that cognitive phenomenology may well be reduced to some other form of sensory phenomenology; namely, sensory imagery<sup>13</sup>. For any such thoughts, Vita entertains some kind of sensory imagery, typically but not exclusively a visual one. While thinking, say, of her work tomorrow, she has some flashes of the building where she works; while thinking of how to get to that building, she auditorily images the noise of the traffic around, and so on and so forth. Yet no such imagistic phenomenology may account for *all* the thoughts Vita entertains while lying in bed. As she is very ingenious, she has developed a technique for thinking boring, sleep-inducing, thoughts: typically, item-counting thoughts. Yet instead of counting sheep as normal people do, Vita counts items featuring an even less exciting subject; namely, geometrical figures. As you already know, she is an addicted insomniac. So, her enumeration proceeds: after a while, she arrives at counting a chiliagon first, and a circle afterwards. Yet as we all know, no sensory imagery distinguishes a thought of a chiliagon from a thought of a circle. Thus, this passage in Vita's thoughts cannot be accounted for in terms of (having vs. not having) sensory imagery. More in general, her having a thoughtful life that prevents her from falling asleep cannot be so accounted for<sup>14</sup>.

Yeah, yeah – will the detractor say. Yet in counting geometrical figures, as in any other thought for that matter, Vita engages herself in some inner speech, which definitely has an aural counterpart. So, while counting a chiliagon, Vita silently says to herself (and auditorily images her saying) “This is a chiliagon”; while counting a circle, Vita silently says to herself (and auditorily images her saying) “This is a circle”. Thus, her change in thought is matched by a change in (auditory) imagery that concerns the different phonology and possibly also the different syntactical parsing of such sentences<sup>15</sup>.

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12 One might take this PCA as a form of what Chudnoff (2015, pp. 55-60) labels a *glossed* PCA, in whose premises one also glosses on the nature of the phenomenal difference involved.

13 Cf. Prinz (2011, pp. 181-193). Kriegel himself (2016) seems sensitive to this sort of reply.

14 For a similar move, cf. Mendelovici (2010).

15 Cf. Prinz (2011), Tye and Wright (2011). One might take this objection also as a reply to Montague (2016, pp. 193-194) that a given sensory imagery is no necessary condition for a thought, for one and the same thought may be surrounded by different sensory images. See also Wilson (2003, p. 417). For in inner speech, the objector may say, a certain thought is surrounded always by the same (auditory) image. To be sure, Montague would reply (*ib.*, pp. 194-195) that in inner speech, speakers of different languages surround one and the same thought with different (auditory) images. Yet this reply works for intersubjective, but not for intrasubjective, cases of thinking the same

Yet even if this were the case, it is easy to figure out a continuation of the story where Vita exploits another technique: namely, obsessively repeating to herself in her inner speech the very same sentence endowed both with the same phonology and the same syntax, yet meaning it now one way, now another way. For instance, she obsessively repeats to herself “Dionysius is Greek” once meaning Dionysius the Elder, ruler of Syracuse, Sicily, in ancient times, once meaning Dionysius the Younger, son of the preceding. It is quite likely that in her mind, not only she does not visually tell the two guys, with whom obviously she has never had any physical contact – she sticks to the very same mental image of a distinguished ancient adult Greek – but also she does not aurally tell the different yet both phonetically and syntactically alike tokens of the above sentence<sup>16</sup>. In this case, she repeatedly undergoes a thought alternation that constitutes her thoughts in their having an overall, sleep-preventing, phenomenology. Yet by hypothesis that alternation cannot be accounted for by any sort of change in sensory imagery. Thus once again, her having a thoughtful life that prevents her from falling asleep cannot be imagistically accounted for<sup>17</sup>.

Now, if I have managed to show that cognitive phenomenology is irreducible to *any* sensory phenomenology, it is relatively simple to also show that the former is independent of the latter. This is the second step of my argument.

As is well known, Wittgenstein repeatedly said that meaning something by means of an expression does not consist in any sort of mental process, which at most *accompanies* that meaning<sup>18</sup>. Now, Vita’s case shows that the very same point can be made as to the relationship between sensory and cognitive phenomenology, at least as far as the phenomenology of *having* thought is concerned. Let me concede that any of Vita’s thoughts is actually flanked by some sort of sensory phenomenology or other: in actual fact, there is no thought of Vita’s that is not flanked by some phenomenal sensory state or other, ultimately a sensory imagery of some form or other (visual, auditory, etc.). Yet clearly enough, this relationship between the two kinds of phenomenologies is no more intimate than that of an accompanying or a surrounding. Yet this is to say, there is no *intrinsic* relationship between a cognitive form of phenomenology and a sensory form of phenomenology. In other terms, the cognitive phenomenology of having thoughts is *independent* of any sensory phenomenology. There indeed is a possible world in which Vita still has the thoughts that prevents her from falling asleep and yet she has no phenomenal sensory states at all. Needless to say, this is a world in which Vita is a Zoe-like person<sup>19</sup>.

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thought. Wilson (2003, p. 417) puts forward such an intrasubjective case that however mobilizes mere visual imagery.

16 For similar examples, see e.g. Siewert (1998), Horgan and Tienson (2002).

17 As Wittgenstein once magisterially said in his own way: “When someone says the word ‘cube’ to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole use of the word come before my mind when I *understand* it in this way? Yes; but on the other hand, isn’t the meaning of the word also determined by this use? And can these ways of determining meaning conflict? Can what we grasp *at a stroke* agree with a use, fit or fail to fit it? And how can what is present to us in an instant, what comes before our mind in an instant, fit a use? What really comes before our mind when we *understand* a word? -- Isn’t it something like a picture? Can’t it *be* a picture? Well, suppose that a picture does come before your mind when you hear the word ‘cube’, say the drawing of a cube. In what way can this picture fit or fail to fit a use of the word ‘cube’? -- Perhaps you say: ‘It’s quite simple; if that picture occurs to me and I point to a triangular prism for instance, and say it is a cube, then this use of the word doesn’t fit the picture.’ -- But doesn’t it fit? I have purposely so chosen the example that it is quite easy to imagine a *method of projection* according to which the picture does fit after all. The picture of the cube did indeed *suggest* a certain use to us, but it was also possible for me to use it differently” (2009<sup>a</sup>: I, § 139).

18 Cf. e.g. “Neither the expression ‘to mean the explanation in such-and-such a way’ nor the expression ‘to interpret the explanation in such-and-such a way’ signifies a process which accompanies the giving and hearing of an explanation.” (2009<sup>a</sup>: I, § 34)

19 Accepting this claim means accepting what Chudnoff (2015, p. 118) labels the Disembodied Qualia Premise: “if there are cognitive phenomenal states, then there should be parts of phenomenally different total phenomenal states  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  such that:  $T_1$  includes both sensory and cognitive states and  $T_2$  is the same as  $T_1$  with respect to cognitive phenomenal states but lacks all sensory phenomenal states”.

To be sure, someone may still wonder whether there really is no intrinsic relationship between cognitive and sensory phenomenology. In a sense, this perplexity is correct. For there are situations in which, unlike the previous one, irreducibility of cognitive phenomenal states to sensory phenomenal states does not lead to the former states' independence from the latter states. Yet this only shows that there is a difference between the cognitive independent phenomenology of *having* thoughts, which is what we have talked about all along, and the cognitive merely irreducible phenomenology of *grasping* thoughts, namely that form of phenomenology that paradigmatically takes place in experiences as of understanding, those originally pointed out by Strawson (1994) among others. Let us see.

In experiences as of understanding, there definitely is a dependence of the cognitive phenomenology of understanding on the sensory phenomenology of hearing or reading. One could not understand the thought that is expressed by a sentence that by itself is "dead", i.e., meaningless, if one did not hear or read that very sentence, or even another such sentence that is ascribed the very same meaning (for instance, a synonymous sentence yet in a different language), by then suitably interpreting it. Yet such an experience of understanding does not reduce itself to the sensory phenomenology that hearing or reading a meaningless sentence involve, as ambiguous sentences clearly show. One could not understand the famous Wildean joke "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness" if one did not first hear or read that sentence as a meaningless sentence by then interpreting it in the sense having to do with misplacing rather than in the sense having to do with suffering from deprivation<sup>20</sup>. Yet moreover, those experiences of understanding do not reduce themselves to sensory experiences, as this ambiguity case shows. For in this case, two experiences of understanding correspond to *one and the same* sensory experience of the relevant sentence (including any imagistic apprehension of that sentence's syntax). Thus, also experiences of understanding involve cognitive phenomenology.

Yet in *having* a thought, no such act of interpretation of a previously perceived sentence has to be involved. It is not the case that one mentally hears or reads a certain sentence and then understands it by interpreting in a certain way, possibly choosing one among different theoretically legitimate interpretations<sup>21</sup>. Rather, one immediately thinks the thought in the only sense it has. Thus, even if some sentence or other imaginatively heard or read in inner speech pops up while having that thought, this sentence only accompanies the thought in an *extrinsic* sense: one might have thought that very thought without silently repeating to herself that sentence, or any other sentence for that matter<sup>22</sup>. Consider Vita again. In alternately thinking that Dionysius the Elder is Greek and that Dionysius the Younger is such, her silently repeating to herself "Dionysius is Greek" is unnecessary. But if by chance she had heard this very sentence, now grasping one of its meanings now grasping the other one – we

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20 It may well be the case that also in the other two cases that Chudnoff (2015, p. 107) points out, namely: grasping a mathematical proof that uses a diagram and intuiting a mathematical proof by visualizing a shape, cognitive phenomenology is grounded in sensory phenomenology. For both such cases are cases in which one perceives something meaningless and then has a perceptually-based realization of the proof it manages to express. See later in the text.

21 Perhaps interpreting that sentence amounts to match it with a Mentalese sentence in the brain, as Fodorians say. Yet the Mentalese sentence is not a meaningless sentence that is first (imaginatively) sensed as such and then interpreted in some way or other, for it is an *originally meaningful* yet inaccessible sentence. Thus, if it is a vehicle of thinking, it is not such in the same way as a meaningless sentence is a vehicle of understanding.

22 Chudnoff acknowledges that there may be cases of thoughts endowed just by a cognitive phenomenology. Yet by echoing Prinz (2011), he wonders whether such cases are actually possible (2015, p. 108). If I am right in splitting in the above way these cases from cases of understanding as cases of thought entertainment vs. cases of thought grasping, there is no problem in accepting their being genuinely possible.

may suppose that *this* is the sentence that obsessively the radio she is listening to repeats – then hearing that sentence would be necessary, though insufficient, in order for her to have now one, now another, understanding experience. Thus, there is a difference in this form of cognitive phenomenology: the cognitive phenomenology of having thoughts is independent of any sensory phenomenology, while the cognitive phenomenology of grasping thoughts is merely irreducible to it.

Let me take stock. The difference between the cognitive phenomenology of having thoughts and that of grasping thoughts explains why in the former kind of phenomenology the relationship between cognitive and sensory phenomenology is not the one holding in the latter kind of phenomenology; namely, it is an extrinsic and not an intrinsic one. Thus, it leads in such a case to the independence of cognitive phenomenology from sensory phenomenology<sup>23</sup>. Hence, if I am right, by appealing to the case of Vita I have managed to show that there is a kind of cognitive phenomenology that is not only irreducible, to but also independent of, sensory phenomenology.

### 3. Kinds of cognitive phenomenology

The contrast between the phenomenology of having thoughts and the phenomenology of grasping thoughts I have pointed out in the previous Section is illuminating for various reasons. First, it tells us not only, and obviously, that there is a plurality of cognitive phenomenologies<sup>24</sup>, but also that such a plurality is *typologically* differentiated. For, to trace back to Pitt's (2004) own characterization, while the phenomenology of having thoughts is merely *proprietary*, that is, it is a *sui generis* kind of phenomenology different from any other such kinds<sup>25</sup>, the phenomenology of grasping thoughts is also *distinctive*, that is, it is such that distinct types of experiences as of understanding have distinct cognitive phenomenal properties<sup>26</sup>.

Why so? For in the latter case, as we saw before, there may well be a phenomenal switch between grasping a certain thought and grasping another thought that is however expressed by the same sentence without any change in the underlying sensory phenomenology concerning that sentence's apprehension. By hypothesis, therefore, that switch must be taken to be a switch in the cognitive phenomenology that the two types of experiences as of understanding respectively possess. A certain experience as of understanding and another such experience, which respectively belong to different types of such experiences, are also distinct in their cognitive phenomenology. Yet in the former case, passing from having one thought to having another thought prompts no such switch. Thus, distinct types of having thoughts still share the same cognitive phenomenology. In the Vita case, her *overall* going on *thinking* prevents her from sleeping, not her passing from one thought to another. If she switched from entertaining certain cognitive phenomenal properties to entertaining

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23 Incidentally, by drawing such a difference in those cognitive phenomenologies, as to the phenomenology of having thoughts one may reject Chudnoff's premise in the argument he labels "the missing explanation argument" (2015, pp. 117-120) that is meant to undermine irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology to sensory phenomenology via undermining independence of the former to the latter. That premise supposedly leads from irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology to sensory phenomenology to independence.

24 As Kriegel (2015, 2016) also maintains.

25 Bayne and Montague acknowledge that the fact that cognitive phenomenology has proprietaryness, which they take as the defining feature of that phenomenon, does not entail that it also has the other features. Cf. (2011, pp. 12-13). See also Bourget and Mendelovici (2016). Yet the idea that cognitive phenomenology is at least also distinctive is defended by various people: cf. e.g. Horgan and Graham (2012, p. 334), Horgan and Tienson (2002, p. 522), and Montague herself (2016).

26 Cf. also Kriegel (2011, p. 49), who may be however meant to use the case as supporting the claim that cognitive phenomenology *in general* has a proprietary as well as a distinctive character (Bourget and Mendelovici 2016).



different cognitive phenomenal properties when obsessively thinking now that Dionysius the Elder is Greek now that Dionysius the Younger is such, her reason for endorsing that thinking technique, namely preventing her from being distracted by any phenomenal change (remember that in that case her sensory phenomenology remains the same), would be futile<sup>27</sup>. Second, those cases may prompt one to put forward a general hypothesis. *Whenever* a kind of cognitive phenomenology is independent of sensory phenomenology, it is merely proprietary. Conversely, *whenever* a kind of cognitive phenomenology is merely irreducible to sensory phenomenology, it is both proprietary and distinctive.

Granted, it is hard to prove this hypothesis in its generality. For irreducibility *per se* merely entails that, *if* there is a phenomenal difference between sensuously identical mental states of the same sort having an irreducible kind of cognitive phenomenology, say two aurally or visually identical experiences as of understanding, this difference is a difference in their cognitive phenomenology, hence such a phenomenology is distinctive. But it does not entail that there is such a difference between two mental states of *any* such sort instantiating that kind of cognitive phenomenology, hence that such a kind of cognitive phenomenology is distinctive. Conversely, independence merely entails that, *if* there is no phenomenal difference between sensuously identical mental states of the same sort having an independent kind of cognitive phenomenology, say two aurally or visually identical thoughts, then such a phenomenology is merely proprietary. But it does not entail that there is no phenomenal difference between two mental states of *any* such sort instantiating that kind of cognitive phenomenology, hence that such a cognitive phenomenology is merely proprietary.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis is quite sensible. For on the one hand, if phenomenal independency has to do with the fact that sensory phenomenology is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of the overall phenomenology of the relevant mental state, it is quite likely that any two mental states of the same sort do not differ in their kind of cognitive phenomenology, thereby prompting that kind of phenomenology to be merely proprietary. Whereas on the other hand, if phenomenal irreducibility has to do with the fact that sensory phenomenology is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of the overall phenomenology of the relevant mental state, it is quite likely that there will be two mental states of the same sort that differ just in their kind of cognitive phenomenology, thereby prompting that kind of phenomenology to be both proprietary and distinctive. In this respect, it can be definitely shown not only that there are *other* cases of mental states whose cognitive phenomenology is independent of sensory phenomenology, in which the former phenomenology is merely proprietary, but also that there are *other* cases of mental states whose cognitive phenomenology is merely irreducible to sensory phenomenology, in which the former phenomenology is both proprietary and distinctive.

To begin with, consider the phenomenology of endorsing thoughts. Some people claim that there is a difference between the phenomenology of *having* thoughts, of merely entertaining certain proposition-like contents, and the phenomenology of *endorsing* thoughts, of believing,

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<sup>27</sup> This may prompt one to wonder whether the cognitive phenomenology of thinking does not reduce once again to the sensory phenomenology of imagining, which in such a case remains constant, as we have seen before. Yet there is no such risk. For not only Vita still has the cognitive feeling that her thoughts differ, a feeling that cannot be explained by that constancy in imagery. But I may also suppose that Vita has thoughts that, by belonging to different attitude types, induce an overall change in cognitive phenomenology that is matched by no corresponding change in sensuous imagery. For instance, while sticking to the same mental images, she may *endorse* the thought that Dionysus [the Elder] is Greek while *wondering* whether Dionysus [the Younger] is such. For the idea that there is a variety of types of cognitive phenomenology that matches the difference in the attitude type of the relevant thoughts, cf. both Horgan and Tienson (2002) and Horgan and Graham (2012).

if not even knowing, such contents<sup>28</sup>. I am not sure whether endorsing thoughts amounts *per se* to instantiating a form of cognitive phenomenology. On behalf of this idea, one may claim that, just as any perceptual experience involves a feeling of presence as to the object perceived, any endorsing of a thought involves a feeling of certainty in the subsistence of the propositional-like content so endorsed. Perhaps. Yet one is not forced to defend such a claim. For one may nevertheless hold that there is a phenomenal difference between the phenomenology of *having* thoughts and the phenomenology of *realizing* thoughts, that is, the cases in which one *comes* to believe, or to know, a certain thought that was previously at most merely entertained. Now, just as the cognitive phenomenology of having thoughts, the cognitive phenomenology of realizing thoughts is independent of any sensory phenomenology. Thus, one may well expect that it is merely proprietary as well.

Consider again the case of Zoe when she realizes that a certain mathematical proposition she merely thought is true. Now, as I said before, I agree with Kriegel that in that case there is a phenomenal switch. Yet the switch in question precisely concerns one's passing from *entertaining* a certain proposition-like content to *realizing* that such a content subsists. However, passing from a certain realization to another such realization involves for Zoe no such switch. This may further be seen once one notices that mathematical cases are definitely not the only cases in which such realizations are involved. Someone's coming to know the informative value of an "a is b" – form of identity, such as Hammurabi's coming to know that Hesperus is Phosphorus, is another example of such realizations<sup>29</sup>. Now, consider the most famous case of such realizations, namely when Oedipus realized at one and the same time both that Jocasta was Mummy and that Laius was Daddy. Both such realizations are definitely imbued with a proprietary kind of phenomenology. Possibly, before that discovery Oedipus had already wondered whether Jocasta was Mummy and Laius was Daddy; yet such wonderings, i.e., the entertaining of the corresponding thoughts, did not definitely have on him the same experiential impact as those realizations. Yet there is no phenomenological difference for him in realizing the two things. Definitely, they were the realizations of different *thoughts*. Yet they were not phenomenally different *realizations*. Thus, the phenomenology of endorsing thought, which as we have seen is independent of any sensory phenomenology (just as the phenomenology of having thoughts), is again a merely proprietary but not a distinctive kind of phenomenology.

Yet suppose now that someone, call her Mata, instead of mumbling *à la* Zoe whether a certain mathematical proposition is true, attends to its demonstration performed via a certain diagram that she faces. Mata again entertains a realization, yet unlike the previous realization, this realization essentially involves her seeing the dots constituting the diagram. In want of a better term, let me call it a *perceptually-based realization (PB-realization)*<sup>30</sup>. In this case, the phenomenology of a PB-realization is not independent of, but is merely irreducible to, that of sensory phenomenology. One must see the dots in order to capture the mathematical proof. Thus, it is quite likely that the phenomenology of PB-realizations is not only proprietary,

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28 Kriegel (2016) holds that, unlike the first kind, only the second kind of phenomenology deserves the label of *cognitive* phenomenology, for the first kind is just a *contemplative* phenomenology. If however both kinds are just, admittedly different, proprietary sorts of phenomenology, perhaps the issue here is merely verbal: there is a general cognitive phenomenology of *cogitating* thoughts that may be specified in terms of different sorts such as *entertaining* thoughts, *endorsing* thoughts, etc. One may say that the phenomenology of cogitating covers what Montague labels a subject's "conscious thought field" (2016, p. 173). As I said in the previous footnote, both Horgan and Tienson (2002) and Horgan and Graham (2012) have acknowledged that there is a variety of types of cognitive phenomenology that matches the difference in the attitude type of the relevant thoughts.

29 On such cases, see my Voltolini (2016).

30 Chudnoff (2015, p. 116) provides an example of such a case.

but also distinctive. For it is quite imaginable that a phenomenal switch in PB-realizations arises with respect to the perception of the very same dots when however involving distinct mathematical proofs, for example if they were used as a support now of a geometrical proof, now of an utterly different arithmetical proof, which are respectively apprehended<sup>31</sup>. In such a case, since the switch cannot be ascribed to sensory phenomenology, it must be ascribed to the different cognitive phenomenologies the distinct PB-realizations of the different mathematical proofs would instantiate. Thus, the phenomenology of PB-realizations, which as we have seen is merely irreducible to sensory phenomenology (just as the phenomenology of grasping thoughts), is not only a proprietary, but also a distinctive, kind of phenomenology.

At this point, an important objection to my distinction between the above two kinds of cognitive phenomenologies may be raised by arguing in favour of the claim that *all* cognitive phenomenology, of whatever kind, is not only both proprietary and distinctive, but also *individuating*, i.e., it is such that a mental state has a *specific* intentional content in virtue of its having the cognitive phenomenal property it has<sup>32</sup>. As is well known, Pitt defends this claim by appealing, via an argument to the best explanation, to the kind of introspective acquaintance with an intentional (occurrent) mental state, an (occurrent) thought, which enables one to be immediately aware of that state. According to Pitt's argument, one is able to identify via that acquaintance an intentional (occurrent) mental state as the (occurrent) thought it is: that is, via that acquaintance one is able not only to distinguish it from any other (occurrent) mental states she entertains, her other (occurrent) thoughts included, but also to capture it as the particular (occurrent) thought it is as endowed with a certain intentional content. Yet one could not be so able unless that thought had a cognitive phenomenology that is not only proprietary, but also distinctive and individuating. Hence, that thought has that phenomenology<sup>33</sup>.

Yet in order for this argument to go through, as to its second premise one has first of all to rely on a disputable analogy between (occurrent) thoughts and sensory mental states. True enough, in order to identify via introspective acquaintance a sensory mental state as the state it is, one must be able to grasp the sensory phenomenological property that makes it different from any other such state. When sipping a glass of Burgundy, one can identify via introspective acquaintance her present headache while simultaneously telling it from her kinaesthetic sensation affecting her lips as well as from her tasting that wine. For such an immediate awareness of that headache is the awareness of the sensory phenomenological property that makes that headache the sensory state it is rather than another one. Now, let me well suppose that in being introspectively acquainted with an (occurrent) thought, a subject grasps the nonsensory phenomenal property that thought admittedly has. Yet it is not in virtue of that grasping that she identifies via introspective acquaintance that thought, unless it has been already established that it is precisely that property that makes that thought differ from any other (occurrent) thoughts of hers, rather than a different property, typically its having the intentional content it has. That is, unless it has already been established that the identification via introspective acquaintance of an (occurrent) thought depends on grasping a certain phenomenal property insofar as that property is also responsible for that thought's individuation. Moreover, the argument risks to be trivialized, for this was what it

#### 4. An objection and a reply

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31 On intellectual Gestalts and on how they are related to sensory Gestalts (those in which the phenomenal switch occurring can be taken to be basically sensory), so as to possibly undergo Gestalt switch as well, see Chudnoff (2013, 2015).

32 For more about this final point, see my Voltolini (2016).

33 Cf. Pitt (2004, pp. 7-25).

was supposed to prove. That is to say, the argument was supposed to prove the claim that the cognitive phenomenal properties of an (occurrent) thought individuate its intentional content, hence that thought as well<sup>34</sup>.

To see the point, consider the following case. Russell once thought that one may be immediately aware of universals<sup>35</sup>. Even if this were true, then the fact that one is immediately aware, say, of the Bold as different from the Beautiful would not have to do with the phenomenal properties, if any, that are involved in being immediately aware of the first universal and in being immediately aware of the second universal respectively. Instead, it would have to do with what makes what one is firstly aware of, i.e., the Bold, be a different item from what one is secondly aware of, i.e., the Beautiful. To deny this, one would implausibly need to say that those awarenesses are what makes what one is firstly aware of different from what one is secondly aware of, by also risking of trivializing the whole issue. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds as to (occurrent) thoughts in general. To come back to a previous example, it is quite likely that what essentially constitutes the realization that Jocasta is the same as Mummy as different from the realization that Laius is the same as Daddy that poor Oedipus made at one and the same time are their different intentional contents. Thus, the fact that Oedipus identifies via introspective acquaintance the first realization as different from the second has to do not with the proprietary phenomenology of such realizations, but with the distinct intentional contents of such realizations that make such realizations be different thoughts. Unless one implausibly said that such a phenomenology respectively makes it the case that the first realization is the realization that Jocasta is the same as Mummy while the second realization is the realization that Laius is the same as Daddy, by also risking of trivializing the whole issue<sup>36</sup>.

Recently, Montague has argued in a different way for the thesis that cognitive phenomenology must be as Pitt describes it. For only in such a case, she says, one can account for a principle that Montague takes as “intuitively obvious” (2016, p.176), namely the *conscious content principle* (CC): “if an occurrent thought T is to be a conscious thought, the (representational) content of that thought must in some manner be consciously occurrent” (2016, p.176.) (for instance, a conservative account of cognitive phenomenology in terms of sensory phenomenology won’t do)<sup>37</sup>.

*Pace* Montague, however, I think that CC is neither intuitive nor obvious. For not only CC presupposes a *propositional* account of a thought content which many take to be problematic, since there are *objectual* thoughts, i.e., thoughts whose content collapses onto the very object they are about<sup>38</sup>. But also CC is a problematic principle whatever conception one endorses of what a thought content is: either an externalist conception, or an internalist conception (or even a mixture of the two). *Pace* Montague, if a thought content is conceived externistically,

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34 For a similar criticism see Chudnoff, who however also worries whether (occurrent) thoughts have proprietaryness. Cf. (2015, pp. 37,41). For a different critique to Pitt’s argument, which rejects the premise of its argument that identification of an (occurrent) mental state relies on being immediately acquainted with it, see Levine (2001, pp. 106-107) and Tye and Wright (2011, p. 340).

35 Cf. e.g. Russell (1912).

36 Pitt would rejoin that, unlike universals, (occurrent) thoughts are mind-dependent objects (2004, p. 22). This may be true, but it still fails to entail that to be immediately aware of mind-dependent (occurrent) thoughts means to identify them by means of their nonsensory phenomenal properties rather than by means of their intentional contents.

37 Cf. Montague (2016, pp. 197-203).

38 Cf. e.g. Crane (2001, 2013). As Montague herself admits, “the Eiffel Tower isn’t conscious” (2016, p. 198). Yet an objectual thought of the Eiffel Tower has precisely the very tower itself as its content.

Twin Earth cases abundantly show that it may not be consciously occurrent<sup>39</sup>. But insofar as more sophisticated Twin Earth cases may occur also if a thought content is conceived internistically<sup>40</sup>, a thought content does not have to be consciously occurrent also if it is conceived. Thus, a defender of cognitive phenomenology is not forced to account for CC. Hence, that defender must not endorse Montague's Pitt-like conception of that phenomenology.

To sum up. In this paper, I have first tried to show that there really is a primitive form of cognitive phenomenology, by contrasting its independence of sensory phenomenology with the irreducibility to sensory phenomenology of another such form. Second, by reflecting on the fact that sensory phenomenology is neither necessary nor sufficient for an independent cognitive phenomenology while it is necessary for an irreducible cognitive phenomenology, I have maintained that such phenomenologies in general are typologically different, for the former is merely proprietary while the latter is both proprietary and distinctive. Hopefully, I have managed to show that this is the case for the cognitive phenomenologies of having thoughts and realizing thoughts on the one hand, and for the cognitive phenomenologies of grasping thoughts and perceptually-based realizations of thoughts on the other hand<sup>41</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

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39 As Montague instead says: "for any given conscious thought the content of that thought itself has got to be entertained ['live']" (2016, p. 198).

40 As Baker (1991) has convincingly shown.

41 I thank Elisabetta Sacchi for her comments to the parts of this paper she had not previously shared.

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