

# ‘Yet Another Workshop on Phenomenal Intentionality’



29 - 30 November 2014  
 CEU Department of Philosophy  
 Nádor u. 9, Monument Building, Gellner Room

## PROGRAM

	29 November	30 November
09:30 – 10:00		Coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Elisabetta Sacchi</b> (Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele) <u><a href="#">“Phenomenal Character and Experiential Aspectuality”</a></u>	<b>Marta Jorba</b> (University College Dublin) <u><a href="#">“Attitudinal Cognitive Phenomenology and the Horizon of Possibilities”</a></u>
11:15 – 11:30		Break
11:30 – 12:45	<b>Terry Horgan</b> (University of Arizona) <u><a href="#">“Phenomenal Intentionality with Compromise”</a></u>	<b>Sam Coleman</b> (University of Hertfordshire) <u><a href="#">“Unconscious Qualities as the Basis of Content”</a></u>
12:45 – 14:00		Lunch break
14:00 – 15:15	<b>David Pitt</b> (California State University LA, CEU-Fulbright Fellow) <u><a href="#">“Unconscious Thought”</a></u>	<b>Howard Robinson</b> (CEU) <u><a href="#">“What Cognitive Phenomenology Is, and Why the ‘Hard Problem’ Cannot be Confined to Qualia”</a></u>
15:15 – 15:30		Break
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Hanoch Ben-Yami</b> (CEU) <u><a href="#">“The Authority of Our Self-ascription of “Mental States”: Experiential Dead-ends and Conceptual Cleared Ways”</a></u>	<b>Anders Nes</b> (University of Oslo) <u><a href="#">“On Fore- and Background in Cognitive Phenomenology”</a></u>
16:45 – 17:00		Break
17:00 – 18:15	<b>Bence Nanay</b> (University of Antwerp) <u><a href="#">“Particularity and Cognitive Phenomenology “</a></u>	<b>Katalin Farkas</b> (CEU) <u><a href="#">“Phenomenal Character and Functional Role”</a></u>

## Abstracts

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### “Phenomenal character and experiential aspectuality”

**Elisabetta Sacchi** (University San Raffaele)

Abstract: In my paper I shall argue for the claim that the phenomenal character of conscious intentional states has a substantive role to play in a fully comprehensive theory of intentionality. And yet this role is not in my view the one that most people adhering to the “phenomenal intentionality research program” [Kriegel, 2013] assign to phenomenal character. What I shall claim, to put it in a slogan, is that phenomenal character is not the source of intentionality but only of one of its features, namely: aspectuality. After having argued for this point, by showing how the attempt to account for aspectuality purely in terms of mind-world tracking relations succeeds only at the price of denying that our mental states represent ordinary mind-independent entities (be they properties or individuals) [Kriegel, 2011], I shall present my positive proposal as regards the nature of phenomenal character which will turn out to be a variant of adverbialism [Thomasson, 2000]. I shall conclude by providing my reasons for rejecting the claim that the phenomenal properties which account for aspectuality are constitutive of the content of conscious mental states. This will enable me to say what I find troublesome in so called intentional psychologism [Pitt, 2009].

### “Phenomenal Intentionality with Compromise”

**Terry Horgan** (University of Arizona)

In her book *The Subject's Point of View* and her paper ‘Phenomenal Intentionality without Compromise’, Katalin Farkas articulates and defends the view that phenomenal intentionality is the only genuine kind of mental intentionality. She calls this position ‘phenomenal intentionality without compromise’; I hereby label it *uncompromising* phenomenal intentionality, or UPI for short. (Other fans of phenomenal intentionality, including Uriah Kriegel and David Pitt, also favor the UPI position.) Farkas argues that UPI is theoretically superior to the view—advocated, for instance, in Horgan and Tienson’s ‘The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality’ and in Horgan, Tienson and Graham’s ‘Phenomenal Intentionality and the Brain in a Vat’—that there is also another kind of mental intentionality, “externalistic” intentionality. (I hereby label the Graham/Horgan/Tienson position *compromising* phenomenal intentionality, or CPI for short.)

In this talk I will begin by offering an expanded, partially novel, articulation of CPI—*elaborated* compromising phenomenal intentionality, or ECPI for short. Then, relying on ECPI, I will address the principal theoretical considerations which, according to Farkas, supposedly count against CPI and in favor of UPI. I will argue that those considerations do not make serious trouble for ECPI. Finally, I will discuss the comparative theoretical benefits and costs of UPI and ECPI respectively, aiming to argue that on balance, ECPI fares better.

## “Unconscious Thought”

**David Pitt** (California State University LA, CEU-Fulbright Fellow)

I address the obvious, and ostensibly fatal, objection to the thesis that thought content is phenomenal that there can be unconscious thoughts but no unconscious phenomenology. I consider and reject strategies that attempt to assign unconscious states derived contents on the basis of their relation to conscious states, and conclude that there are only two viable responses to the objection. One must either affirm that there can be unconscious phenomenology or deny that there can be unconscious thoughts. I try to bolster the case for the former by appeal to blindsight and phenomenal sorites, and to soften the blow of the latter by arguing that contentless unconscious states may enter into processes that respect content relations, and that such purely syntactic processes can account for phenomena that appear to involve unconscious thought. Such unconscious syntactic processing is *programmed by* conscious thinking.

## “The Authority of Our Self-ascription of “Mental States”: Experiential Dead-ends and Conceptual Cleared Ways”

**Hanoch Ben-Yami** (CEU)

When we say, ‘I’d like to have a cup of coffee’, ‘I think Peter is in his room’ or ‘I have a headache’, then – assuming we are sincere, know the meaning of the words, and perhaps some other such caveats – what we say is true. The source of this authority has been a subject of philosophical theorising. One route that has been taken is to claim that when we experience something directly, when we are immediately conscious of it, we know its true nature; and that the content of our wishes and thoughts is also determined by their experiential nature. I think this is based on a wrong conception of our authority regarding how the things we see, hear, and so on appear to us. I shall first analyse the sources of this authority and then show why it cannot be used as a model for the explanation of our authority with respect to what we wish and think. I shall then develop a different explanation of this latter authority, one grounded in what is involved in the mastery or understanding of the relevant concepts.

## “Particularity and Cognitive Phenomenology “

**Bence Nanay** (University of Antwerp, University of Cambridge)

How can we explain the phenomenology of a conscious thought? There seem to be two options: (a) it has proprietary non-perceptual phenomenology and (b) its phenomenology can be explained in terms of perceptual phenomenology. The aim of this paper is to offer a third option in the cognitive phenomenology debate, which has not been explored: metacognitive feelings. Metacognitive feelings are about (perceptual or nonperceptual) mental states but they are based on the vehicle and not the content properties of the first order mental state (e.g., the ease of processing). So a new way of thinking about the phenomenology of conscious thoughts would be that it derives from the metacognitive feelings that is about these thoughts - and this will be a kind of phenomenology that is neither perceptual nor cognitive.

## “Attitudinal Cognitive Phenomenology and the Horizon of Possibilities”

**Marta Jorba** (University of Girona/University College Dublin)

In this talk I present a defence of cognitive phenomenology by focusing on two related elements: (i) the attitude component of cognitive mental episodes, and (ii) the background knowledge and what can be called ‘the horizon of possibilities’. Firstly, I examine the relation of cognitive attitudes and phenomenal character and defend the view that different kinds of cognitive attitudes exhibit different kinds of cognitive phenomenology. This view is supported by a version of the epistemic argument (Pitt 2004) applied to cognitive attitudes. Secondly, and focusing on cases of consciously thinking a thought, I argue that these are not isolated intentional experiences but rather we have to acknowledge holistic clusters where our previous beliefs and knowledge play a certain role in the anticipation of future experiences. I call this anticipation aspect ‘the horizon of possibilities’ and I elaborate on what it is, why it is experienced, whether it is reducible or not to a temporal anticipation and, finally, how it contributes to cognitive phenomenology.

## “Unconscious Qualities as the Basis of Content”

**Sam Coleman** (University of Hertfordshire)

I argue that (i) since there is unconscious mental content there must be unconscious qualia to carry that content, (ii) consciousness (i.e. subjective character, sheer awareness) has little or nothing to do with fixing content and (iii) unconscious non-mental qualities can be the basis also of natural intentionality. What emerges is a picture where proponents of phenomenal intentionality are right that qualia are key to content, but where traditional reductive naturalists are right that mental intentionality is just an offshoot of natural intentionality and that consciousness is a bystander.

## “What Cognitive Phenomenology Is, and Why the ‘Hard Problem’ Cannot be Confined to Qualia”

**Howard Robinson** (CEU)

According to one mainstream empiricist tradition, cognitive states can be treated reductively (by behaviourism or functionalism) but sensory consciousness cannot. This latter’s irreducibility is associated with its phenomenology, whilst cognition is said to lack any distinctive phenomenology. It is this latter claim that CP denies.

Prinz adopts something close to the traditional empiricist view, and denies that there is such a thing as CP. I argue that he misunderstands what CP is, and thereby makes it seemingly easy to refute it.

A minimal statement of CP is that it is a denial of the reductive, behavioural or functional account of ‘conscious’ thought, so that grasping thought content is a kind of irreducible experience in its own right. This thought gets expressed in a variety of increasingly specific ways. (i) Thinking has a phenomenology. (ii) Thinking has a *phenomenal* character. (iii) Thinking

has a qualitative character. Prinz equates CP with (iii). This enables him to defend his 'restrictivist' view, according to which only the sensory has *qualitative* character and hence there is no CP. But I argue that it is wrong to identify the experiential character of thought with a qualitative feature, and Prinz's criticism collapses. I also argue against Carruthers and Veillette.

In an argument not, I think, normally part of this debate, I argue that the irreducibility of qualia itself entails that there is cognitive phenomenology.

### **"On fore- and background in cognitive phenomenology"**

**Anders Nes** (CSMN, University of Oslo)

Can we distinguish anything like fore- vs. background structures in cognitive phenomenology? I think we can, and here try to articulate some such structures. I consider the phenomenologies of speech comprehension and reasoning. In each domain, I propose, we have an experience of something, X, as meaning something, Y. In some such cases, our experience of X as meaning Y is an experience of X as meaning Y in a manner that is capable of further elucidation, where certain further, more or less specific and informative ways in which X means Y are more or less dimly anticipated. (The suggested structure in consciousness here is akin to Husserl's ideas about a 'horizontal' dimension of intentionality.) In other such cases, our experience of X as meaning Y is rather one of X as 'just', 'simply' or 'primitively', meaning Y. I suggest this distinction has relevance to the question how non-demonstrative inferences, whose plausibility are sensitive to vast stocks of background knowledge, may be justified for us, from within the perspective of phenomenal consciousness.

### **"Phenomenal Character and Functional Role"**

**Katalin Farkas** (CEU)

The pure qualitative character of a conscious experience is sometimes contrasted with its intentional or functional properties. Defenders of the phenomenal intentionality view resist at least one of these contrasts: they claim that there is a kind of intentionality that is constitutively determined by the qualitative (or phenomenal) character of experiences. This paper argues for an analogous position for functional properties: that is, for the view that the phenomenal character of some experiences determines a certain functional profile.

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