

Being an Experience as the Mark of the Mental

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Abstract

In this paper, I want to revive an idea stemming out of the Cartesian-Husserlian phenomenological tradition as regards what makes the case that something—primarily a state, but also an event, or even a property—is mental; namely, the both necessary and sufficient conditions of mentality, i.e., *the mark of the mental*. According to this idea, the mark of the mental is, primarily for a state, its *being an experience*, to be meant as the property of having a phenomenal character that makes that state phenomenally aware. I defend this idea while also endorsing its most problematic consequence; namely, that internal states, whether standing (e.g., dispositional beliefs or desires) or occurrent (subpersonal states), that are not phenomenally aware are not mental. For I try to show why this consequence is not so problematic as it seems.

Keywords: Mark of the mental, Intentionality, Experience, Unconscious states.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I want to revive an old proposal regarding the venerable issue of the mark of the mental, i.e., the quest for both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions in order for something—primarily a state, but also an event, or even a property—to be mental. This quest was originally revived by Brentano when he held that *intentionality* plays that role. First of all, however, against both Brentano and the intentionalist account stemming from him, I remind that intentionality cannot be such a mark; nor can other traditional proposals coming from the phenomenological tradition, both Brentano and Husserl (Sec. 2). For me, moreover (Sec. 3), the best candidate is the old Cartesian-Husserlian property of *being an experience*, taken as the property for something, primarily a state, of having a phenomenal character, whether sensuous or not, hence for that something to be phenomenally aware: in a nutshell, something is mental iff it is an experience.¹ Finally (Sec. 4), I try to undermine what seems to be the main drawback for this other traditional candidate; namely, its ruling out of the realm of the mental certain

¹ For properties, the criterion must obviously be modulated as *being a property of an experience*.

unconscious internal intentional states, in the sense of phenomenally unaware internal states, either standing (e.g., dispositional beliefs, dispositional desires) or occurrent (e.g., subpersonal perceptions, subpersonal cognitions).

2. Neither Intentionality nor Other Traditional Factors Work as MOM

In the first 1874 volume of his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano revived the venerable issue of what makes the case that something—a state, or an event, or even a property—is mental; in a nutshell, the quest for the mark of the mental, taken as the both necessary and sufficient conditions of mentality. As is well known, he proposed that *intentionality*—taken as it has become standard in the literature either as the basic property of *being about something*, i.e., *reference intentionality*, or as the non-basic property that provides something with satisfaction conditions, i.e., *content intentionality*—is such a mark.²

Yet intentionality, notably reference intentionality, does not work as such. For on the one hand, it does not provide sufficient conditions of mentality. Consider *singular propositions*, the abstract entities that, starting from Russell (1903), some people take as the semantic contents of sentences involving directly referential devices such as proper names or indexicals. Such propositions are about their constituents, i.e., the objects and properties constituting them (Salmon 2007); yet they are not mental entities.³ On the other hand, intentionality does not provide necessary conditions either. In order for something to instantiate reference intentionality, it must instantiate the essential features of such property, i.e., *directedness*—the property of being about something else whether or not it exists—and *aspectuality*—the property of being about something that may turn out to be or appear as an aspect of something else (Crane 2001). Yet intero/proprioceptive sensations, an important subset of phenomenal mental states, i.e., the states exhibiting a what-it-is like viz. a phenomenal character (Nagel 1974), display neither directedness—their having a felt location does not amount to be directed upon something—nor aspectuality—the identifications that should affect their alleged objects of aboutness mobilize no aspect whatsoever (Voltolini 2013). So, at least some phenomenal mental states turn out to be irreducible to intentional mental states. Hence, intentionality certainly contributes to mental life but does not determine it.

In point of fact, the negativity of the above result may lead one in despair. For, says Crane (1998), to give a different treatment of intentional states and of phenomenal states as utterly different species of the very genus of a mental state risks making that genus a spurious category. For it merely turns out to be a disjunctive property: a mental state is either an intentional or a phenomenal state. No real commonality is captured by this disjunction, as Rorty (1979) originally stressed.⁴

² For the distinction between reference intentionality and content intentionality, cf. Kim 1996; for why the former is more basic than the latter—the latter entails the former but not *vice versa*—cf. e.g. Crane 2001, 2013.

³ Incidentally, propositions are both originally (i.e., immediately) and intrinsically (i.e., essentially) about their constituents. So, they cannot be ruled out as a counterexample by saying that they have their aboutness derivatively (i.e., mediately), as it may be the case for the sentences that have them as their semantic content.

⁴ Granted, says Tartaglia (2008: 328), this disjunctivist position has been held in the literature, from Malebranche up to Chalmers (1996).

Yet, as Kriegel (2018) aptly reminds us, in the second 1911 volume of his *Psychology* Brentano says that, over and above intentionality, there are at least other five candidates to play the role of the mark of the mental: i) being either a presentation or being grounded upon it; ii) being non-spatial; iii) being innerly perceived; iv) being noumenally real (one's appearance collapses on one's reality); v) being something that appears to us as a unity.⁵ To these, on behalf of Husserl (1983), Textor (2017) adds another candidate: vi) being such that, unlike physical states, it cannot be a target of perspectival awareness.

However, with these putative criteria things fare no better. To begin with, ii) not only is a merely negative criterion, but also, *pace* Kriegel, is not even extensionally correct: even abstract objects are non-spatial. Granted, one may take ii) to mobilize *perceived* non-spatiality: unlike physical states, one is not aware of mental states as having a location (Textor 2017: 29). Yet, even so modified, the criterion not only fails to meet the above sufficiency problem with abstract objects, since one is not aware of *abstracta* as having a location as well; but, as Textor himself stresses (ib: 30), it also fails to provide necessary conditions of mentality, since, as we saw before, intero/proprioceptions are instead felt as having a location.

Nor, moreover, do iv) and v) provide sufficiency conditions for mentality: as Kriegel admits, provided that they hold, they also hold, possibly primarily, of the *self*, taken as the bearer of mental states.

Furthermore, as regards i) and iii), first of all, they look circular.⁶ Both a presentation and an inner perception are mental characteristics as well, even if the latter—e.g., one's inner perception of one's hearing a sound—is not taken as a higher-order representation as in Lycan (1990) and Rosenthal (1986) theories, but as one and the same self-concerning mental state that *represents*, or *is aware of*, itself. In this latter case, as Kriegel (2009, 2011, 2018) and Textor (2017) respectively claim on behalf of Brentano, the state allegedly mobilizes one (conceptual) part of itself that is identical with itself, its *secondary* object—e.g., one's inner perception of one's hearing—as fused with another part of its—e.g., that very hearing—that is the *primary* object of that *representation*, or of that *awareness*. Granted, appealing to self-concerning states is better than appealing to higher-order representations. For, as the aforementioned distinction between (self-)representation and (self-)awareness is intended to stress, there may be a *presentational*, utterly non-representational, way of conceiving self-concerning states. Unlike higher-order representations, this way does not have a drawback affecting such representations; namely, to re-propose intentionality as the mark of the mental from the rear door, since higher-order representations surely are representations about representations. For in cashing out self-awareness as *self-presentation*, no appeal to representations, hence to intentionality, occurs any longer (cf. Zahavi 2004, Montague 2019, Dewalque 2020, Seron 2020, Antonelli 2022). Yet even so, moreover, iii) has a further independent drawback. For it relies on the idea Brentano defended in the *Psychology* that *awareness of awareness* qualifies all mental states: all mental states are such that, while regarding something, are also innerly perceived. However, this idea is quite disputable, independently of how it is cashed out. On the one hand, exteroceptive sensations can legitimately be taken to be affected by awareness of awareness, since they are phenomenally aware states which are

⁵ As Textor (2017: 158) explains, this unitarian appearance depends on the fact that for Brentano mental states concern themselves as their secondary objects.

⁶ As Textor himself (2017: 45) surmises as regards i).

moreover aware of, or present, objects by presenting their sensible worldly properties. My perception of a red patch presents that patch by virtue of presenting its redness. Yet on the other hand, intero/proprioceptive sensations are phenomenally aware states that neither are aware of nor present objects and their sensible worldly properties. Definitely, in having a stomachache, the felt localization of that state, i.e., my stomach, is not presented to me by virtue of presenting a property of its. Clearly, the painfulness of my stomachache is not a property of my stomach, but of my interoceptive experience, nor is it clear how that painfulness may present any physical property of my stomach (in the masochist case, would her pleasure present the same bodily property as the corresponding pain of the normal person presents?).⁷ Replying that such sensations are however aware of a phenomenal content, as Gertler (2001: 309), Nida-Rümelin (2011, 2015) and Textor (2017: 108) do on behalf of Brentano's, is simply to rename the fact that they are phenomenally aware viz. they are endowed with a phenomenal character. As such, they present nothing (although they can be presented to the subjects entertaining them).

As regards vi), finally, as Textor (2017: 186) stresses, it may have the advantage of explaining ii). For if it were non-perspectival, the awareness of a mental state would show that it is non-spatial. Yet it has the disadvantage that either non-perspectival awareness does not apply to mental states or awareness is not perspectival with respect to both mental states and physical states. In actual fact, perspectival awareness is ultimately nothing but aspectuality; namely, one of the constitutive features of reference intentionality. So first, if *qua* aspectuality awareness had also to do with intentionality, then there would be no difference in perspectival awareness between awareness of mental items and awareness of non-mental items, since both should be featured by aspectuality.⁸ Yet second, if awareness has not to do with intentionality, as I suspect, then it has *nothing* to do with perspectival awareness either, with respect to both mental states and physical states. For example, if awareness is conceived in presentational terms, as I am precisely inclined to hold, then it may be either the presentation of an object with its sensible worldly properties or the (self-)presentation of a mental state with its own properties, without any perspective being involved.

3. Being an Experience as The Mark of the Mental

So, are we back in despair? Fortunately enough, no. For there is a further alternative account, which traces back to the Cartesian-Husserlian tradition, although

⁷ Clearly, as Wittgenstein intuited, intero/proprioceptive sensations might be equated with exteroceptive sensations if they were taken to present properties not of bodily portions, but of *external objects*: "Let's imagine the following. The surfaces of the things around us (stones, plants, etc.) have patches and regions which cause pain in our skin when we touch them. (Perhaps through the chemical composition of these surfaces. But we needn't know that.) In this case, we'd speak of pain-patches on the leaf of a particular plant, just as at present we speak of red patches." (Wittgenstein 2009: I, §312). If this were the case, then also such sensations would be subject to awareness of awareness. Actually, however, this is not the case.

⁸ As the later Husserl realized. Cf. Textor 2017: 189-90.

neither Descartes nor Husserl defended it explicitly:⁹ namely, letting *being an experience* be the mark of the mental. For Brentano, its insistence on intentionality notwithstanding, just as for Descartes, the realm of the mental coincided with the realm of the conscious (Kriegel 2018). By following him in this respect, from (2001) onwards Husserl conceived all and only mental states to be *Erlebnisse*, i.e., experiences.¹⁰ In more contemporary terms, one may claim that all and only mental states have a phenomenal character, or in other words, that they are what their bearers are phenomenally aware of. This claim simply better articulates the idea that all and only mental states are experiences. So conceived, this claim has recently received some explicit support (from McGinn 1991, Searle 1992, up to Strawson 1994, Gertler 2007).

Granted, if phenomenal awareness is cashed out either in higher-order or in self-representational terms, as Lycan (1990) and Rosenthal (1986) on the one hand and Kriegel (2009, 2011, 2018) in his reprise of Brentano (Textor 2017: 141) on the other hand respectively claim, the criterion of *being an experience* can be reduced to the unsatisfying aforementioned criterion iii). But, since one may see *being an experience* neither as a representation of a representation nor as a self-representation, hence as a representational entity, but as a mere *property* of mental states, one is not forced to cash out phenomenal awareness in such (self-)representational terms.

Clearly, in order for the experientialist claim to be properly supported, one must defend (a version of) cognitive phenomenology, according to which not only occurrent sensuous mental states, but also occurrent non-sensuous mental states (certain beliefs and desires above all), are endowed with phenomenal character (e.g. Horgan and Tienson 2002, Pitt 2004, Chudnoff 2015, Kriegel 2015, Montague 2016, Strawson 1994).¹¹

At this point, one may object that the non-commonality problem surfaces again. For if phenomenology is merely disjunctive—either sensuous or non-sensuous, cognitive—there is no real experiential property that both phenomenally sensuous and phenomenally non-sensuous states share (Tartaglia 2008: 339-40).

Yet saying that there are two forms of phenomenology does not show that such forms are not species of the same genus. Phenomenologically speaking, both kinds of phenomenal states contribute to determine an *experienced* life, which captures the most basic sense of consciousness, i.e., *being awake*, as Chalmers (1996) originally noted. In fact, the distinction between *being awake* and *falling asleep* is the most basic phenomenological distinction. For falling asleep precisely entails failing to have experiences, whether sensuous or not (Voltolini 2016). If one takes that falling asleep, or even being in a coma, as forms of soft depth, one may find in this reflections an echo of what Wittgenstein held in the *Tractatus* when claiming “Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death” (Wittgenstein 1961: 6.4311).

⁹ For, as we will see below, Descartes appealed to the epistemic mark of the mental of being incorrigible, while, as we just saw, Husserl appealed to a criterion resorting to different modes of awareness of the mental and of the physical respectively.

¹⁰ Husserl would have specified that *Erlebnisse* are lived experiences. Yet since there can be lives that are not experienced but there cannot be experiences that are not lived, as we will soon see by recalling Wittgenstein’s position on this concern in the *Tractatus*, as regards *Erlebnisse* “lived” can be dropped.

¹¹ Some (cf. Kriegel 2015) also allow for an emotional form of phenomenology. Yet for the purposes of this paper let me put this point aside.

Granted, by defending cognitive phenomenology one is not forced to also defend the idea of *phenomenal intentionality*, i.e., the idea that intentionality has (either directly or indirectly) a sort of phenomenal nature. For this idea is independently problematic. Indeed, it is neither sufficient nor necessary for an intentional state to have a phenomenal nature. For on the one hand, its phenomenal character may be utterly unrelated to its intentionality, while on the other hand, there may be internal intentional states (whether standing—e.g., dispositional beliefs and desires—or occurrent—e.g., the phenomenally unaware forms of perception that any of us entertains, primarily dorsal perception,¹² as well as the phenomenally unaware forms of perception that impaired subjects (e.g., heminegligent subjects) entertain) that are not phenomenal at all (Voltolini 2022).

Yet if one dispenses with phenomenal intentionality, a problem immediately arises for the experientialist account of the mark of the mental: how can one allow for the mentality of the above phenomenally unaware internal intentional states?¹³

Friends of phenomenal intentionality may retort that they have an answer to this problem. For they may claim that phenomenally unaware internal intentional states can be supposed to be mental, since they are ascribed intentionality derivatively on the basic form of intentionality that phenomenally aware states have originally.¹⁴

Yet from what I just said above it turns out that even this claim is ultimately indefensible. If such unaware states possess intentionality, as I think, they possess it just in the same manner as phenomenally aware intentional states. Holding the contrary just improperly conflates the distinction between manners of possessing a property and ways of ascribing it (Searle 1992: 78-82, Voltolini 2022). Now, even if unaware intentional states were ascribed intentionality derivatively—an idea that for me is far from being true—they would not be mental. Sentences and pictures, which are surely ascribed intentionality derivatively, are not mental. So, being ascribed intentionality derivatively does not entail being mental.

If that claim by phenomenal intentionality people is indefensible, I may also dispense with a similar experientialist position by Farkas (2007) that as regards the mark of the mental puts phenomenal intentionality aside, but which also allows for the mentality of phenomenally unaware internal intentional states, by taking them as derivative on phenomenally aware intentional states. Let me first sketch Farkas' position and then see what does not work with it.

¹² Dorsal perception is the kind of perception that is implemented by a process occurring in the dorsal stream leading from the retina to the visual areas of the brain.

¹³ Obviously enough, the problem is strengthened if one also allows for phenomenally unaware internal yet still qualitative states (Marvan and Polak 2017, Coleman 2022), as in the case of alleged phenomenally unaware internal intero/proprioceptions. Granted, it is controversial whether there is anything like a phenomenally unaware internal qualitative state. Some think that this idea is a contradiction in terms (Strawson 2008). But, if it is not a contradiction, then, provided one is able to convincingly explain what a phenomenally unaware yet qualitative state is, the solution I will provide for unaware internal intentional states can be extended to such states as well. Insofar as they are not experiences, they are non-mental as well (possibly, they are merely cerebral states), although they contribute to determine the overall behavior of a subject along with (aware) mental states.

¹⁴ For Mendelovici (2017), occurrent yet phenomenally unaware internal states are not even intentional derivatively on occurrent states possessing phenomenal intentionality. This makes even more obscure how she can defend the idea that such states are mental. Perhaps she is disposed to retract this defense, since for her such states merely possess a certain functional role.

To begin with, according to Farkas, the mark of the mental has a *prima facie* epistemological flavor. For, she says, a state is mental iff it is privilegedly accessed by its bearer. Being a state privilegedly accessed for its bearer does not mean that its self-ascription is incorrigible, as is claimed in the tradition following Descartes' *Meditations*. There definitely are cases in which a bearer is wrong as regards what state she is entertaining, as when a bearer self-ascribes a belief or an emotion she does not have. Instead, it simply means that its bearer has a (defeasible) first-person authority on her states. As Wittgenstein once put it, "If you want to know whom he meant, ask him!" (2009: II, iii, §17).¹⁵

Yet moreover, the explanation Farkas herself provides for this first-person / third-person epistemological asymmetry has to do with a phenomenal feature. A bearer has first-person authority on her states insofar as such states are states *for her*, where this *being for a subject* of a mental state traces back to a *subjective* component of its phenomenal character (Kriegel 2009). So in the end, for Farkas a state is mental iff it is a state for its bearer in that its phenomenal character contains an irreducible for-me component.¹⁶

Furthermore, if the above is the case, for Farkas phenomenally unaware internal states, in particular phenomenally unaware intentional states, can be mental only insofar as they are derivative on states that are felt in that subjective way. For, just as one may derivatively ascribe mental states to (non-human) animals, which, although they may entertain states with a phenomenally subjective component, are unable to be authoritative as regards them, one may derivatively ascribe phenomenally unaware internal states either to oneself or to others.¹⁷

Yet again, it is unclear to me in what sense phenomenally unaware internal states, in particular phenomenally unaware intentional states, can be derivative on phenomenally aware states. For I am unclear in what sense those states can depend for their mentality on phenomenally aware states. Temporally speaking, phenomenally unaware intentional states precede aware ones. Explanatorily speaking, the latter emerge out of the former. Both this precedence and this emergence are taken to hold not only in a Freudian psychology, according to which conscious thoughts and desires are just the tip of an iceberg made of unconscious such states, but also

¹⁵ Apparently, Rorty (1970) defended the Cartesian claim. Yet his position is closer to Farkas' position than one may expect. For first, he draws a distinction between two different kinds of mental items, mental events and mental features, by ascribing incorrigibility only to items of the first kind (actually, the phenomenally aware occurrent states) and second, by "incorrigibility" he means something very similar to privileged access. According to Textor (2017: 34-36), moreover, one may also take the aforementioned criterion iii) of inner perception as an epistemic criterion. So taken, however, one must see whether it really differs from either Farkas' or Descartes' criterion. As Textor himself (2017: 33) stresses, there is a further way to defend the Cartesian incorrigibility criterion; namely, Ryle's (1949: 152) appeal to the *self-intimacy* of mental states: if one entertains a mental state, one *eo ipso* knows that one is entertaining that state. Now, since inner perception is factive, it is a kind of self-knowledge. Thus, self-intimacy applies to it. Hence, in appealing to inner perception, the criterion iii) epistemically meant may collapse onto Descartes' criterion. The same problem arises with Tartaglia's (2008) criterion, appealing to introspection. For, as Tartaglia himself acknowledges, introspection can be cashed out either in terms of inner perception or in terms of privileged access.

¹⁶ Likewise for Tartaglia (2008: 341), introspection is ultimately based on the fact that the introspector *occupies* a certain mental state.

¹⁷ Likewise, Tartaglia (2008: 342) claims that non-introspectable states are mental since they substantially resemble introspectable mental states.

in ordinary cognitive psychology, according to which the relevant aware intentional states arise out of subpersonal unaware processes. Consider not only perception, in which, as many people following Marr (1982) say, the conscious percept is the last step in a process that begins unconsciously by opportunely elaborating proximal stimuli (e.g., the retinal images), but also the ‘tip of the tongue’ thoughts (TOT thoughts), which are phenomenally aware states popping up out of an unconscious process of retrieving information (Calabi 2016).

If all this is the case, for me it is better to be more radical and deny mentality to phenomenally unaware internal intentional states. If the mark of the mental is *being an experience*, things that are not experiences do fall out of the realm of the mental, in line with Brentano’s original stance (Kriegel 2018). Hence, as Strawson (2008) originally maintained, I may also claim that internal intentional states which are not experiences are non-mental as well.¹⁸

4. Objections and Replies

Granted, the idea that *being an experience* is the mark of the mental may sound problematic. However, since, as we have seen before, intentionality is not even a sufficient condition in order for something to be mental, there preliminarily is no problem in having phenomenally unaware internal states that are intentional but that are not mental. The real problem is another, as we will immediately see.

To begin with, as Brentano himself originally stressed (Kriegel 2018), phenomenally aware intentional states are not the only states that can be invoked in order to explain the psychology of the subjects entertaining them. For how could those intentional states exclusively manage to explain the extremely rich and fine-grained behavior that such subjects commit themselves to (Clark and Chalmers 1998)? Even without resorting to Freudian psychology, there is plenty of evidence that, sometimes at least, one’s behavior is also determined by one’s phenomenally unaware internal intentional states. Starting from animals, first, dogs can recognize illusory triangles amodally completed, such as the Kanizsa one, in order for them to get food (Looke et al. 2001). Impaired subjects, second, exhibit the same behavioral patterns as non-impaired subjects. As regards a case that was found by Marshall and Halligan (1988), if hemineglect subjects see two pictures of what actually is the very same house, while only the second picture depicts the left-hand side of that house as burning, those subjects say that they see no difference between the two pictures. So, their phenomenally aware perceptions of what is depicted in such pictures are pretty much the same. Yet if they are asked to say in which house depicted in those pictures they would like to live, they say the one depicted in the first picture, the safe one, just as normally sighted people would say. So, their phenomenally unaware perceptions of the two depicted houses differ, by prompting such subjects to have different reactions as regards such houses. Third, even normal subjects display forms of behavior that are determined by phenomenally unaware internal intentional states as well. For example, one’s

¹⁸ For Strawson (1994), their being non-mental shows that such states are not even intentional. But for him this way of putting things depends on the fact that he takes intentionality to be *phenomenal* intentionality. Moreover, my non-mentality claim as regards internal intentional states utterly departs from Brentano. For, since he believed both that intentionality is the mark of the mental and that there are no mental states that are not experiences, Brentano could not have allowed for internal intentional states that are not experiences. Cf. Antonelli 2022.

appropriate grip of optically illusory objects, such as those shown by the Titchener illusion, is not determined by the phenomenally aware ventral¹⁹ illusory perception of such objects, in which the relevant inner round bodies are non-veridically seen as having different sizes, but by the phenomenally unaware dorsal yet veridical perception of such objects (Aglioti et al. 1995).

Yet moreover, now comes the problem. If phenomenally unaware internal intentional states are not mental, how can they contribute to explain the psychology of the subjects entertaining them? Intuitively speaking, one would say, one's behavior requires *mental* determinants (beliefs, desires, intentions ...), whether aware or not. Quite likely, this problem leads Kriegel (2018) to claim that *being an experience*, which as we have seen he cashes out in the Brentanian terms of being innerly perceived, only fixes reference to what *being mental* amounts to. Indeed for him, that characteristic enables one to merely point to the paradigmatic cases of mental states, i.e., the mental states that are experiences, since for him mental states that are not experiences are only the non-paradigmatic mental states that however bear some important resemblances to the former mental states.

To this problem, a defender of the experientialist account might immediately reply that phenomenally unaware internal intentional states can be appealed to only as the causal grounds of a subject's psychological continuity, just as the deterioration of a factory's machinery explains why all cars of that factory that are produced via the employment of that machinery have the same causal history (Gertler 2007).

But this reply is unsatisfactory as it stands. If phenomenally unaware internal intentional states were the mere inputs of a series of phenomenally aware intentional states causally united by that source, their contribution to the explanation of a subject's psychology could easily be screened off, just as in cases one may appeal to in the context of a causal theory of perception. In such cases, one's phenomenally aware perceptual state may, but not must, be prompted by the presence of a worldly object as an external input. As Putnam (1981) 'brain-in-a-vat' thought experiment is indeed supposed to show, even a phenomenally indistinguishable hallucination generated in an utterly different way, hence not by that external input, would have the same impact on one's behavior. But, say, Oedipus' phenomenally unaware internal craving for his mother is not the mere input of the psychological story that led him to murder his father first and marry his mother second. Quite to the contrary, the motivational force of that craving keeps its power throughout his whole story, as Freudians believe.

So, one needs a different solution of the above problem. For me, the fact that mental states *qua* phenomenally aware states are necessary but not sufficient in order for one's behavior, or action, to be explained, does not mean that other mental states that are not experiences are necessary as well. Instead, one may take a subject's piece of behavior, or action, as being also determined by a cluster of internal states, although all of them are not mental. Hence, that piece of behavior, or action, may be determined both by phenomenally aware states, which are mental states (some of which are intentional), and by phenomenally unaware internal intentional states, which are not mental states according to the experientialist criterion. As we will now see, this result can be obtained both in the context of a Davidson-like framework in which one conceives that determination in causal

¹⁹ Ventral perception is the kind of perception that is implemented by a process occurring in the ventral stream leading from the retina to the visual areas of the brain.

terms and in the context of a Wittgenstein-like framework in which one conceives that determination in rational terms.

On the one hand, consider a causal explanation of behavior in terms of both (phenomenally aware) mental states and non-mental factors. Suppose that, by virtue of seeing a frightening situation, one is so emotionally shocked that one's digestion gets blocked. In its own turn, this digestion's block prompts one to have, via the stomach-induced activation of the relevant neural circuits, a terrifying hallucination that, along with the unaware internal belief that the hallucinated (non-existent) object is dangerous, leads one to flee away. In this case, it would be natural to causally account for one's piece of behavior both in terms of phenomenally aware intentional factors, such as one's emotion and one's hallucination, and in terms of phenomenally unaware internal factors, whether merely biological—the digestion's block, the activation of the neural areas responsible for one's hallucination—or intentional—the phenomenally unaware internal belief that the hallucinated object is dangerous. Since *pace* Aristotle (Farkas 2007) no-one presently doubts that a digestion process is non-mental, and so is the relevant activation of the neural circuits, there seems to be no reason as to why one should not take the above phenomenally unaware internal belief as being non-mental as well, although both that process and that activation as well as that belief are causally responsible, along with other properly mental states such as those phenomenally conscious emotion and hallucination, for one's escaping form of behavior.

On the other hand, consider a rational explanation of behavior in terms of both (phenomenally aware) mental states and non-mental factors. Suppose that one is going to learn a new mathematical theorem, which however is so complicated that, along with one's phenomenally unaware and yet unfulfilled internal intentional state of desire to be the best mathematician in the world, ultimately makes one so frustrated as to close the book displaying the theorem's demonstration. One's final action—one's closure of the book—is justified both by phenomenally aware intentional factors—one's apprehending the theorem, one's emotional frustration—and by phenomenally unaware factors—the content of the theorem, the phenomenally unaware internal desire to be the best mathematician in the world. Since the content's theorem, *qua* abstract object (say, a set of propositions), definitely is not a mental state, there seems to be no reason as to why one should not take the phenomenally unaware internal desire as being non-mental as well, although both can be appealed to, along with the above phenomenally aware states, in order to rationally justify one's final action.²⁰

Thus, it seems that nothing theoretically prevents an internal intentional, yet phenomenally unaware, state from entering because of its intentionality either in a causal or in a rational explanation either of one's piece of behavior or of one's action. Hence, one may dispense with the main reason against my idea of ruling out of the realm of the mental phenomenally unaware internal intentional states.

This stance is independent of whether one takes internal intentional states that are not experiences either as a species of a common kind of states of which mental states that are experiences are another species, or as states of a kind that

²⁰ Suppose that one also accepts that one's piece of behavior can *inter alia* be rationally justified by fictional characters, as when one is moved by Anna Karenina's fate. Since a fictional character definitely is not a mental state but plausibly an abstract artefact, one may see that piece of behavior as being *inter alia* rationalized by something non-mental as well. For such an option on *ficta*, cf. Thomasson 1999 and Voltolini 2006.

differs from the kind the latter mental states instantiate. For example, Coleman (2022) holds that both conscious and unconscious beliefs are states of the same kind, i.e., beliefs *tout court*, while Crane (2013) instead holds that conscious beliefs and unconscious doxastic dispositions are states of a different kind: the latter are not beliefs, but mere dispositions to believe. Granted, if one takes the first option, one must consider *being mental* aka *being an experience* as a non-essential property of a unique kind of states, just as *being attended to* or *being intense*. This is not problematic in itself. To stick to a different example, *being human* is a genus under which both Italians and Japanese fall, yet *gesticulating* is a non-essential property of that genus that affects the former but not the latter people. Yet one may take the second option as preferable, since the former makes *being mental* aka *being an experience* an utterly epiphenomenal feature of the states it applies to qua experiences: if both an intentional state that is an experience and an internal intentional state that is not an experience are states of the same kind, they seem to share their causal/motivational force independently of whether they are experiences. Granted, in some cases this epiphenomenality seems to be acceptable. In the case of the heminegligent people described before, their visual states seem to have the same causal/motivational force, independently of whether they are experiences. Yet in other cases it seems less acceptable. To stick again to Oedipus (provided that the Freudian account of his story is plausible), his earlier unaware dispositional belief that Jocasta is the same as Mummy and his later aware realization of that very sameness obviously have different behavioral consequences.

Yet at this point one may still wonder whether the above considerations really force one to endorse an experientialist account of the mark of the mental. Indeed, Coleman (2022) proposes a possible alternative conception; namely, to take *being qualitative* as such a mark, by splitting the qualitativity of a mental state from its aware phenomenality, which is for him a non-essential feature of that state, as we just saw.

However, in order to better appreciate this proposal, one must assess what *being qualitative* so meant really amounts to. In this respect, Coleman (ib.) further suggests to consider *being qualitative* as being either an intrinsic feature of a mental state, or a functional feature of it (along the lines of Rosenthal 2005). Yet neither suggestion seems to work. As regards the first suggestion, on the one hand, remember that sensuous and non-sensuous (i.e., cognitive) phenomenology are two species of *being an experience*, qua their common genus. Yet it is unclear whether there is an intrinsic feature, prior to both *being phenomenally sensuously aware* and *being phenomenally non-sensuously aware*, to be taken as a genuine common feature underlying both sensuous and non-sensuous phenomenally aware mental states. In actual fact, the intrinsic qualities respectively grounding the first and the second form of phenomenal awareness seem to be no more than heterogenous kinds of cerebral properties. The fact that different parts yet of the same bodily organ, i.e., the brain, are involved in the cerebral processes respectively responsible of such groundings obviously provides no guarantee that those processes are processes of the same kind. As regards the second suggestion, on the other hand, *being functional* turns out to be a too generic feature in order to single out mental states from other states still endowed with a functional role. Granted, Coleman may try to circumvent this second objection by saying that the functional roles of the former states are roles *of a certain kind*. Yet he would then risk that the individuation of that kind did circularly rely on certain mental features.

All in all, therefore, one may go on sticking to the idea that the mark of the mental is being an experience, thereby preserving *being mental* as a genuine category.²¹

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