

SYMPOSIUM

## Reply to Symposiasts

Uriah Kriegel<sup>(α)</sup>

AS I NOTED IN THE *Précis* of my book,<sup>1</sup> the book argues for four irreducible types of phenomenology at the same level of abstraction as the more widely recognized types associated with perceptual experience and pleasure/pain. These may be referred to as: cognitive phenomenology (Chap. 1), conative phenomenology (Chap. 2), contemplative phenomenology (Chap. 3), and imaginative phenomenology (Chap. 6). By marvelous happenstance, the symposiasts have spontaneously divided their critical labor to target each of those: Sacchi & Voltolini target cognitive phenomenology (but their discussion is also relevant to contemplative phenomenology), Shepherd targets conative phenomenology, and Kind targets imaginative phenomenology. I take up their criticisms in the order in which the topics come up in the book.

Before starting, though, a word is due on Gozzano's discussion of the methodological underpinnings of the project in the book's introduction.<sup>2</sup> Gozzano's main complaint is that I treat phenomenology as though it enjoys a kind of introspection-independent existence. I agree that I do, but I am also willing to stand by this: on my view, sometimes phenomenology goes unintrospected, and sometimes it is introspected as having certain properties it does not in fact have and/or as lacking prop-

erties it does in fact have. At the same time, I am sympathetic with Gozzano's underlying thought that phenomenology does not have an existence independent of our awareness of it. To make this consistent, I distinguish between introspective and non-introspective inner awareness. The former is attentive, focal awareness of one's own phenomenology, the latter is nonattentive, peripheral awareness of it. In *Varieties*, I do not develop this distinction, but see Chap. 5 of my book *Subjective Consciousness*<sup>3</sup> for a lengthy discussion.



Sacchi & Voltolini<sup>4</sup> offer three main contributions regarding my discussion of irreducible cognitive phenomenology. First, they present an objection to my subsidiary (proto-)argument for such a phenomenology, the "life would be boring" argument. Secondly, they point out a limitation of my main argument for it, the Zoe argument. Thirdly, they present a new argument intended to overcome that very limitation, thus producing a dialectically stronger argument for a sui generis cognitive phenomenology. I address each point in turn. (For background on the "life would be boring" and Zoe arguments, see the *Précis*).

Regarding the proto-argument, Sacchi & Voltolini have convinced me that indeed it

<sup>(α)</sup>Institut Jean Nicod, UMR 8129 Pavillon Jardin, Ecole Normale Supérieure 29, rue d'Ulm - 75005 Paris (F)

E-mail: theuriah@gmail.com (✉)



does not work as it stands. It may succeed in showing that a conscious life consisting only of perceptual phenomenology would be boring, which would then contrast with our own conscious life, which is not (not always, at any rate!). However, to establish the existence of a *sui generis* cognitive phenomenology, the argument would have to claim that a conscious life exhausted by perceptual *and algedonic* phenomenology would be boring. This is far from obvious, however, given the great interest that might attach to a life of sufficiently intense (quantitatively) and sufficiently varied (qualitatively) pleasures.

Nonetheless, I wonder if the argument could be tweaked to accommodate this consideration. Imagine a philosopher, call him Kant\*, whose life is characterized by a certain sensory-algedonic virginity: he partakes in no sexual, gastronomic, or other sensory pleasures of any notable vivacity. Yet, he works out in his furious mind a three-critique system that provides a unified, harmonious, compelling, and to some definitive grand theory of the true, the good, and the beautiful. I think we could still argue as follows: Kant\*'s inner life is highly interesting, but it would be of very little interest if it were exhausted by the phenomenology of his perceptual and algedonic experiences.

Regarding the Zoe argument, Sacchi & Voltolini point out that the argument would be rationally probing only if it could establish the *metaphysical* possibility of a subject like Zoe (i.e., a subject lacking any sensory phenomenology but for whose inner life an explanatory gap presents itself). As I confess in the book, though, all I establish is her *epistemic* possibility; while the latter provides *defeasible evidence* of metaphysical possibility, it would be quite a task to rule out all viable defeaters of that evidence. And until all such defeaters *have* been ruled out, the argument is not as probing as one might wish. This criticism too I accept whole-heartedly: it would certainly be dialectically better to have in one's pocket a Zoe-style argument where the protagonist's metaphysical possibility is established to everybody's satisfaction – something that is

certainly not the case with *my* Zoe argument.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps Sacchi & Voltolini's main goal in their piece is to provide an *alternative* to the Zoe argument, which they call the Vita argument. Being an inveterate insomniac, Vita places herself every night very carefully in her bed, shuts down all sensory stimulation and uses self-calming techniques to suppress any notable emotional or mood phenomenology. At some point, all that remains in her conscious life is her *thought process*. Imagine now that Vita's world branches into two possible worlds. In both worlds, she experiences visual imagery of a generic, bearded, toga-clad man and auditory imagery of the words "Dionysius is Greek" in silent speech. However, in  $W_1$  her conscious thought concerns Dionysius the Elder, whereas in  $W_2$  it concerns Dionysius the Younger. That is, a different *proposition* is present before her mind in each world. Intuitively, the phenomenology of Vita's overall state of consciousness in  $W_1$  and in  $W_2$  is different – and the best explanation of this difference is that a certain irreducibly cognitive phenomenology involved in grasping the relevant proposition accounts for it.

I find the Vita argument ingenious and welcome it heartily into the cognitive-phenomenologist's arsenal. In particular, the branching scenario is effective in neutralizing certain distractors that may attend previous contrast arguments for cognitive phenomenology (notably Strawson's).<sup>6</sup> I also note that – conveniently, from my perspective – the argument could be run either as an argument for *cognitive* phenomenology or as an argument for a *contemplative* one, depending on whether we conceive of Vita's thoughts in  $W_1$  and  $W_2$  as states of *judging*, or as states of merely *entertaining*, that Dionysius the Elder/Younger is Greek. As such, I suspect that it does have greater dialectical force than the Zoe argument. At the same time (and I mean this as the minor point it sounds like!), I am not entirely sure it bears a categorically different kind of dialectical force than with the Zoe argument. A cognitive-phenomenology skeptic might suggest that if Vita really has

the very same feelings about, and sensory impressions associated with, Dionysius the Elder and Dionysius the Younger, then in fact there is *no phenomenal difference* between her thought episodes in  $W_1$  and in  $W_2$ . I would personally reject the skeptic's assessment, but presumably something would have to be said to make this kind of interpretation seem less plausible – just as something must be said to rule out potential defeaters of the defeasible evidence Zoe's case provides. In other words, the skeptic's opposition shows, I think, that while Sacchi & Voltolini have successfully portrayed an epistemic possibility in which two subjects are (i) phenomenally indistinguishable in every non-cognitive respect but (ii) phenomenally distinguishable overall, the *metaphysical* possibility of the scenario can still come under attack. (At one point, Sacchi & Voltolini suggest that Vita's metaphysical possibility is undeniable, because insomniacs are *actual*. But Vita's existence is insufficient to establish the irreducibility of cognitive phenomenology. The claim that her overall phenomenology is different in  $W_1$  and  $W_2$  is needed as well – and that is not a claim *only* about the actual world).

At bottom, I very much doubt that a *demonstrative argument* for sui generis cognitive phenomenology is available. What the friend of cognitive phenomenology should hope for is to produce *overwhelming evidence* for such a phenomenology. The way to do so is to collect all the non-demonstrative arguments (premises each of which rationally invites at least 50% credence) for it. I would suggest that there is a place for both the Zoe and Vita arguments in that collection.



Like Sacchi & Voltolini with respect to cognitive phenomenology, Shepherd<sup>7</sup> is happy to grant me the phenomenal irreducibility of *conative* phenomenology. Sacchi & Voltolini were dissatisfied with my *case* for the irreducible phenomenology; Shepherd is critical of my *characterization* of conative phe-

nomenology as an evaluative phenomenology whose paradigmatic manifestation is the experience of deciding-and-then-trying. He rejects both the evaluativist take on conative phenomenology and my characterization of the paradigmatic conative experience as deciding-cum-trying.

Shepherd's first target is the claim that conative phenomenology is essentially evaluative. For Shepherd, certain experiences of relevance, such as the experience of trying to  $\phi$ , have no trace of evaluating their intentional objects. They merely command the execution of  $\phi$ , without commenting on the value of doing so. Perhaps deciding to  $\phi$  is evaluative, but once the subject has decided to  $\phi$ , that is her goal and now she is trying to achieve that goal. The trying experience is in itself silent on the question of whether the goal is good or bad – that has been the concern of the deciding experience. The mandate of the trying is merely to carry out the decision, regardless of any evaluation. In terms of my labeling of the proprietary attitudinal property characteristic of conative phenomenology, then, Shepherd claims that trying does not present-as-good, or -as-right, but rather presents-as-to-be-done. We may put this – and Shepherd does – by saying that the experience of trying is imperative rather than evaluative.

Shepherd's picture makes perfect sense, but only against the background of the assumption that the experiences of deciding and trying are two distinct experiences that “combine” together into a complex of deciding-plus-trying. But the way I put it in the book, the experiences of deciding and trying are more like two sides of a single experience. A “decision” that were cut off from any pull toward implementation would be no decision at all – it is built into the very notion of decision that deciding implies commitment to implementation. This is what distinguishes, I claim in the book, the categorical pull to action of decision from the hypothetical pull to action characteristic of desire, say. One can desire to  $\phi$  and experience no temptation to actually go ahead and  $\psi$ , because one desires

to  $\psi$  even more (and  $\phi$ -ing is incompatible with  $\psi$ -ing). In desiring to  $\phi$ , one is merely committed to acting on one's desire *pending overriding desires*; the pull to action is in that sense hypothetical. But deciding to  $\phi$  is different: to decide to  $\phi$  just is to commit oneself to implementing  $\phi$ -ing in action, therefore to trying to  $\phi$ . If I am right about this, then trying and deciding are just two aspects of a single, unitary conscious state, which I call deciding-cum-trying, that must therefore exhibit a single kind of characteristic attitudinal property. I claim that this property is presenting-as-right, a species of presenting-as-good (in the most generic sense of "good").

Unsurprisingly, against this background, Shepherd rejects this conception of the relationship between deciding and trying. This is the second aspect of my characterization of conative phenomenology he finds problematic. According to him, my claim that decision inherently implicates the initiation of implementation in action can be shown to be misguided when we consider a distinction, which I fail to draw in the book, between two kinds of decision: proximal and distal. Deciding to clench one's fist is an example of a proximal decision, but deciding to start training for a marathon as soon as your child goes to college in four years is a distal decision. Such distal decisions, claims Shepherd, are inherently disconnected from any implementation or execution. There is nothing for you to do, once you have taken the decision, but wait for your child to go to college. And yet, claims Shepherd, the conative phenomenology of proximal and distal deciding is as such indistinguishable. It follows that while proximal decisions are reliably associated with a felt implementational pull, such a pull is not *constitutive* of the phenomenology of *any* decision.

I want to start my response by conceding that it was a phenomenological oversight on my part to miss the distinction between proximal and distal decisions. But I also want to make a certain observation and then consider three possible responses to Shepherd's objection it might inspire. The observation is

this: typically, when we announce to ourselves that we shall do such-and-such at some (perhaps specified) time in the future, the announcement is accompanied by a certain feeling of uncertainty. Consider Sam, who on the ides of December makes a New Year resolution to stop smoking as soon as the new year takes effect. I submit that if Sam is a typical person, there would be a glimmer of uncertainty nesting within her, if ever so faintly, during the rest of December. Only as she avoids smoking on January 1st, then on January 2nd, and so on does this feeling start to slowly dissipate.

What are we to make of this feeling? What is Sam uncertain about? One answer is: that she has really fully committed to quitting smoking. One way to understand this answer is as saying that Sam's New Year resolution is not a full-blown decision during the second half of December. It graduates to the status of full-blown decision only in January. (Another answer is that Sam is sure she has made a decision, she is just unsure she will stick to it. But is such a decision, one the agent is unsure of executing, really a full-blown decision? This seems a bit like making a promise to wash the dishes but adding the caveat that one is only 95% sure of making good on it – not really a full-blown promise!). If this is right, then while we can recognize the psychological reality of distal decisions, we should cast them as second-class decisions. We are then free to insist that as far as first-class decisions are concerned, the constitutive link to implementation remains.

It might be thought that while this treatment will suit some distal decisions, others are surely going to be full-blown decisions yet cut off from implementation. Perhaps. Still, because of this cloud hovering over the status of distal decisions as full-blown, there is a sense in which they do not overwhelm us phenomenologically as paradigmatic exercises of the will. This may inspire a second and more moderate response to Shepherd's objection: to simply retreat from the claim that deciding-cum-trying is the paradigmatic con-

tive experience, not to the claim that simple deciding is, however, but to the claim that *proximal*-deciding-cum-trying is the paradigmatic conative experience. It follows that the paradigmatic conative experience remains the kind of decision-experience characterized by its constitutively requiring an implementational complement.

A third response in the same spirit would suggest that, just as we recognize in the cognitive domain not only the binary notion belief, but also the gradient notion of credence, so we should recognize in the conative domain not only the binary notion of decision, but also a gradient conative analogue of credence; we may call it *conatence*. The claim we would retreat to then is this: states of high conatence require the implementational complement, though states of sufficiently low conatence may not. The latter may still be classified as decisions by folk psychology, but this should not blind us to the fact that the purer manifestations of the will, in the form of high-conatence states, do feature a constitutive link to trying as implementational complement.



Amy Kind<sup>8</sup> is also sympathetic to the notion that imagination may exhibit an irreducible type of phenomenology, different *in kind* from that of perception. But she objects to my particular account of the kind-difference between the two as pertaining to the attitudinal properties of presenting-as-existent (characteristic of perception) and presenting-as-nonexistent (characteristic of imagination). Her chief objection is this. Suppose you sit on your balcony in Naples and visualize Paganini's violin in Palazzo Tursi in Genoa. If your visualization presents-as-nonexistent the violin, then given that the violin does exist, your visualization is in some sense *incorrect*. But if it makes sense at all to attribute correctness or incorrectness to imaginative experiences, imagining Paganini's violin in Palazzo Tursi, where it really is, should be considered correct!

I accept that this consideration essentially

refutes the view that the characteristic feature of imaginative experience is that it presents-as-nonexistent. There are two options for modifying the suggestion, however, in a way that protects the basic idea.

One of them Kind anticipates: it is the idea that, as she puts it, while perceptual experience presents-as-before-the-senses its object, imaginative experience presents-as-*not*-before-the-senses its object. My inclination is to put the idea by saying that imagination presents-as-not-existing-here-and-now. (The "here" part corresponds to "before the senses", but the "now" part adds something – something that captures a certain temporal dimension of perceptual phenomenology).<sup>9</sup> Kind presents two objections to this new view.

The first is that we can also visualize things that are before our eyes, as when I visualize how it would look if I moved the flower pot an inch to the left. Perhaps this charge can be avoided by construing "here" so strictly that an inch to the left would no longer qualify. It would certainly not be easy to produce a principled account of this kind of "here", but if it could be done the resulting account would be extensionally adequate. For the only thing it would insist on is the impossibility of visualizing something to be exactly where you can see it actually is. And this indeed seems impossible.<sup>10</sup> (Try it! Look at some object around you and try to *visualize* it to be *exactly* there. Perhaps you can visualize it to be *almost* there, and perhaps you can imagine *that* it is exactly there, but you cannot visualize it to be exactly there).

Kind's second objection bears some similarity to the paradox of fiction (Radford 1975)<sup>11</sup> but goes beyond it. It can be put as the following argument: (1) imaginative experiences can trigger genuine emotions; (2) genuine emotions involve belief in the reality of their objects; (3) experiences that present-as-not-existing-here-and-now their objects cannot trigger mental states that involve belief in the reality of their objects; therefore, (4) imaginative experiences do *not* present-as-not-existing-here-and-now their objects. I

accept that this argument has force, but note that discussants of the paradox of fiction have been willing to deny either of the first two premises. Walton,<sup>12</sup> for example, denies that the kind of imaginative experiences we have in engaging with fiction trigger genuine emotion, while Lamarque<sup>13</sup> denies that emotions necessarily involve beliefs in the reality of their objects. In addition, the third premise is eminently deniable, given that it is a causal rather than constitutive claim: who knows what kinds of causal connections may exist between mental states? Consider the so-called power of suggestion: repeatedly saying that mayoral candidate Jimmy is not a cocaine addict is the surest way to create in voters' mind a tight association between Jimmy and cocaine addiction that effectively results in their believing that Jimmy is a cocaine addict. It is hard to rule out from the armchair that experiences presenting-as-not-existing-here-and-now something can trigger beliefs in that thing's reality (especially the kind of sub-rational beliefs allegedly implicated in emotions).

All said and done, however, defending the "here-and-now" view in the face of Kind's two objections would be a tough task. The other option is to suggest that imaginative experiences *merely-present* in the sensory domain analogously to the way entertaining and contemplating merely-present in the nonsensory domain. In the book I air this view for a subset of imaginative experiences, but given Kind's forceful argumentation, I am now inclined to propose this as the right view for *all* imaginative experiences: all of them are characterized essentially by their sensory mere-presentation of their objects.

Crucially, experiences that merely-present do not have correctness conditions, since there is no F such that these experiences are supposed to be had only in the presence of an F. No incorrectness attaches, for instance, to the act of entertaining the proposition that the moon is made of cheese. By the same token, there is nothing wrong about *imagining* cheese-textured moon. It is neither correct

nor incorrect – it is what it is.

Likewise, there is no *normative* difference between imagining Paganini's violin hanging in the Palazzo Tursi and imagining it hanging in my grandmother's attic. Qua imaginings, they are equally good specimens. This suggests that imagining *x* is characterized attitudinally by its (sensory brand of) merely-presenting *x*.



My conclusion is this: my book would have been far better had it been published *after* this symposium! It would have been better if it had incorporated something like the Vita argument; better if it had taken into account the distinction between proximal and distal decisions; better if it had developed an account of all imaginative experience as involving essentially sensory mere-presentation. At the same time, I note with satisfaction that the commentaries by Sacchi & Voltolini, Shepherd, and Kind are entirely consistent with a picture of phenomenal consciousness as involving six second-layer phenomenal primitives arranged along two axes: the sensory/nonsensory axis and the present-as-true/present-as-good/merely-present axis. It is this sixfold classification of the primitive phenomenal properties at the highest level of abstraction that I was most concerned to develop and defend in *The Varieties of Consciousness*.

## Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the French National Research Agency's grants ANR-11-0001-02 PSL\* and ANR-10-LABX-0087. I have benefited from a valuable discussion at LMU in Munich and would like to thank in particular Tobias Bauer, Gregor Bös, Christopher Erhard, Anna Faix, and Doris Lütgenau.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See U. KRIEGL, *Précis of The Varieties of Consciousness*, in: «Rivista internazionale di Filosofia

e Psicologia», vol. VII, n. 2, 2016, pp. 240-246.

<sup>2</sup> See S. GOZZANO, *Conscious Primitives and Their Reality*, in: «Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia», vol. VII, n. 2, 2016, pp. 247-255.

<sup>3</sup> See U. KRIEGEL, *Subjective Consciousness: A Self-Representational Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009.

<sup>4</sup> See E. SACCHI, A. VOLTOLINI, *Another Argument for Cognitive Phenomenology*, in: «Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia», vol. VII, n. 2, 2016, pp. 256-263.

<sup>5</sup> See D. STOLJAR, *Review of U. Kriegel, The Varieties of Consciousness*, in: «Journal of Philosophy», vol. CXII, n. 12, 2015, pp. 678-682.

<sup>6</sup> See G. STRAWSON, *Mental Reality*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1994.

<sup>7</sup> See J. SHEPHERD, *Kriegel on the Phenomenology of Action*, in: «Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psi-

cologia», vol. VII, n. 2, 2016, pp. 264-272.

<sup>8</sup> See A. KIND, *Imaginative Phenomenology and Existential Status*, in: «Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia», vol. VII, n. 2, 2016, pp. 273-278.

<sup>9</sup> See U. KRIEGEL, *Experiencing the Present*, in: «Analysis», vol. LXXV, n. 3, 2015, pp. 407-413.

<sup>10</sup> See L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Zettel*, edited by E. ANSCOMBE, G.H. VON WRIGHT, California University Press, Berkeley (CA) 1967, § 621.

<sup>11</sup> See C. RADFORD, *How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?*, in: «Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society», vol. XLIX, Supplement, 1975, pp. 67-80.

<sup>12</sup> See K. WALTON, *Fearing Fictions*, in: «Journal of Philosophy», vol. LXXV, n. 1, 1978 pp. 5-27.

<sup>13</sup> See P. LAMARQUE, *How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?*, in: «British Journal of Aesthetics», vol. XXI, n. 4, 1981, pp. 291-304.