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INTENTIONALITY, QUALIA, AND THE STREAM OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS¹

abstract

According to Brentano, mentality is essentially intentional in nature. Other philosophers have emphasized the phenomenal-qualitative aspect of conscious experiences as core to the mind. A recent philosophical wave – the ‘phenomenal intentionality programme’ – seeks to unite these conceptions in the idea that mental content is grounded in phenomenal qualities. However, a philosophical and scientific current, which includes Freud and contemporary cognitive science, makes widespread use of the posit of unconscious mentality/mental content. I aim to reconcile these disparate, influential strands of thought concerning mentality’s essence, by defending a conception of the mark of the mental as consisting in content-carrying qualitative character (or mental qualities) – but understood as properties that can exist both in conscious (i.e. phenomenal) form and unconsciously. I describe this conception, deal with major historical objections to the notions of unconscious qualitative character and mentality, and explain the virtues of construing the mark of the mental in this way.

keywords

Intentionality; Mental content; Consciousness; Qualia; Mental qualities; Unconscious mental content; Phenomenal intentionality; Freud; Brentano

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0. Introduction Brentano claims that intentionality is mentality's mark. Other philosophers say mind's 'essence' lies instead in phenomenal-qualitative character, or qualia.¹ Elsewhere, proponents of 'phenomenal intentionality theory' (PIT) promise to reconcile these conceptions by arguing that intentionality is grounded in phenomenal-qualitative character. PIT proponents claim that positing such 'phenomenal intentionality' solves longstanding difficulties afflicting accounts of mental content (Strawson, 1994; Mendelovici, 2018; Kriegel, 2011). Setting this consideration aside, what PIT evidently has in its favour regarding the quest for the mark of the mental is its capacity to do justice to the Brentanians as well as the friends of phenomenal-qualitative-character-qua-essentially-mental. Unification is a powerful theoretical driver.

But then along comes Freud, and in his wake the leviathan of modern cognitive science, with the powerful denial that mentality is exclusively conscious. According to Freud and the scientific program he inspired, much mental-contentful activity in fact occurs below the threshold of consciousness. To explain action, Freud urges, we need more than the incomplete chains of mental-contentful processes which consciousness reveals: *unconscious* mental-contentful processes are posited to complete the story.

If one agreed with Brentano about intentionality as mentality's essence, and with PIT that intentionality is based in phenomenal-qualitative character or qualia,² acknowledging Freud's insight might naturally lead one to infer that phenomenal qualities, the mental content bearers, must also be capable of unconscious existence, and indeed that much of mental life consists of processes involving such unconscious mental qualities or 'unconscious qualia', as we could, courting paradox, call them.

In effect, one would be swayed by this argument:

1 This conception of mind arguably has its roots in Descartes. Qualitative character, or qualia, are often taken as *grounding* phenomenal character, hence these notions are, arguably, strictly non-equivalent. However, sometimes 'phenomenal character' is used in such a way as to refer to qualitative character. I will ultimately advance a view on which the phenomenal, i.e. phenomenally conscious, and the qualitative aspect of a phenomenal state can come apart, hence my use of the term 'phenomenal-qualitative character'. Many philosophers further see phenomenal states as involving a subjective or 'for-me' aspect (e.g. Kriegel, 2009). I bracket this aspect for present purposes, focusing specifically on qualitative character. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer here.

2 To simplify, I subsume in PIT philosophers who stress phenomenal-qualitative character as quintessentially mental. Naturally, these views can diverge, e.g. if one construes certain sensory qualities as non-intentional.

P1. Mentality is essentially intentional. (Brentano's thesis)

P2. Intentionality is essentially based in phenomenal qualities. (PIT)

P3. Some mentality is unconscious. (Freud's Thesis)

So: The essence of mentality is mental qualities-of-content, which can exist in phenomenally conscious form, but also unconsciously.

Thus, a *Grand Unification* (GU) over mentality's nature would seem to be within reach. Acknowledging the insights of these three camps, we might propose that the mental mark consists in a kind of mental content, or intentionality, carried – or constituted³ – by mental qualities, but mental qualities that can be phenomenally conscious,⁴ or unconscious. Hence they can provide the basis of the Freudian unconscious-mental as much as of conscious mentality.

GU faces just one main obstacle: *All* the concerned parties deny that any such properties are possible. Brentano claims that all intentionality, hence mentality, is conscious. PIT proponents deny that qualitative character, hence mental content – hence, effectively, mentality – can exist unconsciously in any more than a dispositional, i.e. *potential*, sense.⁵ Even Freud, despite acknowledging unconscious mental processes, denies that they resemble the phenomenally conscious processes we recognise as mental quality-involving. As a result, he embraces mysterianism about the unconscious, and a displeasing parallelism regarding the relation of unconscious to conscious mental processes (Wakefield, 2018).

My aim is to clear the road to GU, the thesis that mentality's essence consists in mental qualities-of-content that can exist consciously or unconsciously. To this end, I will examine and rebut the major philosophical arguments against unconscious mental qualities. These arguments flow from different directions, including from Brentano himself, PIT proponents, and others. §1 clarifies the operative notion of unconscious mental qualities. §2 tackles objections to unconscious mental qualities. With this resistance overcome, §3 elaborates the merits of GU.

So far I have used terms like 'phenomenal qualities', 'mental qualities', and 'qualia' without clear distinction, as if they were more or less interchangeable. Of course they are not. It is pretty clear that phenomenal qualities, given the sense of 'phenomenal', are conscious, and so this is not a useful term with which to conduct an investigation into whether any such properties could be unconscious. 'Qualia', though it does not have consciousness as it were ostensibly built-in, is standardly used to refer to consciously experienced mental qualities. And, indeed, many writers do define qualia thus. Do such definitions rule out *unconscious qualia* as an incoherent notion from the start? It would seem not. For one thing, the terminology of qualia is disputed, or disputable: C. I. Lewis introduced qualia as properties of sense-data, and on some views sense-data could exist unconsciously (e.g. Broad, 1919, p. 128). But even if 'qualia' is inseparable from connotations of consciousness, that still leaves the substantive issue open, viz.: whether awareness, or experience, is essential to the distinctive qualitative properties that we, admittedly, know most directly from consciousness. I have reservations about conceding the term 'qualia' to those who claim that qualia are conscious by definition: I do not number this among the harmless stipulations in the world. But, since it is only a term,

1. Unconscious Mental Qualities?

³ Pitt (2004) holds that thought content consists in phenomenal qualities. Other theorists might say content is fixed or determined by, or supervenes on, phenomenal qualities. I bracket this issue.

⁴ Whenever I use the unqualified term 'consciousness' I mean phenomenal consciousness.

⁵ This is signaled by their tendency to refer to mental qualities as *phenomenal* qualities, connoting ineliminable consciousness: I discuss this policy, and related terminological issues, at the start of §1. Some PIT-ers who take this line to its logical extreme explicitly eliminate unconscious mentality (Strawson, 1994; Mendelovici, 2018).

I will talk hereon about *mental qualities*, in a way that leaves open prima facie whether these properties can be conscious and unconscious. What we are interested in, as philosophers, is putative *arguments* that mental qualities, or qualitative character, must be conscious. Whether or not it is legitimate for theorists to coin a term denoting mental qualities that are exclusively conscious, that does not address the deeper issue we wish to confront here.

Nevertheless, given the standard usage of terms like ‘qualia’ and ‘phenomenal qualities’, especially by PIT proponents, it is fair to request clarification about unconscious mental qualities. Just what is the relevant understanding that leaves open whether mental qualities are conscious or not? Answering this request will also help the reader to judge what is at stake, and to assess the efficacy of my responses, regarding the arguments against unconscious mental qualities to be surveyed below.

What are *unconscious mental qualities*? Let us start from conscious mental qualities. Some identify these with ‘intrinsic’ qualitative properties knowable through introspection or ‘acquaintance’. Others identify mental qualities by their functional roles, especially in subjects’ perception/perception-based activities.⁶ I will not adjudicate between these approaches. Indeed, I am inclined to combine them, and say that mental qualities are individuated by functional role, while still only fully knowable in a first-person way, via consciousness of them. But in this paper I will be ecumenical, taking either of the aforementioned aspects as criterial for mental qualities. The thesis of unconscious mental qualities is then that either the ‘intrinsic’ qualitative properties we know from consciousness and introspection can exist when we are consciously unaware of them, i.e. phenomenally unconsciously, or there are unconscious properties with the distinctive functional profiles of conscious mental qualities.⁷ Two images may assist the reader in grasping unconscious mental qualities in more intuitive fashion:

First, naïve realists often take it that colours (which, they say, inhere in external-world surfaces/volumes) can exist just as colourfully when unperceived, e.g. when we close our eyes on a sunset. Mental qualities are naturally taken as internal mental properties, but the analogy with naïve realism otherwise sheds light. One might view internal mental colour qualities as capable of surviving, in full colourful form, the lapse of the subject’s awareness – the closing of the ‘inner-eye’. And what goes for these mental qualities is said by purveyors of unconscious mental qualities to go for others too, such as pains, qualities of thought, if such there be, etc.⁸ Second, Leopold Stubenberg (1998) has distinguished ‘silver-screen’ and ‘celluloid’ conceptions of qualia. Advocates of the former say that mental qualities exclusively appear on the ‘big-screen’ of consciousness. But purveyors of the latter conception imagine mental qualities somewhat like the colours of old-fashioned cinema reel, which are just as colourful when the projector (consciousness) is not illuminating them.

Two specific roles of mental qualities are also worth focusing on. If we can make sense of these being played by unconscious properties that will help us grasp the notion of unconscious mental qualities. First, mental qualities are the primary properties in virtue of which experiences resemble and differ.⁹ If there can be such resemblances among unconscious states,

⁶ See, notably, Rosenthal (2005).

⁷ Bracketing, that is, any functionality due merely to their *being conscious*. For example, perhaps conscious mental qualities are cognitively accessible to the subject more easily, or in special ways, as compared with unconscious mental qualities.

⁸ See Lockwood’s (1989) ‘inner direct realism’ – his view being that consciousness only serves to ‘disclose’ mental qualities that are, or can be, present in the subject’s mind anyway.

⁹ As contrasted with extrinsic resemblances, e.g. time/date. Some cite intentional content as another resemblance respect for mental qualities: but given PIT this collapses into qualitative character-based resemblance.

of which we are by hypothesis unaware, we can say there are unconscious mental qualities. Second, when an experience features mental qualities, they are properties that fix what the experience is like, or what it's like to be aware of the mental state given that we are aware of it. This understanding leaves open the possibility of unconscious mental qualities. It is just not obvious that the role of fixing what mental states are like when we *are* aware of them requires mental qualities to be eternally conscious, like lightbulbs that are never switched off.¹⁰ We can encapsulate the thesis of unconscious mental qualities by appealing to Kripkean ideas about natural kinds. Kripke's influential thought is that many of a kind's most striking properties may be only contingently possessed by a salient sample, and used to fix the reference of our terms to a deeper essence which is shared by the salient sample with other samples of the kind. So, although we standardly think of water as transparent, potable, etc., water lacking these properties will still count provided that it shares the essence of the salient sample – being H₂O (Kripke, 1980). In these terms, the claim about mental qualities, or qualitative character, is that consciousness/awareness may turn out to be a reference-fixing property contingently possessed by the salient sample – those mental qualities we directly experience. With this clarification out of the way, we can turn to consider arguments against unconscious mental qualities.

Opposition to unconscious mental qualities is longstanding.¹¹ An indicator of its current default status is that the rejection of unconscious mental qualities often features only as an implicit premise within wider chains of reasoning.¹²

Two further things are striking about this opposition. First, few theorists argue that mental qualities cannot be unconscious. Most stipulate, or pronounce, qualitative characters to be exclusively conscious (e.g. Kriegel, 2011, p. 86; Mendelovici, 2018; Foster, 1982, p. 101). I ignore such stipulations and pronouncements. Second, the arguments against unconscious mental qualities are surprisingly weak. I survey them below, and show that they are unpersuasive. This survey is intended, but is unlikely, to be exhaustive. I will likely have omitted an argument against unconscious mental qualities worth considering. I hope, however, that the range of responses available to purveyors of unconscious mental qualities suggests how further such arguments might be resisted, and evinces the (perhaps surprising) robustness of the posit of unconscious mental qualities.

1. Galen Strawson (2008) argues that mental qualities ('experiential what-it-is-like-ness', in his terms) can no more exist without consciousness than a branch-bending can exist without a branch. But this argument assumes that mental qualities are *modifications of consciousness*, as a branch-bending modifies a branch, and the believer in unconscious mental qualities might well deny this. Indeed, if the operative claim in Strawson's argument is that mental

2. Arguments against Unconscious Mental Qualities

¹⁰ Nagelian 'what-it-is-like-ness' is another perilous term in this domain (Nagel, 1974). Sometimes it is used to pick out the qualitative character of experiences, a property I am claiming could exist unconsciously. At other times it is clearly intended to entail or involve phenomenal consciousness. One way of reading the thesis of unconscious mental qualities is as the claim that there is unconscious what-it-is-like-ness – that is, that an unconscious state can nonetheless be qualitatively 'like something' (cf. Snowdon, 2010; Rosenthal, 2005). In these terms, one might want to distinguish what-it-is-like-ness, or strict qualitative character, from what we could call 'what-it-is-like-for-me-ness', qualitative character of which the subject is also phenomenally conscious. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for flagging this issue.

¹¹ But see Leibniz (1714), Rosenthal (2005), Lockwood (1989), Feigl (1975).

¹² E.g. Byrne (2013) and Tye & Wright (2011) infer that propositional attitudes, since they are (as supposed by these authors) unconscious, lack mental qualities ('phenomenology'), without explicitly rejecting unconscious mental qualities.

qualities are *exclusively* modifications of consciousness, then this is exactly what his opponent will deny. That would make Strawson's argument question-begging. And it does appear that no weaker thesis would serve Strawson's purposes. For even if we grant that mental qualities are modifications of conscious mentality, it does not follow that they cannot also be modifications of *unconscious* mentality – just as many non-branches can bend. Strawson's argument therefore requires the stronger, and question-begging, thesis that mental qualities are exclusively modifications of consciousness.¹³

2. John Searle (1992) claims that positing unconscious mental qualities entails dualism. But that conclusion, if it is unwelcome, follows only given Searle's stated assumption that the unconscious brain exclusively features neurophysiological processes, plus the thesis, which he does not defend, that unconscious mental qualities cannot be realised by any such processes. It is unclear why Searle believes that unconscious mental qualities cannot be realised by neurophysiological process. Granted, there is a sense of 'neurophysiological processes' which one can hear as excluding such properties as mental qualities. But this would guarantee the dualistic result, and the focus would switch to Searle's entitlement to that sense of 'neurophysiological processes' in his argument. Given the variety of reductive accounts of mental qualities in ultimately neurophysiological terms, we require reasons why unconscious mental qualities, specifically, cannot be neurophysiologically realised.

It might be thought that what is really operative here is Searle's independent argument that conscious mental qualities are irreducible to any conventional neurophysiological processes. Searle might judge unconscious mental qualities to be irreducible for the same reason, the thought would go. But we can see this reasoning is incorrect, from the fact that Searle does not believe his argument shows that *conscious* mental qualities entail dualism: Searle considers consciousness a distinctive ('higher-level') neurophysiological process. Therefore, Searle must have *special* reasons for holding that unconscious mental qualities in particular are neurophysiologically irreducible, so as to entail dualism. But nowhere does he say what these reasons are, nor, hence, why we should accept his argument.

3. John Foster (1982) distinguishes consciousness of a mental quality from 'conceiving' it. In consciousness, or sensation, he says, a mental quality – say of navy blue – is *present* ('realized'), whereas in recollection or imagination it is only 'represented'. This, he suggests, explains the phenomenological difference between sensation and recollection. Foster then assumes, for reductio, that the navy-blue mental quality can exist unexperienced, and asks in virtue of what it is that the quality can then be present-as-experienced, or instantiated, in an episode of sensation. The answer the friend of unconscious mental qualities must give, Foster claims, is that the mental quality is sensed by being the *object of the subject's awareness*.¹⁴ But Foster rejects as incoherent the proposal that such an act of awareness could actually *constitute* the mental quality's instantiation. The alternative, he argues, is to frame matters conversely: it is a quality's sheer presence that provides awareness of *itself* – mental qualities are 'self-revealing', hence essentially conscious.

This ingenious argument ultimately seems guilty of begging the question. The key move is that

13 This 'argument' might perhaps be fairly numbered among the stipulations about mental qualities. And Strawson is concerned to stress in the relevant passage something I would not wish to deny: that *experiences*, i.e. conscious mental qualities, require an experiencing subject (thanks to Strawson for stressing this point to me, in personal communication). Still, if this is not Strawson's argument it could easily enough be Strawson*'s, and has sufficient prima facie force to merit inclusion in our survey.

14 This is indeed the sort of answer proponents of unconscious mental qualities often give – e.g. Rosenthal (2005).

awareness cannot constitute the presence, or instantiation, of a mental quality in experience. Foster does not explain why he finds this proposal incoherent. But we need not dwell on that, because it just isn't what proponents of unconscious mental qualities say. In fact, it directly contradicts their doctrine. The purveyor of unconscious mental qualities claims that mental qualities can be present/instantiated, *whether or not* they are objects of awareness: that is their core doctrine. So they are far from holding that awareness itself ever constitutes a mental quality's instantiation. What they say is that awareness – to state the obvious – makes us aware of, or discloses,¹⁵ mental qualities that are (or can be) present anyway. The purveyor of unconscious mental qualities certainly owes an account of awareness, to complete their picture. And perhaps all existing models of this sort fail (Shani, 2020; Mihalik, 2019). But that is no objection to unconscious mental qualities as such,¹⁶ nor is it the line Foster takes. Behind Foster's argument there seems to be an assumption that mental qualities have no genuine existence except as sensed. If one thought that, one might well want to ask how awareness conjures a mental quality into being, and to dismiss the suggestion that it could. But that assumption flatly contradicts the doctrine of unconscious mental qualities. This makes Foster's argument, ultimately, question-begging.¹⁷

4. Charles Siewert identifies the issue over unconscious mental qualities as being whether unconscious states could resemble and differ in the qualitative ways that conscious states do. Could a blindsighter's discrimination of yellow and blue conceivably involve states that differ as our visual experiences of yellow and blue do? He argues (1998, p. 88):

These experiences differ as nothing could differ without being an episode of consciousness. The differences in question are these: the way it seems to you for it to look as if something is yellow differs from the way it seems to you for it to look as if something is blue.

Siewert stresses that mental qualities are properties bound up in experiential appearances to us. Plausibly, a blindsighter's states present no appearance to her: specifically, they do not differ regarding how things look to her. So there *is* a way the subject's experiences of yellow and blue differ that cannot carry over to the blindsighter. Nonetheless, the believer in unconscious mental qualities will likely view these 'how-things-look-colourwise' properties as *conjunctions* of a mental colour quality and the subject's awareness of this quality. In which case the bases of conscious differences, the properties *in virtue of which* yellow and blue differ looks-wise when the subject is aware of them, namely a certain constellation of qualitative

15 Lockwood's (1989) term. Note that an 'extrinsic' account of the consciousness of mental qualities (as per Lockwood, Rosenthal 2005, Lycan 1996, and other 'higher-order' theories) is not compulsory for the advocate of unconscious mental qualities, even if it would seem a natural companion thesis. One might think that consciousness of mental qualities requires some intrinsic modification in them, such as a sprinkle of 'consciousness dust' or acquiring an 'inner-glow'. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to make this clarification.

16 Notably, Shani (2020) and Chalmers (2013) – both of whom are unsympathetic with theories that posit unconscious qualities plus an appended awareness mechanism – discuss unconscious mental qualities and related models of awareness separately.

17 Another reading of Foster's argument might make more of his distinction between sensing and conceiving: perhaps Foster holds that theories of awareness such as Rosenthal's higher-order *thought* theory (2005) can only capture thinking about (conceiving) mental qualities and not consciously experiencing (sensing) them. But such an argument, however viable (or not), would require further development, which Foster does not supply. Moreover, higher-order perceptual theories of awareness, such as Lycan's (1996), would seem on the face of it to be obviously immune, as well as, arguably, some non-standard higher-order thought theories, such as that of Coleman (2015), which invokes a mechanism of 'mental quotation' of unconscious mental qualities to capture experiential awareness.

features, might well be taken to exist unconsciously. And these might be taken to resemble and differ in just the right qualitative ways to ground the relevant resemblances among the conscious appearances. If Siewert now claims that these qualitative differences can obtain only when things look or seem some way to the subject, i.e. consciously, he would seem to beg the question. In sum, though Siewert may be right in isolating a difference between conscious qualitative states that cannot be present among unconscious states (exemplified by the ‘how-things-look-colourwise’ property), this does not show that mental qualities cannot exist unconsciously. I think at root Siewert may be expressing the intuition that a colour quality cannot be present without something’s looking some way to someone (i.e. consciously). But in the context that is only an intuition, and it clearly loads the dice against the advocate of unconscious mental qualities. It requires far more in the way of support than Siewert provides, to be the basis of a persuasive *argument* against unconscious mental qualities.

5. Brentano (1870) claims that every mental phenomenon presents something – this is his thesis of intentionality as mentality’s mark. He additionally claims that every mental phenomenon is also the *object* of a presentation. Further, every presentation of an intentional object has an ‘intensity’, or strength, he affirms. For example, the hearing of a sound presents the sound with a certain intensity. The intensity of the object must be matched by its presentation, he says; since inner-perception – Brentano’s construal of consciousness – is infallible, it cannot present a strong sound as a weak one, say. It follows that *the presentation of a presentation* of an object must share intensity with the first-order presentation – the latter is now the object, and its representation must share its intensity. Thus, when I hear a sound with a certain intensity, the presentation of the hearing, which must accompany it since all mental phenomena are by hypothesis presented, shares its intensity – i.e. represents the hearing of the sound with the same intensity as the hearing presents the sound itself.

Brentano can now infer that every mental phenomenon is presented with non-zero intensity – after all, objects or presentations of objects with zero intensity will presumably not constitute intentional states. And he concludes that every mental phenomenon is therefore conscious, by virtue of being represented with positive intensity by another mental phenomenon.

In reply, one might doubt that a mental phenomenon’s being mentally represented entails consciousness (Wakefield, 2018). But if one posits unconscious mentality, one is likely to hold that consciousness consists in being suitably mentally represented.¹⁸ Given this dialectic, if Brentano can show that every mental phenomenon is represented with non-zero strength, it plausibly follows that all mental phenomena are conscious. After all, the fiercest objection he considers to his thesis of the pervasive consciousness of mental phenomena is that consciousness-as-mental-representation, plus the pervasive consciousness thesis, provokes an infinite regress of states. Brentano blocks this regress by positing unitary, self-referential, mental acts. But the thesis that mental representation enables consciousness is assumed by his objector, whose argument is that the train of mental representation must end in an unconscious state. So Brentano’s opponent arguably accepts that mental representation enables consciousness.

But there are other places to attack Brentano’s argument. Even granting that all mental phenomena are intentional, it is unclear why all must also be intentional *objects*. This does follow from Brentano’s thesis that intentionality involves self-representational states. But

¹⁸ See e.g. Rosenthal (2005), Lycan (1996). But see Coleman (2015; 2018), Lockwood (1989).

opponents need not accept that thesis.¹⁹ Vulnerable, too, is Brentano's claim that the intensity of presentations of intentional objects must match their object's intensity, and the claim he thinks entails this, that inner-perception (aka consciousness) is infallible. That all mental phenomena are represented themselves, and that consciousness is infallible, seem just the sorts of claims that advocates of unconscious mentality would reject (Rosenthal 2005, Freud 1953). I tend to grant consciousness's accuracy, for my part. But this still leaves Brentano's claim that all mental phenomena are not only intentional but are intentional *objects*. Given the proximity of the theses that a mental phenomenon is mentally represented, and that consciousness consists in mental representation of a mental phenomenon, this is not a claim I am disposed to accept. And Brentano supplies no good reason to accept it. So his argument against unconscious mentality fails.

The surveyed arguments are unpersuasive. We cannot decisively rule out the existence, or future production, of a sound argument against unconscious mental qualities. But for now we are free to pursue the Grand Unification concerning the mark of the mental.

At issue is mentality's boundaries: which phenomena to include, and which to reject, as belonging to the mind. Accordingly, we seek a characteristic – a mark – borne by those phenomena that are most plausibly considered mental, and lacked by those that are not. Furthermore, if a mark unifies phenomena that i) garner widespread support regarding their mental status, while ii) being *prima facie*, or often considered, distinct, that speaks powerfully in its favour. This section argues that the posit of unconscious mental qualities possesses this virtue of unifying ostensibly disparate, nonetheless plausibly mental, phenomena, providing a strikingly coherent overall conception of mind.

First, there is the obvious point that if one takes seriously Brentano, PIT, and Freud on the mind's nature, then positing unconscious mental qualities seems to be the route forward. This is the *have-your-cake-and-eat-it* motivation. This move is not congenial to those theoretical camps, but we have examined the arguments of Brentano, PIT proponents, and others, against unconscious mental qualities, and found them wanting.

Regarding Freud things are more interesting. He does not explicitly argue for his thesis that, though there is unconscious mentality, it does not resemble conscious qualitative goings-on. Like Brentano, he construes consciousness as inner perception. Unlike Brentano, he deems the neurophysiological processes underlying consciousness to be genuinely mental, with conscious mental qualities constituting in effect inner perceptions of these processes (Wakefield, 2018). This stance involves Freud in various difficulties. For instance, he sometimes claims that the unconscious is just like conscious mentality only with consciousness removed. But that cannot be literally true unless the unconscious involves *unconscious mental qualities*, given that the stream of consciousness undoubtedly features mental qualities. Further, he posits unconscious mental processes because of the 'incompleteness' of 'conscious sequences', especially those leading to action. Given this incompleteness, Freud infers, consciousness is 'dependent on something else', and he holds that the real mental processes productive of action, etc., are unconscious, hence neurophysiological. This move excludes conscious mentality, including mental qualities, from behaviour-generating mental sequences – hence epiphenomenalism about such properties as pain, feelings of anger, conscious thoughts, etc., threatens. This is a distinctly unwelcome result for Freud's project of a realistic empirical

3. The Mark of the Mental and the Stream of Unconsciousness

¹⁹ Brentano presents it as *following from* the infinite regress objection, but it is only one solution, the other being unconscious representations. As an anonymous reviewer further notes, both Brentano's identification of intentionality with presentation and his claim that presentation entails self-presentation might seem dubious.

psychology. That conscious mental qualities contribute to our activities is surely a premise about as certain as any in psychology. Such difficulties can be dismissed by ruling that unconscious mentality and conscious mentality are of *one kind* – mental quality-involving. Then Freud can cleave to his dictum that the unconscious is like consciousness only with awareness removed. And the puzzle concerning the role of feelings in action is solved: mental qualities can be said to contribute to action whether conscious or unconscious. The mind is of a single unified nature, only we are unaware of all the mental qualities our minds contain. Thus the ‘incomplete’ chains Freud observes at the conscious level are *filled in* by unconscious mental-qualitative processes, instead of being *made redundant* by wholly unconscious, mental quality-free, parallel processes. Freud should posit unconscious mental qualities.²⁰ The lesson for Freud generalises. Those PIT proponents who acknowledge unconscious mentality must say strange things about it and its interactions with consciousness, on account of their rejection of unconscious mental qualities. For instance they say that unconscious mentality has intentionality *only potentially*, or, more bizarrely, that unconscious states do themselves possess content, in some sense, by virtue of being disposed to produce bona-fide conscious, mental quality-based, content.²¹ This is analogous to claiming that a bomb with its fuse intact is exploding right now, *in a sense*, thanks to its disposition to explode if lit. What the relevant sense is, nobody has explained, and it seems unintelligible. It appears to require equating dispositional property *p* with occurrent property *p* – an equivalence of which no PIT proponent has provided a single other example or precedent.²² Nor is it really intelligible how unconscious mentality, if it lacks mental qualities, hence – for PIT – genuine content, interacts with conscious mentality in chains of thought, to yield actions and inferences. This is another reincarnation of Descartes’ interaction problem, which has long plagued the philosophy of mind, and which led Freud and his contemporaries to their inelegant parallelism. All this perplexity disappears if we say that unconscious mentality has the same nature as conscious mentality – mental qualities-of-content.²³ The outcome is this. As Freud noted, the stream of consciousness is incomplete, in failing wholly to account for the outputs of reasoning, and action. These chains, I say, are completed by unconscious content-qualities. When we reason, converse, think, act, *this is due to mental*

20 For further development of this argument, in specific connection with the issue of conscious and unconscious beliefs, see Coleman (2021).

21 The locus classicus of this view is Searle (1992), but he has been largely followed by those contemporary PIT proponents who profess realism about unconscious mentality – e.g. (at least in some moods) Kriegel (2011).

22 One might seem to be able to reply that mental content simply comes in two radically different kinds, qua conscious and unconscious. Yet the picture remains extremely puzzling. A disposition to produce *p* is said to constitute a kind (albeit another kind) of occurrent *p* – still no analogies or precedents seem available to make sense of this view. We must ask why the unconscious dispositional property, though a disposition to produce content, itself merits the label ‘content’. I suspect at this point that PIT proponents become more interested in what might account for our *ascriptions* of unconscious content, rather than in realism about unconscious content (cf. Strawson, 1994)—a suspicion that is supported by the tendency of PIT advocates to retreat, under pressure, to overt elimination of unconscious content (see e.g. Kriegel, 2011). Pitt (2016) shows commendable candour about what, so it seems to me, follows from the dispositional treatment of unconscious content – elimination.

23 Does this thesis commit one to any view about the physicality/reducibility of mental qualities, or phenomenal qualities? I believe these issues are orthogonal. Rosenthal has long argued that mental qualities can be unconscious, and has faced stiff resistance despite advancing a physicalism-friendly account of such properties, and of consciousness itself. Searle, as we noted in section 2, unconvincingly claimed that unconscious mental qualities entail dualism. Relatedly, Kriegel (2011) toys with two accounts of phenomenal-intentional properties, one on which they are physical and the other on which they are irreducible, and does not come clearly down on either side. For present purposes I simply remain neutral over this issue: unconscious mental qualities are quite controversial enough, aside from one’s views about their reducibility, or not, to the physical. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for prompting me to make this clarification.

sequences partly spanning the conscious and the unconscious mind, and which are all the while mental quality-involving. So, since the stream of consciousness is incomplete, we must posit also a *stream of unconsciousness* – of unconscious-but-mental-quality-involving contentful processes of essentially the same kind as their conscious counterparts. Indeed, given the intimate interplay of conscious with unconscious mental processes in human activity, we must ultimately posit a *single mental content-quality stream*, partly conscious and partly not. This is the mind's true nature.

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