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What is it like to have a thought?

On the phenomenology of thinking

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Inhalt

1. Introduction

In everyday life, we usually know what one means when talking about thoughts but things become more difficult when we ask for an exact definition. We could describe thoughts as something that is going on in our heads, the things we use for thinking, or biochemical processes that take place in our brains. Many and more answers are possible. However, none of them is fit to qualify as a definition or precise description. What is going on in our heads is not limited to thoughts alone, describing thoughts as the stuff we use for thinking is tautological, and although biochemical processes without any doubt constitute thoughts, they neither explain what thinking feels like nor do they exclusively form thoughts.

Another problem is that we use the term 'thoughts' ambiguously and ascribe many different meanings to it. On the one hand, this makes things more difficult because there are always various possibilities of what a speaker refers to. On the other hand, this plurality of different meanings can also be viewed as a strength as it captures the complexity and manifoldness of thoughts pretty well. Commonly, it is accepted that by speaking of thoughts one can refer to at least two different things: first, to an *entity*, something that occurs in our minds, and second to a kind of process, an *activity*, something that we do. Despite many differences, this can be taken as common ground within the scientific field as well as in everyday life. For the purpose of clarity, I stick to the term *thoughts* for the first meaning (i.e. the entity) and call the second one *thinking* or *having/entertaining thoughts* (i.e. the activity).

So what are thoughts? They are something we all have, we all are familiar with, and we still fail to define or describe in detail. Thoughts are hard to observe, difficult to control, and impossible to avoid. They are doubtlessly caused by some biochemical processes in our brains and come with certain experiences in our minds. Thoughts are entities that always contain a proposition and appear in a certain form within a subject's mind. I am aware of the fact that this definition barely deserves to be called one, but at the same time it is rather difficult to get any closer to their nature.

And yet, although we cannot clearly say what thoughts are, all of us are familiar with the experience of thinking. We know what it is like to think – but then again fail to properly describe it when asked to do so. Nonetheless, having thoughts – those mysterious entities that we immediately can identify but fail to describe in detail –, the activity of thinking, can very well be examined without being able to clearly formulate what thoughts ontically are. Just like we can observe and describe what it is like to see a peach without knowing anything about the ontic

state of it, we very well can observe and describe our experience of having a thought without exactly knowing what thoughts themselves are. In contrast to peaches, which fruit grouches or little children might easily mix up with nectarines, we do not confuse our thoughts with anything else. We implicitly know what thoughts are and we usually have no trouble at all identifying them. Observing, describing, analyzing, and classifying them, though, is by far more difficult and less common. I suppose that most people do not pay much attention to their thoughts and thinking processes but rather focus on their content and outcome, which in daily life is the reasonable thing to do and therefore more than understandable.[1] From a philosophical perspective, though, having thoughts and entertaining thinking processes as such are interesting phenomena to study. Admittedly, even with practice this is not an easy thing to do. That might be a reason why there is still no detailed descriptive account and analysis of the experience of having thoughts.

My aim in this thesis is to get a better understanding of the experience of thinking and to contribute to a richer picture of thoughts than the one we have at the moment. I want to examine the ambiguity of thought experiences, capture their multidimensional structure and get a refined descriptive account of the phenomenon. The available philosophical concepts of thoughts are mainly of analytical nature and try to capture the properties and ontic state of thoughts. Without any doubt, this is of importance. However, by focusing exclusively on the ontology of thoughts we risk being too reductive as there is much more to the phenomenon of having thoughts and the experience we have when undergoing it. Therefore, my focus lies on the subjective experience of thinking. What is it like to have a thought? What is it like to think? These are the underlying questions that I try to answer.

To do this, I choose a phenomenological approach. The phenomenologist takes a first-person account; she starts with the experience itself and brackets everything else, such as in our case for instance the question of ontic states of thoughts, or the epistemic problem if there is an evil demon that tricks us into believing in a reality that does not really exist. The actual understanding and proper description of experience is at the heart of the examination; the emphasis is rather on *how* something is experienced than on *what* is experienced. The phenomenologist aims at discovering the structures of experience and does that by closely examining experiences

[1] I found this assumption confirmed and strengthened both in various books and articles and when talking to others, philosophers as well as non-philosophers, scientists from other areas, and non-academics. Nearly everyone, whom I talked to about this thesis, expressed surprise and stated never having thought about the topic in general and never having tried to observe their own experiences while thinking. Although 'never' is a very strong word, this still suggests that it is not very common to observe and reflect on the experience of having thoughts. Moreover, when asked to describe how they think and to tell me what it is like for them, all collaborators struggled to do so.

as such. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, pp. 7–9) However, this examination does not happen detached from the world. On the contrary, the phenomenologist studies perception "as it is lived through by a perceiver who is in the world" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, p. 8), so she is always concerned with both the perception and the perceiving subject's motivations, purposes and the like. Her interest lies in "understanding how it is possible for anyone to experience a world" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, p. 8), it is not limited to her own first-person experiences but aims at more general results. The phenomenological method is thus no mere description based on introspection but always aims at figuring out the relations between subjects and the world they find themselves in, between different subjects, and between the body and the mind. By closely observing, describing, and examining subjective experiences, phenomenologists work out fundamental structures and explain how subjects relate to the world and what it means to be in the world. With respect to having thoughts, this means that I do not only carefully examine and describe the subjective experience of thinking but also try to figure out a general structure of the experience.

Yet, there is one important question to be answered before turning to the examination of thought experiences: phenomenology traditionally deals with experiences such as seeing, hearing, or feeling things, in short: with sense or feeling experiences. However, thoughts are not directly sensory or emotionally felt perceptions; they are perceived in a different way. Can we still apply phenomenology on thoughts, using it for cognitive processes instead of sensory and emotional perceptions? Is there some kind of *cognitive phenomenology*? There is recently a heated debate concerning this question with people denying and people affirming it. In chapter 2, I therefore give a short overview of this debate. As we will see, it is not entirely clear yet whether there is anything such as cognitive phenomenology. Neither proponents nor opponents of the claim can present sufficiently strong arguments to settle the matter. However, both sides do agree that there is something that it is like to *have a thought*, something that it is like to *think*. It is a fact that human beings do undergo a certain experience when they think. Thus, my research project does not depend on the existence of cognitive phenomenology. It is important to keep the debate in mind, but if it turns out at the end that traditional (or how I will call it: sensory) phenomenology is exhaustive to describe all human experiences, including those of cognitive phenomena like thoughts, this does not threaten my choice of phenomenological methods at all.

In the following chapters 3-5 I then try to develop a precise descriptive account of the experience of having thoughts. To this end, I refer to already existing phenomenological concepts and try to apply and adapt them for my own purpose. Since it is obviously impossible to discuss all philosophers or even all phenomenologists who have ever said anything about thoughts, I

mainly focus on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, William James, and Max Seeger. All are concerned with the topic and all follow a phenomenological approach.
Merleau-Ponty is one of the classical phenomenologists and widely known for his occupation with the lived body. What is interesting for me are especially his concepts of style and of motor intentionality.
James, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with philosophical pragmatism and psychology. Nonetheless, he is widely known amongst phenomenologists, particularly for his concept of the *stream of thought* or *stream of consciousness*, that he develops in his two-volume work "The Principle of Psychology". There, he also presents rich phenomenological descriptions along with interesting considerations about the experience of having thoughts.
Seeger, finally, is a contemporary philosopher who presents a classification of different types of thoughts that I take as a basis for my own considerations in chapter 4.
Taken together, the descriptions and ideas of these philosophers provide a promising basis for the attempt to get a precise descriptive account of the experience of thinking.

Throughout the working process, I identified three main aspects that should be considered in order to get a better idea of the phenomenology of having thoughts:

- Ways of Thinking: What I call *ways of thinking* is what we *do* with thoughts, for example reasoning or daydreaming.
- Types of Thoughts: There are different *types of thoughts* that we entertain, such as thoughts that we actively control and others that just seem to come out of nowhere.
- Styles of Thinking: What I call *styles of thinking* or simply *thinking styles* is *how* we think, for instance by hearing an inner voice or by mentally displaying visual images.

This threefold distinction serve as a structure for the thesis.

In chapter 3, I have a closer look at what we do with our thoughts. Referring on James, I describe some examples of what we can do with our thoughts and show that there are many and more possibilities. Moreover, I discuss different phenomenological concepts such as the streams of thought and consciousness, different modes of intentionality, reciprocity and affectivity in different kinds of experiences, and agency and control in thinking. As we will see, these concepts play an important role in our experiences of thinking, which is why I also come back to them several times in other chapters.
In chapter 4, I discuss James' notion of thoughts and point out that this does not suffice to get a complete understanding of the phenomenological nature of thoughts. This is why I next turn

to Seeger's classification, which I enrich and broaden. The classification that I thereby gain is then related to several phenomenological concepts, namely ownership and agency, modes of intentionality, the role of the stream of thought, and the notion of control.

In chapter 5, I turn to our styles of thinking. I show that Merleau-Ponty offers an interesting notion of style but differs from my usage of it. Combining James' notion of handiness and his considerations on imagining with Merleau-Ponty's idea of motor intentionality, I propose that we entertain different thinking styles that are inextricably connected with our bodily capacities and limitations. Besides, I call attention to some similarities between experiences of emotions and thoughts.

In the conclusion, I very shortly summarize the outcome of all chapters. (For more extensive summaries see the particular introductory parts, and the sections "In a Nutshell" that can be found at the end of each chapter.) Further, I discuss which results I consider most interesting and why and point out several questions that still need to be answered.

But first of all let us see if the phenomenological method is indeed suited for the purpose of this thesis, namely to investigate the experience of having thoughts.

2. Sensory and Cognitive Phenomenology

At the heart of the debate on cognitive phenomenology lies the question if *cognitive phenomenology* outstrips classical phenomenology – or as I will henceforward call it: *sensory phenomenology* –, or if all human experiences can abundantly be described within the boundaries of sensory phenomenology only.[2] Whereas some philosophers claim that there are cognitive experiences that fundamentally differ in their what-it-is-likeness from sensory and emotional experiences, others maintain that the latter cover all experiences.[3] As we will see, there are various arguments as well as counterarguments on both sides, which leads to the current situation. So far, the different parties have not come to an agreement and it does not look like this will happen any time soon. In this chapter, I give a short overview of the whole debate. For some widespread arguments in favor of cognitive phenomenology, I mainly refer to Strawson (1994, 2011), who is a prominent advocate of the existence of cognitive experiences. In his paper, Strawson (2011) gives a profound overview of the debate, states his position, and outlines some common arguments. For some popular arguments against cognitive phenomenology, I mostly refer to Prinz

[2] Terminologically, I stick to the already established terms of *sensory* as opposed to *cognitive phenomenology*. Note, though, that sensory phenomenology is a somewhat misleading term since it includes not only sensory but also emotional experiences.

[3] I call proponents of cognitive phenomenology *cognitivists* and opponents *no-cognitivists.*

(2011) and Tye and Wright (2011), since both defend common and relatively strong positions on the no-cognitivist side.

The aim of this chapter is explicitly not to argue for or against the existence of cognitive phenomenology but rather to show that phenomenology is a valid method to examine our having thoughts. Albeit cognitivists and no-cognitivists disagree in many points, both sides acknowledge that there is something that it is like to have a thought, something that it is like to think. Their disagreement rather addresses the question whether these experiences are essentially cognitive and how we can explain them, but there is no denying in us having them. Thought experiences, then, obviously can be examined in a phenomenological way. Thus, my main research question does not depend on the existence of cognitive phenomenology. It is important to keep the debate in mind, but if it turns out at the end that sensory phenomenology is exhaustive to describe all human experiences, this does not threaten my whole project.

Let us still cast a quick glance on some of the main arguments to get a general understanding of the debate.

2.1. Introspection

A central argument for cognitive phenomenology is "the idea that cognitive phenomenology is introspectively manifest" (Bayne and Montague 2011b, p. 19). Many philosophers hold that by careful examination of their own experiences they are able to discern a special type of phenomenology, something that it is like to undergo certain mental states, i.e. they hold to discern cognitive experiences.

No-cognitivists, unsurprisingly, do not agree. They maintain not to find anything that might fall under cognitive phenomenology when they observe their own experiences and claim that every experience can be explained within the boundaries of sensory phenomenology, as there might be underlying or accompanying sensory phenomena that truly cause the experiences others mistake as cognitive ones (see for example Robinson 2011).

It is an interesting question how such fundamental disagreement about introspectional perspectives can arise. Unfortunately, there is no room to investigate this here. Introspection is necessary to get information about how we experience the world. At the same time, it is not entirely trustworthy and therefore should be handled with caution, or as Prinz (2011, p. 192) puts it: "Having an experience and reporting what it's like are two different things, and the latter can be prone to errors." Needless to say, this counts for both sides, cognitivists and no-cognitivists. Although introspection is a common and frequently brought up argument, it cannot settle the matter.

2.2. Conscious Comprehending

The claim that life does not entirely consist of sensations and feelings forms the basis for another widespread argument. According to Strawson, cognitive experience is essential and "constitutive of your conscious comprehending" (Strawson 2011, p. 295). To illustrate his point, he tells us to focus on the activity of reading. He claims that there is more to it than simply seeing certain marks on a paper or on the screen. Reading usually involves understanding, getting the meaning of a word, a sentence, a text. This is what he calls *meaning-experience*. He does not dwell very long on detailed examinations of this claim, so let me illustrate this with an example. As philosophers, we sooner or later encounter texts that are difficult to read and hard to understand. It can take a lot of self-discipline to keep working through such a text, to follow the author, and to identify the central claims of her argumentation. When reading, we sometimes are distracted by other things, or simply very tired. For whatever reason, we force ourselves to still keep studying and manage to read a sentence or a whole passage, to display the words in our head, but fail to get the meaning of any of it. In this case, we read, but we do not understand. We see the characters and even accomplish to declaim the words they form in our heads, but we fail to get the sense behind them. We do process them in some way but fail to do so in another. We do have the sensory experiences of seeing the characters and we 'hear' the corresponding words in our heads, but we lack the cognitive experience of understanding what they mean.[4] (Note, that there is a difference between this not-understanding and other forms of not-understanding, for instance because we are not familiar with some fundamental preliminaries. Whereas in the first case we don't have any cognitive understanding-experience at all, in the second case the "not understanding is itself a form of understanding-experience." (Strawson 2011, p. 321))

Following Strawson and other cognitivists, what we lack in these situations is the experience of understanding – a cognitive experience that cannot be reduced to sensory phenomena only, since they are still given. No-cognitivists, on the other hand, claim that we do not miss a certain *cognitive* experience. Instead, we lack *feeling* experiences that always accompany understanding. Since we do not get the meaning, we also do not have these feelings. So in fact, in understanding, there is no cognitive meaning-experience as such but we rather undergo thereto connected feeling experiences.

[4] In fact, there is a specific form of illiteracy, so called functional illiteracy, that describes exactly this circumstance: a functional illiterate is a person who knows all the characters of the alphabet and manages to read and write some words and sentences, but fails to understand longer sentences and texts. The definition is not very clear and the lines between illiteracy, functional illiteracy and literacy are blurred. Nevertheless, this also suggests that there must be something more to reading than only seeing characters and putting them together to words and phrases.

2.3. Contrast Arguments

Another class of arguments are the so called *phenomenal contrast arguments*. In principle, they function as follows: take two scenarios that do not differ in their sensory phenomenology but despite that are experienced in an experiential different way by two subjects. Some cognitivists claim that the best explanation for this difference lies in cognitive experiences: "since there is no sensory difference between the two scenarios, the phenomenal contrast between them can be accounted for only by appealing to some form of non-sensory phenomenology" (Bayne and Montague 2011b, p. 22).

Strawson (1994, 2011) illustrates this with the popular example of two men listening to the news in French. One is a monoglot Frenchman (Jaques), the other a monoglot Englishman (Jack). While both have the same perceptual experience, they do not share the same overall experience because Jaques also understands the meaning of the words and Jack does not. As Strawson puts it: "The point is simply this: there is the normal case something it is like, experientially, to understand a sentence, spoken or read." (Strawson 2011, p. 318).

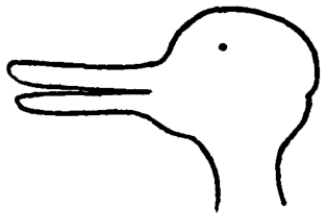
This argument is closely connected with to the previous one of conscious comprehension since both aim at understanding, at meaning-experience. Nevertheless, they address two different apects: conscious language comprehension is directed at only one person and her individual capacity of understanding something (which in turn opens up a connection to introspection). Contrast arguments try to show that two subjects can be exposed to the same sensory phenomena and yet differ in their overall experience, which is best explained in reference to cognitive experiences.

An alternative, no-cognitivist explanation of this example is suggested by Tye and Wright. They claim that the experiential difference can be explained merely in terms of sensory phenomenology. Their argumentation roughly goes as follows: there is in fact a difference in the experiences of Jack and Jaques. However, it does not directly stem from their understanding of the words they listen to. Instead, they propose, when we understand a sentence, the way we hear it changes as well, or more precisely "the phonological processing of the sound stream" (Tye and Wright 2011, p. 337) depends on whether we understand the sound stream or not: the understanding has a direct impact on the grouping of the sound stream, which as a result alters the way we hear the words. Consequently, Jack and Jaques actually do undergo different experiences while listening to the news in French, but this difference can be fully explained by the different grouping of the words. Therefore, they reject Strawson's as well as any similar structured argument.

Further, no-cognitivists could argue that there are far more factors that can alter our experiences than merely sensory aspects, such as pre-reflective, pre-personal, or unconscious aspects. Cognitive experience, then, is one but not the *only* explanation and therefore not necessarily true.

2.4. Duck-Rabbits

In the debate on cognitive phenomenology, ambiguous figures are often referred to, mostly the duck-rabbit-figure:



(Wittgenstein 1953, p. 194)

The crucial question is: how can we explain the change that we undergo while looking at this figure?

Strawson claims that sensory phenomenology does not exhaustingly explain the kind of experience we are interested in, "the change that can't be adequately characterized without some reference to experienced duckishness or rabbitishness" (Strawson 2011, p. 303). No-cognitivists cannot explain what exactly happens *experientially* speaking when the figure changes back and forth. Strawson (2011, p. 302) therefore asks "what good reason could one have to say that […] the global phenomenological character of one's experience remains utterly unchanged, as the figure changes?"

Many people who look at the figure and are asked to describe the change claim that visually everything stays the same. They might admit that their eyes move to different points, that a feeling of surprise arises within them, but somehow they feel that there is *something* more to it, something that is very hard to pin down and to describe.[5] The difficulty to depict this 'something more' comes from the fact that it is a cognitive experience and we are not trained to describe such. Nevertheless, we feel it and we realize it is there when we are asked for it.

To explain the perceptual change of the image, we have to accept cognitive experiences and the fact that "there is cognitive phenomenology in perception" (Strawson 2011, p. 303). However,

[5] Confronted with the duck-rabbit-figure and asked about what exactly changes for him, a friend told me: "It is something in my head, not something I see. My eyes move to different points. That makes it easier to see the duck or the rabbit, depending on the exact point. Still, the change is in my head, not in my eyes." Although this is an observation gained by introspection, I did not want to withhold this anecdote.

to claim this change and to describe the experience we thereby have, we rely on introspection. As we have seen in section 2.1, introspection is prone to error and not a reliable source, so we cannot take this argument as decisive.

No-cognitivists, in turn, maintain that sensory phenomenology suffices to explain the change while perceiving the duck-rabbit-figure and doubt the existence of this 'something more' that some people report. To them, the experience we have while looking at the figure is merely a matter of sensory phenomenology. Prinz (2011, pp. 182–83) for example acknowledges that introspectively, the experience of seeing the duck-rabbit-figure might change, yet he suggests that there are other possible explanations than cognitive experiences. According to him, the application of certain concepts can decisively influence perception: when perceiving the image as a duck, one refers to the corresponding concept, perhaps faintly imagines a duck or hears the word as inner speech. We thus can explain the experience with sensory phenomenology, "we can fully account for the phenomenology of placing an ambiguous image under a concept without assuming that conceptualization introduces non-sensory features." (Prinz 2011, p. 183)
Other no-cognitivists allow a change in the accompanying feelings, such as surprise or joy. Some argue that there is a change of perspective, in the sense that our eyes focus on different points of the figure in order to see the duck-rabbit. Others even suggest that the change is a matter of decision (for example Levine 2011).[6]

2.5. The Ontology of Thought

One argument against cognitive phenomenology is based on the ontology of thought. In reference to Geach (1957) and Soteriou (2007), Tye and Wright (2011) argue that thoughts are simply not the kind of entity that can bear phenomenology. They implicitly presuppose that, to qualify as a bearer of phenomenal character, an entity needs to form part of the stream of consciousness. Next, to be part of the stream of consciousness, an entity needs to unfold over time. Thoughts do not unfold over time, hence they are not part of the stream of consciousness and thereby cannot have any phenomenal character. Accordingly, there is no such thing as a phenomenology of thought since thoughts ontologically do not qualify.
They admit that, on some occasions, the experience of thinking a thought does seem to unfold over time. However, they maintain that it does not unfold itself – as it is a state, it only can arrive at once, there is nothing there to be unfolded. The impression of unfolding instead comes

[6] Merleau-Ponty also deals with ambiguous figures and maintains that they hold different significations at the same time (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 465). However, he does not say anything about the *experience* that a subject undergoes during the change between the different images.

from some sense or feeling experience that accompanies the thought. They conclude that the relevant phenomenology does not belong to the thought itself, "it actually belongs to the *experience* of thinking the thought" (Tye and Wright 2011, p. 343).

Cognitivists can meet this argument from several sides. They can either challenge one of the premises or try to come up with a counterexample to show that there are also bearers that do not unfold over time but still are part of the stream of consciousness. Besides, even if there might be no phenomenology of thoughts, this does not necessarily deny cognitive phenomenology, since there could be other mental states or entities that cause cognitive experiences.

I will neither attempt to refute the argument nor accept it. However, note that Tye and Wright in any case acknowledge that there is a specific phenomenology of thinking. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is not at stake, even if we accept the argument. It is undeniably possible to draw on phenomenology to examine what it is like to have a thought, i.e. what it is like to think.

2.6. Sufficiency of Sensory Phenomenology

The main argument against cognitive phenomenology is that all experiences can be explained within the boundaries of sensory phenomenology: all experiences are sense/feeling experiences, there is no such thing as cognitive experiences. Obviously, we have now reached the heart of the debate, posing the central question: does sensory phenomenology suffice to cover all human experiences, or is there something more to it? Do cognitive experiences and cognitive phenomenology exist? It does not come as a big surprise that these questions cannot be answered yet. If they could, the debate would have come to an end. Let me still quickly outline what exactly no-cognitivists understand by sensory phenomenology.

In their article, Tye and Wright (2011, p. 327) claim that there is no such thing as cognitive phenomenology. They present a list of phenomenological states – the so called *Quintet of Phenomenological States* – that is supposed to cover all phenomenal experiences (Tye and Wright 2011, p. 329):[7]

i. Perceptual experiences (e.g. seeing, hearing, tasting)
ii. Conscious bodily sensations (e.g. pain, tickles)
iii. Imagistic experiences (e.g. imagining)
iv. Conscious linguistic imagery (inner speech, thinking in words)
v. Primary emotional experiences (e.g. feeling fear, grieving)

[7] As a basis for this Quintet, they take the Quartet of phenomenological states given by Lormand 1996, pp. 242–43.

According to them, all experiences can be categorized and explained in reference to this quintet. This counts for mental activities (such as imagining or thinking) as well as for sensory or emotional experiences, what makes cognitive phenomenology obsolete.

Another author who deals with sensory phenomena as the basis of allegedly cognitive phenomenology is Prinz (2011).[8] He, too, does not deny the possibility of experiencing cognitive processes but claims that these experiences can be fully explained in reference to "sensory imagery" (Prinz 2011, p. 174). Prinz claims that in some cases the imagery that comes with two different thoughts might be the same, although the experiences of them differ in their phenomenology. This is the case because the attitude of the subject plays a role as well. With 'attitude' Prinz refers to emotions that accompany mental states: "My suspicion, though highly speculative, is that all of these states are felt as emotions, which, like other emotions, are constituted by bodily expressions." (Prinz 2011, p. 190) As he himself mentions, this is highly speculative. But even if we take this to be the case, we end up at the same point as before: are emotions together with sensory experiences sufficient to describe *all* experiences? Or are there some experiences to which we can only do justice with the aid of cognitive phenomenology? For Prinz, the answer is clear. He even claims that the feeling of knowing is an emotion as well. As a result, the understanding-experience could be explained in terms of feeling experiences, more precisely with the emotion 'feeling of knowing'. There is neither time nor space for a differentiated discussion about the nature of emotions. However, it is at least questionable that an emotion such as the 'feeling of knowing' exists.

I will neither argue for nor against these accounts here, but I come back to the debate in chapter 6, after having examined the experience of thinking.

2.7. In a Nutshell

The core of the debate about the existence of cognitive phenomenology involves various arguments, ideas, and positions.[9] At the end, it comes down to the question whether all experiences can be explained in terms of sensory phenomenology or not. However, no definite answer can be given at this point. No-cognitivists claim that there are strong reasons to take sensory phenomenology as exhaustive. In their opinion, even experiences of cognitive mental states can be

[8] Interestingly, the title of his paper "The Sensory Basis of Cognitive Phenomenology" somehow already presupposes the existence of cognitive phenomenology.

[9] I do not aim at presenting a complete overview of all arguments here but want to give a short overview of the debate. Other arguments are for examples those of philosophical zombies (see e.g. Horgan 2011), interestedness, or variety (for both see Strawson 2011), to name but a view. A good introduction into the whole field is provided by Bayne and Montague 2011a.

explained in reference to sense/feeling experiences, lain out in detail for example in the *Quintet of Phenomenological States* (Tye and Wright 2011, p. 329). Accordingly, they demand cognitivists to present a case of experience that cannot be explained with sensory phenomenology alone. Until now it is not clear if any of the cognitivist arguments are fit to meet this demand or if all arguments that have been brought forward up to now have been successfully refuted. The opinions thereto differ and there is no final answer yet.

However, the aim of this thesis is not to decide whether cognitive phenomenology exists (which besides would be a very ambitious aim for a master's thesis, to say the least). I am not antipathetic to the cognitivist view since I am under the impression to undergo certain cognitive experiences myself, especially when it comes to the meaning-understanding argument. At the same time, I acknowledge that no-cognitivists have their points as well and agree that we have to be extraordinarily careful to rely on arguments based on introspection. In this thesis, I assume an impure version of cognitive phenomenology. This means, that in my understanding there are cognitive experiences, but they are deeply intertwined with sense/feeling experiences and necessarily occur in combination with them. It might be functional in some cases to treat cognitive phenomenology and sensory phenomenology as perfectly dissociated, and yet I don't think that in practice they can be completely separated. Terminologically, I call experiences that we have while thinking *thought experiences*.[10] I thus leave it open if they are cognitive or not, since for the current purpose this question is irrelevant: although cognitivists and no-cognitivists disagree on whether cognitive experiences exist, both do acknowledge that there is something that it is like to have a thought, something that it is like to think. Thus, my main research question does not depend on the existence of cognitive phenomenology. If it turns out in the end that sensory phenomenology is exhaustive to describe all human experiences, this does not annihilate what I do in the following chapters.

3. Ways of Thinking

Having shown that the phenomenological method is apt to address the question of what it is like to think, we can now turn to the main part of the thesis. This chapter is dedicated to different ways of thinking, that is what we *do* with thoughts, for example reasoning or daydreaming. The aim of the chapter is to carve out a solid foundation for further considerations and the

[10] Synonymously, I use the term *thought-related experiences* in times. Further, I talk about *sense* or *sensory experiences* (which include for instance seeing, hearing, smelling, touching), and *feeling* or *emotional experiences* (that would be feeling grief, happiness, sorrow etc.), as well as *sense/feeling experiences* for both.

development of a descriptive concept. Therefore, I first present and critically access James' notion of thoughts, starting with a look at his concept of the stream of consciousness and the stream of thought, which I take to be two different things. As we will see, what James' account lacks is an adequate explanation of what he calls interest. Although he takes our interest to be essential in order to attend some thoughts instead of others, he fails to explain how exactly this works or what interest even is. I propose that we can use the phenomenological concept of intentionality to shed some light on this. Therefore, I take into account both Husserl's horizonal intentionality and Merleau-Ponty's motor intentionality. Yet, even though intentionality forms the basis for the possibility to develop interests, it fails to explain how exactly these interests arise. Due to the co-constitutiveness of world and intentionality it is even dubitable if we can find such an explanation. Further, affective states play an important role in shaping our perception and experience. James touches this very lightly when he talks about so called psychic overtones that always accompany thoughts, but he does not elaborate further on them. I suggest that these overtones are closely connected to affective intentionality as Slaby (2008) understands it. Moreover, I argue that experiences of every kind – sense, feeling, and thought experiences – do heavily influence and in times cause each other and are never absolutely independent from their surroundings. We will further see that the experiences of emotions and thoughts resemble in some structural phenomenological aspects.

Having these fundamental issues gotten clear, I examine James' description of some ways of thinking and enrich his illustrations with additional examples and considerations, referring back to different modes of intentionality. My concept of control also plays an important role in this. Whereas sometimes we feel like being in full control over our thoughts, in other times we experience a lack thereof. Based on that I call the former cases voluntary and the latter ones involuntary thinking. Yet, as we will see when examining imagination, presumably all ways of thinking can be experienced as voluntary as well as involuntary, depending on the concrete situation. Thus, we need to be careful to pair voluntary and involuntary thinking with certain ways of thinking only.

3.1. Stream of Thought and Interest

James is widely known for his description of the so called "*stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*" (James 1950a, p. 239). According to him, our "consciousness […] does not appear to itself chopped up in bits" (James 1950a, p. 239) but what goes on in our conscious mind is a flowing stream where one appearance smoothly melts away into another. Our consciousness "is nothing jointed; it flows" (James, p. 239). Thoughts, then, as they are conscious

to us, naturally form part of this stream. However, James does not specify the difference between the stream of consciousness and the stream of thought. On the contrary, his formulation suggests that both terms mean the same and are interchangeable. (Indeed, he even uses a third term equivalently, namely *subjective life*, that I neglect to simplify matters.) This seems like a major inaccuracy to me because speaking of a stream of thought implies that it only contains thoughts. Yet, given that the two terms can be used interchangeably, this is not the case for there are more conscious experiences than thoughts – we can consciously experience perceptions or emotions, too. In these cases, it is misleading to speak of a stream of thought. I therefore propose to differentiate between the stream of consciousness as more general and the stream of thought that only includes thoughts. The stream of thought thus forms part of the stream of consciousness and can be seen as sort of a sub-stream, a part of the overall stream, or a stream within the stream, if we will call it such. The stream of consciousness, on the other hand, does not only contain the stream of thought (and thereby thoughts) but in addition other conscious experiences of the subject.[11]

Having this clarified, let us now take a closer look at the stream of thought. What makes one thought follow the other; what is it that connects them? For James (1950a, p. 550), association is the "manner in which trains of imagery and consideration follow each other through our thinking". It is hard to pin down, though, why A is associated with B and not with C, or why A is sooner associated with B than with C. Some factors that influence this associating process (in other words: reasons for associating two things) are "*habit, recency, vividness, and emotional congruity*" (James 1950a, p. 577). However, James (1950a, pp. 581–82) admits that it "would be folly in most cases to attempt to trace" the exact relations between our associations out. We have to accept that we do not know for sure why certain associations arise, and there is no secure way of predicting which association will be evoked before we actually experience it. In respect of the stream of thought, this does not cause major problems: the matter that we do not know under which laws association operates does not change the fact that our mind displays an ongoing stream of connected thoughts, independent of what drives this connection.

However, what is of importance is the question to which of these thoughts we pay attention. Many just pass by as we notice more or less consciously. Due to the overwhelming amount of thoughts, we ignore most of them (see James 1950a, p. 285) but some achieve to awaken our attention and make us ponder on them for quite a while. What is it that triggers this attention? For James (1950b, p. 333), the decisive element is our will to do something, or more generally:

[11] Another interesting question is if *all* conscious experiences necessarily form part of the stream of consciousness or if they can occur in other ways, too.

our *interest*. He claims that "my thinking is first and last and always for the sake of my doing". To which thoughts we pay attention thus necessarily depends on the action we perform or want to perform. Our will functions as an election mechanism for the stream of thought. Interests, for James (1950b, p. 345), "are the weightiest factors in making particular ingredients stand out in high relief. What they lay their accent on, that we notice; but what they are in themselves, we cannot say". What triggers our interest, then? At this point, James stops and claims that we cannot know. In doing so, he only shifts the problem from one layer to another: the original and crucial question was why some thoughts achieve to catch our attention, to stand out of the stream of thought, whereas others fail to do so. James' response to this question is interest: attention is based on interest and thoughts that correspond to our interests thus awaken our attention. Naturally, one would next want to ask what constitutes our interest. What is it based on? Is there a difference between interest and will? Does interest form part of the stream of consciousness or is it situated in a whole other place? Are we aware of our interests? Can we influence our having them? Many and more questions that we can ask but James chooses to ignore.

As unsatisfying as this is, we still have an intuitive understanding of what he means. This might be the case because we are familiar with relevant situations from our own experience: take for instance the case when you try to describe a certain taste. Imagine you just came back from holidays in a foreign country and ate some exotic fruit there that is not available in your home country. When telling a friend about it, she asks you what its taste was like. Of course, you are willing to share your experiences and try to describe it to her as detailed as possible. Your interest consists in finding the correct words to cover the fruit's taste. Thus, your stream of thought immediately comes up with suggestions; supposedly, it presents a row of adjectives and comparisons to you. Was it sweet? Bitter? Sour? Did it feel firm? Soft? Crunchy? Juicy? Did it remind you of apples? Lemons? Ginger? Cherries? Did it contain a hint of Vanilla? Pepper? Cardamom? Mocha? Most likely, many associations will appear in your head, but only those that bear some kind of resemblance with the exotic fruit will catch your attention because only they are what serves you in this moment. Only they help you to reach your aims. Only they match what lies in your interest. We select many thoughts that we pay attention to based on our interest of doing something, of achieving a certain goal, be it solving a crossword puzzle, explaining the easiest way to the next supermarket, or describing the astonishing color of our new favorite dress as accurately as possible. Even though he cannot explain why, James is nonetheless right when he claims that our interest is what controls our thoughts in a large part. It directs our attention and lets us pick some thoughts over others out of their continuous

stream.[12] However, James does not offer any explanation of what causes our interest as such. What might help us here is the phenomenological concept of *intentionality*, so that is what I turn to in the following section.

3.2. Interest and Intentionality

Intentionality, also referred to as 'directedness' or 'aboutness', is an essential aspect in phenomenological approaches and concepts. In the most basic sense it is "a claim about the *sensefulness* of experience based on the irreducible interrelatedness between embodied consciousness and the surrounding world of significance" (Moran 2018, p. 579). This means that intentionality in the phenomenological use of the word does not only include the relation between a mental act and an object. It also describes the fact that our consciousness does not exist independently and completely detached from the world but is always about something; it is always directed at something. Consciousness is always consciousness about something, which means "that when one perceives or judges or feels or thinks, one's mental state is about or of something" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, p. 109). Thereby, intentionality "involves both *sense-giving* […] and *sense-explication*" (2018, p. 597): we can only bestow sense on what we perceive or experience thanks to intentionality. If we were not conscious *about* something, i.e. our consciousness would not be directed at something, perception or experience would not be possible, at least not in the way it is now. We would not be able to make any sense of it. This is what Moran means when he says that intentionality is sense-giving. In addition, it is also sense-explicating: thanks to intentionality, we are not only able to have experiences but we also get that there is some meaning behind them. We are conscious of the fact that there lies some kind of significance in the pre-given world, independently of us perceiving or experiencing it, but we can engage and interact with it and thereby get to a better understanding of it, at least to a certain extent.

However, there are many things concerning intentionality that phenomenologists do not agree upon, which explains the great number and plurality of related accounts. I mainly understand intentionality in a classical way "as a non-willed openness and responsiveness to others (Waldenfels 2004) and to the world, often involving passive, but nonetheless constituted, preconscious syntheses, harmonies, and attunements" (Moran 2018, p. 582). Intentionality, thus, is rather an essential aspect of our way of being than a conscious decision or behavior. As I understand it, it describes the general openness and directedness of a subject towards the world

[12] Note, though, that interest explains many but not all cases! Sometimes a random thought pops up in our head completely unexpectedly. It even might go against our interest, as in cases when we try to focus but get distracted by our thoughts.

as well as everything that is embedded in it, and functions as a basis for the possibility to perceive the world, to engage and interact with it, or simply put: to live in it. I do not deny, though, that there also is such a thing as a willed form of intentionality that a subject controls and consciously directs at certain things. Although I do not think that this is how intentionality usually works, there are cases where we actively make use of it. This mode of intentionality I will call *controlled* or *active intentionality* in contrast to *passive intentionality* or simply *intentionality* without any further adjectives.

Husserl develops a mode of intentionality that is connected with his notion of horizons and that he accordingly calls *horizonal intentionality*. The idea basically is that objects cannot be understood completely on their own, in an empty space so to say, because they always stand in relation to their surroundings. These surroundings do not only cover the perceiving subject or other objects but rather everything that is or can be experienced, everything that can form part of our conscious life. (Moran 2018, p. 590) Based on that, Moran claims that sense-giving therefore should be understood "as an interactive, collective, social, historically embedded experience, an experience of interconnecting subjects operating within the horizon of the life-world" (Moran 2018, p. 591). Intentionality and the world we live in, hence, stand in a two-way relation. On the one side, intentionality is necessary for our perception of and experiences in the pre-given world. It directs our attention and enables us to choose out of all the perceptions that we theoretically could experience and at the same time practically cannot, because there are simply too many of them – we are not able to consciously process all the experiences that in principle we are able to undergo. On the other side, the world has a great impact on intentionality. The fact that we are open to others and the world in general requires us noticing that there indeed is something more than our own being. What we lean towards, what we intend to do, presupposes some external input but cannot arise merely from within our own being. Thus, our experience of the world is both strongly influencing intentionality and influenced by it.
There are two reasons why I will not deal with the question which happens first, the world influencing intentionality or intentionality opening up the world. First, I consider this to be a chicken-and-egg problem that cannot satisfyingly be solved within a few sentences. Second and more important, I assume that both are co-constitutive and to ask which one comes before the other therefore misses the point.

Another interesting mode of intentionality is brought forward by Merleau-Ponty. He claims that not all intentionality is cognitive or mental but that the body itself also has a certain way to be

directed at objects and the world in general.[13] This bodily leaning-towards-the-world is what he calls *motor intentionality*. Merleau-Ponty does not deny other forms of intentionality but introduces motor intentionality as an additional mode of how a subject can be directed at the world. Indeed, one gets the impression that he considers motor intentionality as more fundamental than other modes, as he says: "consciousness is *originarily* not an 'I think that,' but rather an 'I can.'" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 139; my italics). The body plays an important role in Merleau-Ponty's work and in motor intentionality – it is not the "I think" that structures our experiences but the "I can". Consciousness, Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 140) claims, "is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body". For him as well as for many other phenomenologists, intentionality is a central and necessary aspect to enable the relation of a subject and the life-world. What makes his approach stand out is the crucial role he ascribes to the body with its capabilities and powers through which we gain and understand our experiences.

Let us now turn back to James and the problem I mentioned in the previous section, namely that he does not further explain how exactly interest arises. The main question at this point is why we choose to pay attention to some thoughts but not to others that present themselves to us in the stream of thought. Due to the sheer total amount of thoughts we cannot attend all of them (just like we cannot explicitly pay attention to all sense experiences we perceive) but have to select some over others. According to James, this selection happens based on our interest or will: we pay attention to those thoughts which best serve us to reach a certain goal, to get our will in the broadest sense. This sounds intuitively right, and yet it is unsatisfying since James does not elaborate further on how this exactly works or what interest is in itself.

This is where intentionality might enrich our view. Intentionality is not simply another name for interest but a concept on its own. Whereas interest is usually seen as something cognitive, intentionality in the primal sense describes a way of being, a general directedness, openness, and responsiveness of a subject towards the world. Even though it can be controlled in times, it usually is not. Thoughts are similar in this respect, as we will see later in this chapter (section 3.4) – whereas some can be controlled, others come to us unbidden. However, it is our general openness and tending towards the world that enable us to develop certain interests, which in turn let us select some thoughts rather than others. Intentionality, thus, is the basis for our interests. Perception and experience are never neutral. We perceive some things whereas others go by unnoticed, perceptions of the outer world as well as certain feelings or thoughts. However, things stand out to us from the world in the same way as thoughts stand out to us from the

[13] When not indicated otherwise, with 'body' I refer to Merleau-Ponty's notion of body, that is "not the body I possess, but the body that I live as my own, which has come to be called the *lived body*" (Landes 2013, p. 141).

stream of thought. Being generally open to that and being able to direct one's attention to it are essential for perceiving. And yet, this does not explain why certain things catch our interest while others do not, or why we have certain intentions instead of others. If we, in reference to Husserl, take the world and intentionality to be co-constitutive, it is even dubitable whether we ever can get to a final answer concerning the question of the ultimate cause of interests. Since the world we live in and the intentionality that is an essential trait of us stand in a reciprocal relation, it seems impossible to pin down where exactly our interests arise from. And even if this was possible in theory, practically there are way too many interfering relations and aspects as to consider all of them. To trace back the origin of an interest, we would have to consider for instance social, historical, and individual norms as well as previous experiences, what is simply impossible. On the bright sight, I suppose that all sane human adults know what it is like to be interested in something. We all are familiar with the experience of having an interest, even though we cannot explain exactly how it arises. Taken this for granted I will not further deal with the question how interest arise but rather focus on the phenomenological experience as such.

3.3. Reciprocity and Affectivity in Experiences

Although we do not know (and perhaps never will) what exactly causes our interests, it is beyond question that some things do stand out to us from the world whereas others do not. Likewise, some thoughts stand out to us from the stream of thought. What is it then, apart from interest, that influences, causes, or guides our perception?

According to James (1950a, pp. 255–56), we have a "permanent consciousness of whither our thought is going. It is a feeling like any other, a feeling of what thoughts are next to arise, before they have arisen". In his point of view, we have some sense of direction of our thoughts. What we get while or even before the actual thought arises, is this certain kind of feeling, perhaps an intuition, of what will come next, not an unconscious or puzzling kind of thoughts. "The intention to *say-so-and-so* is the only name" (James 1950a, p. 253) we can ascribe to the feeling that foregoes thoughts, for those feelings are "often so vague that we are unable to name them at all" (James 1950a, p. 254). At the same time, for James, they form part of the stream of thought themselves and do not exist independently of thoughts. James suggests that we speak of a "*psychic overtone*, *suffusion*, or *fringe*, to designate the influence of a faint brain-process upon our thought" (James 1950a, p. 258). Thoughts, thus, always come with a psychic overtone that we often cannot describe precisely.

What James calls psychic overtones seems to depict some sort of affective feeling that accompanies our thoughts. In contrast to the common assumption that having thoughts is rather a cognitive, emotionally neutral process, we also undergo a feeling experience while thinking. This resembles what Slaby (2008, p. 429) claims, namely that

> "a central way of being in touch with the world and with oneself is affective. Intentionality […] is in the most central cases not a cold, detached, purely cognitive affair, but rather constitutively feelings-involving. It is *affective intentionality*."

Most of (if not all) the time, we are not only perceiving but also feeling subjects. We do not neutrally undergo perceptions and independently of them have certain emotional or feeling experiences. Rather, feeling experiences usually are closely connected to sense experiences and, as I suggest, also to experiences of thinking.

On the one hand, feelings, emotions, and moods can influence our perceiving certain things instead of others. This can easily be seen for example when asked which music one wants to listen to. I am sure that very few people who are in an enthusiastic mood decide to listen to deeply saddened songs. The other way round this becomes even more obvious: most people would consider it more than inappropriate to play cheerful music on a funeral.[14] The same holds for thinking. Our thoughts can strongly influence what we perceive. Take for example the situation when you attend a conference with a friend. In the coffee break you lose her but you want to sit next to her during the following presentation. So you go back into the lecture room and start looking for her. You are absolutely sure that she is wearing a white shirt, so you start to scan the rows and only pay attention to those persons who wear white shirts. They are the only ones you actually *see*. However, you cannot find her until finally you become aware of somebody waving at you. It is only then that you realize that your friend is not at all wearing a white shirt but a red one. Assuming that you usually do not identify your friends by the color of their clothes, it was your thought, your absolute certainty or conviction, the image you had before your mind's eye that prevented you from seeing your friend, even though she was sitting right there in front of you the whole time. Our thoughts just like our feelings can thus have great impact on our sense experiences.

On the other hand, our perceptions also influence our feelings and thoughts. We are inclined to watch, listen to, or smell something for some reason or the other, and we do not do this in an emotionally neutral state. Our sense experiences usually give rise to feeling experiences, although we might not always consciously pay attention to them. And yet, when we smell a freshly

[14] Admittedly, the latter might partly be the case due to social norms and conventions. However, it certainly also plays a crucial role that we tend to prefer co-occurring sense and feeling experiences that go along with each other.

baked croissant this usually evokes the desire of eating it (or on the contrary aversion, depending on the individual and situation). Watching a horror movie usually causes feelings of fear. And hearing the voice of our loved ones easily makes us happy. Correspondingly, seeing a shopping mall reminds us that we still have to get a birthday present for our son, touching doorhandles might cause worrying thoughts about bacteria and diseases, and listening to an interesting talk gives rise to all kinds of different thoughts.

As we can easily see, sense experiences and experiences of both feelings and thoughts are strongly connected and heavily influence each other. Moreover, if we turn back to James for a moment, feeling experiences and thoughts also are inextricably linked together – his "psychic overtone" that foregoes and/or accompanies thoughts is nothing else than a certain feeling one gets when having a thought. In many cases it is extremely vague or merely a sense of direction in which our thoughts go. However, it is always there. I agree with James that such overtones exist – some kind of feeling that accompanies our thoughts and, as he puts it, explains "the influence of a faint brain-process upon our thought" (James 1950a, p. 258). In fact, I would even go so far as to claim that thoughts in most (if not all) cases go along with feeling experiences. As we have just seen, sense experiences and feeling experiences are strongly connected, as well as sense experiences and experiences of thoughts. Expanding this, I suggest that experiences of thoughts and feelings are likewise related. Drawing on Husserl's notion of horizonal intentionality, I assume that every experience stands in relation to other experiences just like objects are always related to their surroundings. We always have to include the world in which an object or subject is embedded together with many other objects and subjects. They do not and cannot be utterly independent. Therefore, I think it is only reasonable to assume the same for experiences. An experiencing subject is always embedded in a world together with other subjects and objects that perceive or can be perceived. This results in the consequence that there is also always a great number of possible experiences. Just like the different subjects and objects in the world have an impact on each other, different experiences maintain reciprocal relations, too. Thereby it does not matter if they are sensory, emotional or thought-related. Hence, I agree with James and Slaby but combine and expand their concepts to a broader one, claiming that experiences of each kind stand in relation to others and cannot be completely independent because the subject that undergoes them and the objects they refer to are not independent, either.

Now all these experiences could be taken to be mainly cognitive processes. We experience certain things and then consciously become aware of them, which can be seen as a mental act. Some cases, for instance experiencing pain, clearly involve bodily aspects as well, but this is rather the exception than the rule, one could claim. According to Slaby, however, many people

overlook that there is a strong bodily aspect of feeling experiences in general. This is especially interesting when we think back to Merleau-Ponty's motor intentionality that further plays a crucial role in chapter 5. Yet for the moment, let us focus on what Slaby calls *affective intentionality*. His idea basically is that intentionality, by which he understands "the mind's capacity to be directed at something beyond itself" (Slaby 2008, p. 429), in most cases involves feelings of some kind, i.e. it is affective. Although it is debatable whether affective states always or almost always play a crucial role in intentionality, it certainly does in some cases. What makes Slaby's account particularly interesting for this thesis, though, are his reflections on emotions. In my opinion there are remarkable parallels between his considerations of emotions and the experience of having thoughts. Accordingly, by examining his ideas closer, we can also get a better understanding of the phenomenology of thinking.

Slaby understands emotions as

> "experiential states with intentional content. Emotions are about something. […] Experienced emotions are essentially qualitatively conscious states – they have a 'phenomenal character'. Moreover, intentionality and phenomenality of emotions are no longer seen as separate […] but rather as being essentially united in emotional experience […] in emotional experience, intentionality and phenomenality stand and fall together. […] In an emotion, an aspect of the world is experienced as *significant* in a specific respect." (Slaby 2008, p. 431)

> "Emotions are experiences of significance […] By being pleasant or painful […], affective states move us to act in specific ways." (Slaby 2008, pp. 432–33)

Many of these claims can be applied on thoughts as well: just like emotions, they represent significant aspects of the world we live in and certainly "move us to act in specific ways". Further, thoughts have phenomenal character; there is something that it is like to have a thought even though most of the time we do not pay attention to the experience itself.[15]

Concerning emotions, Slaby further holds the *unification view* which means that intentionality and phenomenality are inextricably connected: if the content of the experience changes, this necessarily also causes a change in the experienced emotion. Likewise, a change in the quality of the experience, that is how it feels like, necessarily causes a change in its content. I will not examine whether this view can be maintained with respect to emotions. For thoughts, however, it is worth an inquiry. Whereas a change in the content of a thought causes the thought to change, the "quality" of a thought does not necessarily need to alter the content of a thought. This will become clearer in chapter 5 when I develop my concept of different styles of thinking.

[15] However, the same counts for sensory experiences. Normally, we do not concentrate on the experience of seeing a chair; we simply see it and take a seat. In fact, paying too much attention to *how* we experience the world would greatly interfere with the normal course of life and therefore would be most inconvenient in daily routine, albeit spending too much time on doing phenomenology certainly can have this effect.

Let me at this point still give a brief example: take for instance a thought about the breakfast you had this morning, more specifically the coffee you drank. Now, if the content changes, namely the coffee, and you instead think of the slice of bread you enjoyed, this clearly is another thought. However, if you change the quality of the thought, the content still might stay the same. Thinking about your breakfast coffee can happen in many different ways. You might remember its color but could also focus on the way it smelled or tasted or what it felt like when it burnt your tongue. Or, in order not to complicate things, let us say that you only think of its color. You might see the color before your mind's eye but you just as well might hear an inner voice saying "brown" or even see the word written down mentally. In all these cases, the content of your thought is the coffee you had, or more specifically its color. How you think about it does not necessarily alter the content of the thought. It is debatable if the content in all of these cases really still stays the same or if we rather think of different aspects of the coffee instead of the coffee as a whole. Additionally, one could claim that the content stays the same but the thought as a whole nonetheless changes. If we take a thought to consist of a content and a certain form, as I assume in chapter 5.1, a change in what Slaby calls quality itself already is sufficient to alter the thought as a whole. Either way, the case is not as clear as with emotions. I therefore neither accept nor reject the unification view for thoughts but stay neutral about it, at least for now.

Let us still have a look at the arguments Slaby presents in order to support the unification view on emotions: the argument of *directness* and the argument of *unwarrantedness*. The argument of directness says that we do not experience emotions in two steps (which would be a neutral representation followed by an emotional evaluation), but we experience them directly and as a whole. I agree with Slaby that emotions are experienced directly as a whole and do not depend on active evaluation. Of course, we can ponder on our emotions and evaluate them in many ways, but this happens *after* we had the experience of them. When we experience anger or fear we immediately feel it and do not first need to rationally evaluate the situation. The same holds for thoughts – we always experience thoughts as a whole. We do not need to perform several steps to finally get to experience a thought; it simply presents itself to us. Even when we are highly concentrated, for example in the process of solving a complicated problem or when writing a philosophy paper, we do not first experience several single parts and then put them together to a thought. And yet we certainly do undergo chains of thoughts. Just like moods include different emotions that follow each other in a certain way, several thoughts can create a chain of thoughts. However, the experience of a thought as such is as direct as the experience of an

emotion or the experience of seeing a kangaroo. We simply experience it, there is no way of splitting it up and there is no mistaking in us having the experience.

The second argument refers to unwarranted emotions. According to Slaby, we can get involved in emotional conflicts in a way that is not possible for rational judgements or beliefs. More specifically, we can have emotions despite the fact that we know they are inappropriate or at least not necessary in the situation we find ourselves in. For example, we can know that we are perfectly safe and still be afraid to death, as it happens for instance to many people who suffer from aviophobia. Thus, following Slaby, we undergo a contradictory experience concerning our emotions. In contrast to that, he claims, it is not possible to truly maintain a contradictory belief: one cannot truly believe that p and non-p at the same time. I agree with Slaby that we can experience unwarranted emotions. Indeed, we can also have unwarranted thoughts, thoughts that we perfectly well know to be inappropriate, that go against our values and beliefs, or that even frighten us. Regarding both, emotions and thoughts, we lack a certain kind of control. Moreover, there certainly is a contradictory element in the experience of unwarranted emotions or thoughts. However, Slaby fails to correctly identify the relata of this contradiction. His comparison to contradictory beliefs such as maintaining p and non-p at the same time seems to suggest that he talks about contradictory emotions of the same sort. This would mean that we have an emotion and at the same time do not have it – which is just as impossible as truly believing that p and non-p at once. The contradiction, hence, cannot lie in the emotion itself but is rather situated in its relation to our evaluation of the situation. We might perfectly well know that flying is an extraordinarily secure way of travelling and still be scared to death when entering a plane. And yet we are not confused about the emotional experience we have – we are perfectly sure about us being scared. The emotion is unwarranted because of our belief that it is inappropriate. This does not mean, though, that we experience fear and at the same time do not experience fear. Thoughts function in the same way. We cannot have and not have a thought at the same time – our experience is perfectly clear in this regard. Nonetheless, it is surely possible to experience unwarranted thoughts as supposedly most of us very well know. This is another interesting aspect of the phenomenology of thinking, especially in the context of the *control* we have over our thoughts. I come back to this in the next section as well as in chapter 4 when I speak about different types of thoughts.

What further can be derived from the previous argument is this: given that a subject is sane and does not find herself in some sort of mentally ill condition, she does not mistake her experience. I would even go so far as to say she *cannot* be mistaken in her experience. What is prone to error is the *interpretation* of it, the explanation we sometimes try to ascribe to it, as well as the

memory of it. But the experience as such, as a subject has it, is exactly what she experiences. There is no possibility of mis-experiencing.[16] Further, as we also have seen in this section, all kinds of experiences are deeply connected to other ones. Sense, feeling, and thought experiences do not occur independently but heavily influence and regularly cause each other. Hence, it is dubitable if there are any non-affective evaluations at all. On the contrary, I suppose that more often than not one undergoes some kind of affection when having an experience. It might not always be as strong as the emotion of fear but many times rather of the vague sense that James describes. Nevertheless, there is always something there. This in turn brings us back to Slaby's claim that all intentionality is affective. As quoted above, he maintains that "a central way of being in touch with the world and with oneself is affective." (Slaby 2008, p. 429) Due to the reasons just stated I agree with him. For the phenomenology of having thoughts, i.e. the experience of thinking, this means that thought experiences are never purely cognitive but always go along with a feeling-related aspect. With respect to the debate on cognitive phenomenology (see chapter 2), we can therefore say that even if thought experiences are cognitive experiences, they never occur on their own.

Concerning the aim of this thesis, to find out what it is like to have a thought, we have gained an important insight: the experience of thinking is necessarily an affective experience to a certain extent. Affective feelings play a crucial role in both influencing and causing thoughts and experiences thereof. On the one hand, this further complicates the matter because it expands the scope of the topic even more.[17] On the other hand, it provides sound reason to at any rate cast a quick glance at the phenomenological structure of emotions to see if there can be found some more parallels to that of thoughts.

Both emotions and thoughts differ from sense experiences insofar as they are gained differently. Sense experiences are immediate in the sense that a subject perceives an object in the world and has a related experience. For example, she sees a red house and immediately experiences the perception. Seeing the red house is a direct result of her seeing. Emotions and thoughts, in contrast, maintain a different relationship to the world since we do not have designated emotion- or thought-organs directed at the outer world. If we experience them in relation to the external world, these experiences are so to say mediate. We need a sense experience of the external

[16] In fact, I believe that even subjects who suffer from mental diseases are not undergoing any mis-experiences. If someone for example has auditory hallucinations, we cannot say that her experience of hearing voices is wrong. She very well does hear these voices. What leads us to say that the experiences are somehow 'extraordinary' (or in many cases insane) is the fact that there is no external correspondent of the kind one usually needs to experience a voice (namely, someone who speaks). There are many possibilities of how to deal with auditory hallucinations but this is neither the topic here nor am I an expert in this area, which is why I won't go in depth. What is important, though, is the fact that the experience as such is not wrong or untrue in any sense.

[17] Due to limited time and space it will not be possible to exhaustingly take emotions into account as well.

world in order to have emotions or thoughts caused by it. For sure, emotions and thoughts themselves can trigger other feeling or thought experiences; they still can be directed at or about the external world without necessarily being bound to sensory perception. But they are not caused by objects in the world in the same immediate way as sense experiences are.

Moreover, there is also another aspect in which sense experiences differ from feeling and thought experiences. Take for instance the situation when you buy a new scarf. In the store you see it as dark grey but when you look at it again at home you notice that it is rather dark greenish. Now what is the *real* color of the scarf – grey or green? Is it both? Or neither nor? Philosophers have pondered over this problem for quite a long time. One possible solution is proposed by Merleau-Ponty who suggests that there are *optimal conditions* under which an object is best perceived: "For each object, just as for each painting in an art gallery, there is an optimal distance from which it asks to be seen […] beneath or beyond which we merely have a confused perception due to excess or lack." (Merleau-Ponty 2012, pp. 315–16)[18] It is these optimal conditions that allow us to see the true color of an object. In terms of colors, this involves for example the ideal lighting, perhaps also the angle in which we look at it, or other aspects. Needless to say, these conditions depend on the intentions of the perceiving subject. When you look at a painting to experience and appreciate it as an artwork, you most likely need to position yourself in some distance to it, depending on the artwork's size, the way it is painted, your eyesight, and so on. If you are interested in the painting's brushwork instead, you need to step much closer to the painting to get the best view for your aims. The optimal conditions for the best perception obviously differ in both cases. This is not to say that it is always clear what the optimal conditions of perception are or that it is easy to figure them out. It might even be impossible at times. And yet, it seems plausible to assume their existence due to both theoretical reflection and daily life experiences.[19]

Turning now back to feeling and thought experiences, I deny that there are corresponding optimal conditions for our experiencing them. In contrast to seeing a painting, listening to a concert,

[18] Note that there is a normative aspect to this account. I'm not quite sure what to make of that and intuitively would rather be careful in this respect. However, there is unfortunately no space to dwell on the relation between perception and normativity in this thesis.

[19] One might say that the main characteristic of optimal conditions is that we exactly do *not* concentrate on or wonder about the truth of the color's quality. On the contrary, in an ideal situation the color stays in the background and is not thematized. Yet this is not an objection to Merleau-Ponty's concept. Firstly, there is simply no need to look for the optimal view any longer when we already have found it. Accordingly, we obviously do not thematize the color as such in these cases. Secondly, we perhaps *should* start paying more attention to our experiences themselves in order to learn more about them and to meet the optimal conditions more often. However, although phenomenologists are interested and probably willing to do this, for most laymen this is assumingly neither reasonable nor necessary but only causes trouble in their daily routine.

or tasting a fruit, which all require optimal conditions to perceive their true qualities, undergoing emotions and having thoughts do not. It is hard to support this claim with examples since I decidedly propose that something is *not* the case. Hence, I could only offer examples where there are no optimal conditions needed, but a single counterexample that might escape my notion would challenge the whole view. Nonetheless, I wonder what optimal conditions for experiencing emotions and thoughts should be. Let us start with emotions, more precisely fear, for fear is a strong feeling that everybody is familiar with. Now, can we think of any optimal conditions for the experience of fear? In fact, we can. Thinking back to unwarranted emotions, one could claim that the ideal condition for being scared is that there actually is a reason for feeling fear. Whereas aviophobia in most cases does not make much sense, being scared when stumbling upon a wild boar on the weekly Sunday stroll is quite decent. Therefore, one could call the conditions in the latter case optimal. Albeit this sounds reasonable, the case still differs from sense experiences: whereas in sensory perception we de facto need ideal conditions to experience the true quality of an object, this is not the case with emotions. Even though there might not be a rational reason for our emotion, we still experience it in its true form (if one will say so). The fact that there is no real reason to be scared does not change the essential quality of our experience. We do experience fear in either case, with or without reasonable cause – this is exactly what makes us notice that our emotions are unwarranted in times. So, there might be some sort of optimal conditions for the experience of emotions, but they fall into the realms of our cognitive categorization; they do not concern our perception as such. The same also pertains to thoughts. While they might be unwarranted at times, we do not need any special conditions to discover their true qualities. In fact, neither emotions nor thoughts pose the same problem as objects in the external world because their qualities are not exposed to the same conditions; lighting, temperature, distance, and the like do not affect them.

On these grounds, there is a strong probability that the structure of thought experiences is far more similar to the one of feeling experiences than to that of sense experiences. I therefore once more turn to Slaby and his considerations in chapter 5.

3.4. Agency and Control in Thinking

In the last section we have seen that experiences of every kind are deeply intertwined – sense, feeling, and thought experiences influence and cause each other. Further, thoughts are always accompanied by feeling experiences and structurally resemble them in a certain way. In the context of unwarranted emotions and thoughts, I touched upon a certain power or *control* we often have over our thoughts. Let me at this point make some brief remark on the notion of

agency that relevantly differs from what I call control. Following Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, p. 160), I take agency to involve two aspects:

> "First, there is an *experiential sense of agency* that comes along with action at the pre-reflective level, the first-order level of consciousness – the level at which I have a sense that I am moving, even if I am not aware of the precise details of my movements. Second, there is the *attribution of agency* that I can make if asked about my action. [… T]he experiential sense of agency is more basic than the attribution of agency, which depends on it."

The concept of agency basically says that a subject has a certain sense of being the agent of her actions, although she does not always consciously reflect this sense, and she also correctly ascribes her actions to herself.

When we experience thoughts, agency usually is given. This becomes especially apparent in cases that depart from the norm, for example in the pathological case of thought insertion. Patients who suffer from this mental disease claim that someone else puts thoughts in their heads or uses their brains to think. A common explanation for this experience is that they lack a feeling of agency.[20] Mentally sane subjects, however, do not experience their thoughts as evoked or inserted by others, yet at the same time they are not always in full control over their thinking. When I talk about a lack of control, I do explicitly not mean a lack of agency. A lack of control does not involve the feeling of external causes for the own actions or behavior. It is rather the feeling that arises when we do something – be it wagging a foot, chewing on one's lip, or thinking of a lost love – and feel unable to stop doing it, even though we perfectly well know that we could. Despite this theoretical knowledge, the feeling of lacking control in such cases persists (and quite often we do not stop doing what we do).

Concerning thoughts, most people would presumably claim to be able to control them. But this is only partially true. This will become clear in this section, where I focus on *voluntary* and *involuntary thinking*. While in voluntary thinking control is given, in involuntary thinking we experience a lack of it. Note, though, that these concepts are idealized and simplified to a certain extent. Many times we might find ourselves somewhere in between the ends of the spectrum, noticing that we have some sort of power but are not in full control over our thoughts or emotions. For the sake of clarity I will still concentrate on idealized cases, because I think focusing on them is the best way to discover the general and basic structures of the phenomenology of thinking.

As the title of this chapter indicates, I maintain that there are different *ways of thinking*, which means that we *do* different things when we think. In the following, I present some examples of

[20] See therefore for example Ratcliffe 2017, pp. 66–70, who refers to but also challenges this popular view.

ways of thinking and describe what phenomenologically happens in them. James provides some rich and detailed descriptions that serve as a good starting and reference point. We will see that there is not merely one way to think but there are many ways which bring along notably different experiences. Thus, we cannot simply speak of the 'one and only' phenomenology of thinking but have to access it carefully and consider its various forms.

When paying attention to what takes place in their minds, most people will find a variety of different things going on. Everyday language also reflects this: we are not only able to *think* but we can reason, guess, reckon, consider, reflect, ponder, cogitate, and so on. Besides, we can also imagine, daydream, hallucinate, and much more. Understandably enough, James states: "It is by no means easy to decide […] how the peculiar thinking process called reasoning differs from other thought-sequences which may lead to similar results." (James 1950b, p. 325) "Reason is only one out of a thousand possibilities in the thinking of each of us." (James 1950a, p. 552) Thinking happens in many different ways and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish and describe all of them in an adequate manner. Nonetheless, James picks out a few and gives detailed descriptions of their phenomenologies: besides 'recalling a forgotten name', he mentions the cases of 'problem solving' and 'reasoning', all of which he subsumes under the broader term of *voluntary thinking*. This means that we do not simply observe our stream of thought but in some way exert control over the thoughts and guide them in a certain direction. What happens now in voluntary thinking is the following: we focus on a topic, on something we want to do or to know, i.e. we have an interest in something. This interest creates a gap – we urge to fill this gap with a matching thought, and this urge "influences us in an intensely active and determinate psychic way" (James 1950a, p. 258). A vivid example for this urge is the case when we fail to produce the correct word, although we know that we usually have it available, such as trying to recall a forgotten name (be it for a person or a thing, James does not specify on that). We want to say something and try to come up with the right word but fail to do so. This experience is especially valuable for phenomenological considerations because it causes us to pay attention to the thinking process itself. Since it does not work out in the usual way, we start to figure out where the problem lies. Thereby, we recognize what it feels like to think, or rather what it feels like to *fail* to think. For some people it apparently feels like they have the missing word right there lying on their tongue, but it refuses to come out. This explains why the phenomenon is also known as the *tip of the tongue phenomenon*. Personally, I have a different experience in times. When missing a certain word, I claim to actually feel how my brain starts working. It is very difficult to put this experience into words and I perfectly well know that it is not possible to feel the neurons firing in my brain. And yet, I feel *something*

happening up there. Perhaps the experience can best be compared to the unsuccessful attempt to wiggle one's ears. Given that you are not able to wiggle your ears but intend to do so, you will concentrate very hard on your aim and try to activate the right group of muscles. Most likely, the attempt will fail because of lacking muscular strength or because the wrong group of muscles is addressed. Nonetheless, there is something that it is like to try to wiggle your ears. And, at least to me, this resembles the experience I have when attempting to recall a forgotten word. Besides the gap that opens up and that evokes my urge to fill it, there is also a feeling of a specific kind of concentration. Curiously, according to James, the distinct gaps that missing words cause feel differently (James 1950a, p. 251), they differ qualitatively from each other. I do not agree with this: the feeling caused by the gaps of missing words is the same feeling in all cases, namely a feeling of absence (or perhaps more adequately: a feeling of longing for something absent). The difference rather lies in the feelings that are provoked when we try to come up with the missing word and therefore test several ones to see if one fits. Our intuition usually tells us if these test-words are rather close or far away from the word we are looking for, or as James puts it: "When these surge up, we have a peculiar feeling that we are 'warm', as the children say when they play hide and seek" (James 1950a, p. 584). The initial feeling of the gap itself, however, does not differ.

Let us also cast a quick glance at the cases of 'problem solving' and 'reasoning'. The latter is probably what most people first have in mind when we talk about thinking.[21] For James, it is the art of knowing what to overlook, to "be able to extract […] the right characters for our conclusion" (James 1950b, p. 343). His idea, basically, is this: when we reason, we have a certain interest. We try to come up with the correct thought to gratify this interest. In our stream of consciousness, many and more thoughts pass by, but reasoning does not merely consist of picking out some of those. Reasoning, in contrast to mere association, is productive rather than reproductive (James 1950b, p. 330) – we do not only reproduce things we already know in the way we know them, but we combine them to create new ones. A reasoner, to come back to the topic, takes a fact, "breaks it up and notices some one of its separate attributes. This attribute he takes to be the essential part of the whole fact before him" (James 1950b, p. 330). What he does is an abstract analysis, based on which he connects one thing with another. He combines already known aspects in a new way and thereby gains knowledge. In contrast to association, which happens automatically and without any intention, in reasoning the connection between

[21] In everyday life, we often tend to equate thinking with reasoning. In my opinion, this understanding is far too narrow. I do not give an exact definition but besides reasoning also consider other mental activities such as day-dreaming, wondering, or imagining as thinking. Thinking, in my understanding, is basically everything that we can do with thoughts.

two thoughts is sought *actively*. (James 1950b, p. 329) To do this in the most efficient way, it is necessary to limit oneself to the *essential* attributes instead of taking *all* or at least too many attributes into account. This is how James comes to the claim that "in reasoning, we pick out essential qualities" (James 1950b, p. 329) (and use them to detect relations between thoughts, to derive conclusions, and the like).

It can easily be seen that there are similarities in recalling and reasoning. In both cases we have a certain interest that we follow. Further, we have control and actively direct our thoughts towards the chosen end – albeit it is obviously a different question, whether we succeed. The difference, then, lies therein that in the first case we merely need to grasp something already familiar to us, whereas in the second case we need to draw on known things and recombine them to something new. In both cases, the experiences go along with certain feelings, such as for instance frustration, eagerness, anger, motivation, or others. These feelings (as well as emotions and moods) might not only be caused or influenced by the thinking experiences but most likely also have a certain impact on our experiencing them. If we are already furious, not being able to recall a certain word will rather provoke anger than eagerness. In contrast, being overjoyed will rather motivate us in our reasoning than give rise to frustration.

The last case of voluntary thinking discussed by James is problem solving. According to him (James 1950a, p. 584), the "solution of problems is the most characteristic and peculiar sort of voluntary thinking". Phenomenologically, it is similar to recalling a forgotten name. Again, in both cases we desire to fill a gap. "The great difference between the effort to recall things forgotten and the search after the means to a given end, is that the latter have not, whilst the former have, already formed a part of our experience." (James 1950b, p. 585) While in the case of a forgotten name we already possess or at least once have possessed the missing piece, in solving a problem we need to somehow come up with a new thought. Therefore, we can understand recalling as a form of remembering, whereas solving a problem rather appears to be a form of reasoning.

In general, it is very hard to figure out phenomenological details and differences between different ways of thinking, especially when we keep in mind that most certainly individual variations occur. There are many more than the three ways James takes up and I mention here. However, they suffice to show that we can do many different things when we think, which is why we need to be careful and precise when talking about the related phenomenology. Nevertheless,

all ways of voluntary thinking share the characteristic of directedness in order to achieve a certain goal and a sense of control to some extent.[22]

Opposed to voluntary thinking stand cases where we do not actively think but simply let our stream of thought pass by without pursuing any specific goal, paying attention to some thoughts that stand out of the stream seemingly by themselves. I call this *involuntary thinking*.

We experience involuntary thinking quite often in daily life, what becomes apparent in utterances like "I have no idea where this thought came from". This is especially the case when the thought in question is fairly weird. Consider the following example: you take a walk in the city, dwelling on thoughts, perhaps fantasizing about your next holidays. You go into a park and pass some children playing on a playground. Across from you, a woman walks her dog and suddenly, out of the blue, this thought appears in your head: "Why not kick the dog and see if I can make it fly some meters?"[23] Now this thought clearly is not controlled, perhaps it is even unwanted because it strongly goes against your values and beliefs. Thoughts like this can be called *disruptive thoughts* since they usually disrupt the ongoing stream of thought and come to us if we like or not.[24] I say more about different types of thoughts in chapter 4. For the moment, though, it is sufficient to show that we have control over some thoughts whereas we experience a lack of it over others.

Whereas it is pretty clear which role intentionality plays in voluntary thinking (namely it enables us to develop certain interests that then motivate us to drive our thoughts in certain directions), it seems to be different for involuntary thinking. Involuntary thinking does not involve any conscious interest we try to gratify. On the contrary, sometimes our thoughts are even unwanted, as we just have seen. However, if we understand intentionality as an openness or responsiveness to the world, it is fundamental for involuntary thinking as well. To pick up the

[22] Remarkably, though, it does not lie in a thinker's power to actively find the results she wishes for. Empirically, we can increase the chances of stumbling over a forgotten word or a yearned for solution through the application of certain techniques, but we cannot enforce them. Our mental faculty "can certainly not create ideas or summon them *ex abrupto*. Its power is limited to selecting amongst those which the associative machinery has already introduced or tends to introduce" (James 1950a, p. 594). Hence, the "*results* of reasoning may be hit upon by accident" (James 1950b, pp. 338–39).

[23] This example is inspired by Ratcliffe (2017, p. 68) who offers a very similar one, namely "Why not punch him on the nose and see how he reacts?"

[24] And yet, not all involuntary thoughts necessarily disrupt our stream of thought as I noticed this morning when I woke up. The very first thought that came to my mind was literally: "I don't want you to be the guy who calls me a stupid fish." Now, this thought did neither stand in relation to my dreams that night nor did it interrupt any ongoing stream of thought, since it was the very first thought that came to my mind after waking up. I experienced it as an inner voice, hearing the sentence in English and very clear. In accordance with what I claimed earlier, it also was accompanied with and caused certain feelings – while having it, I felt a hush of outrage and resoluteness. Right after the thought experience I felt slight astonishment and amusement to such a great degree that it made me laugh out aloud. I have absolutely no idea where this thought came from nor what to make of it. However, it was quite a nice and handy surprise to experience it only several hours after writing down the part of involuntary thinking, as it gave me the chance to examine its phenomenology in detail.

example from above, we would not think about kicking the dog without perceiving it. Although we do not aim at causing this thought, it is only possible to have it due to our leaning-towards the world, i.e. our intentionality.

One might object, that there are also thoughts that seemingly come out of nowhere, where we cannot figure out any stimulus or cause, neither internal nor external. For them, one might claim, intentionality is not relevant. We can meet this objection at least in two ways: firstly, the fact that we are not always able to track down and name a thought's exact stimulus does not mean that there is none. The number of perceptions we have is incredibly high and it is simply not possible for any human being to consciously process and attend all of them. Nonetheless, recalling Husserl's concept of *horizonal intentionality*, nothing exists completely independent from the rest of the world. Any object always stands in relation to its surroundings, just like any thought experience always stands in relation to other experiences, as I have argued in section 3.3. Admittedly, this does not change the experience we have. When we are not able to find any stimulus, we *feel* like there is none, no matter whether this is right or wrong. But secondly, even if we give in to the first objection, this does not undermine the general role intentionality plays for our experiencing thoughts. As I have argued in section 3.2, intentionality is the necessary basis for creating interests and therefore for voluntary thinking. Additionally, it is also indispensable for us being in the world and perceiving it through our body. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty who advocates *motor intentionality*, I consider intentionality as absolutely relevant for having thoughts. This will become clearer in chapter 5, where I argue that thinking is inextricably connected with our bodily capacities and relies on it to a great degree. Further, as we already have seen, thoughts are always accompanied by some feeling experiences, which makes Slaby's account of *affective intentionality* relevant for both voluntary and involuntary thoughts. Thus, different modes of intentionality play a crucial role in the overall experience of thinking, voluntary as well as involuntary.

An interesting case in respect of voluntary versus involuntary thinking is *imagination*. Whereas sometimes we actively use our imagination to fill in a gap, on other occasions a stimulus triggers imagination and an image pops up in our head without us being able to do anything against it. Imagine for instance that you are invited to a party and think about what you should wear. Your interest lies in composing the perfect outfit, which is why you mentally display various combinations of clothes. You see them before your inner eye and only stop thinking about them the moment you decide what you will wear (or perhaps you continue creating new combinations just to see if something even better comes to your mind). In this case, you use your imagination in order to solve the problem (question, challenge, whatever you prefer) of the party-outfit.

Your thought clearly is directed by your goal and aims at filling the thereby created gap. Your thinking is voluntary. In contrast, when I tell you a story about a blue elephant and describe what it looks like in detail, you see a blue elephant before your mind's eye, and even in case I explicitly ask you not to think of the blue elephant I describe, you cannot help but visualize it. In this case, the thought escapes your control, which is why this would be a case of involuntary thinking. Both times, we deal with imagination, i.e. a way of thinking, though.[25]

This ambiguity that imagining involves, being in some cases voluntary and in others involuntary, brings up the question whether this also counts for other ways of thinking. Do we always exert some kind of control over our thoughts when recalling forgotten words and problem solving, which are similarly structured as we have seen above? I do not think so. No matter how hard we try and how much time we spend on it, sometimes we simply fail to recall a missing word. However, it happens quite frequently that several hours or even a day later we suddenly remember it. Presumably, even though we enervated give up after some time, our brain subconsciously keeps working on it. When it then succeeds and presents us with the searched for word, to us it appears to come out of nowhere. We do not know how or why we remember, and experience the related thought as involuntary (although it most certainly is not unwanted). The same happens within the process of problem solving. While actively pondering on a certain problem might not lead us anywhere, some time after having stopped to deal with it we suddenly see clear and know what to do.[26] Again, this does not mean that our brain stops dealing with the problem; on the contrary, our neurons probably still fire wildly. But we do not engage actively in the process, we do not consciously feel anything going on, and thus experience the thereby provoked thoughts not as controlled but as coming to us unwarrantedly. One could object, however, that in these cases the way of thinking as such, namely the activities of recalling a forgotten word and problem solving, is not experienced at all, neither as voluntary nor as unvoluntary. What we do experience is a single thought, the outcome of a subconscious process. Thus, in these cases we cannot speak of involuntary recalling or problem solving but only single thoughts are experienced as involuntary. This does not any longer differ from the case of unsolicited thoughts I have discussed above. I am willing to accept this objection but

[25] Although my examples both deal with visual imagination, we are not limited to that but also can imagine music, tastes, smells, and so on.

[26] Some famous scientists such as the chemist August Kekule or the Nobel Prize Winner Otto Loewi claim to have stumbled over brilliant solutions or ideas when not actively thinking about the underlying problem anymore, for example in dreaming. However, it is not entirely clear if these reports are completely reliable, or if they rather exaggerated a bit in behalf of a better vending story.

still maintain that the cases presented by James can be experienced as involuntary as well. Let us therefore turn to the process of reasoning.

Reasoning, at first sight, always seems to be performed voluntarily. Its subject i) aims at a certain goal, and ii) directs her thoughts in the corresponding direction. How could this possibly happen involuntarily? The crucial point here is that the subject does not lack control over the direction in which she directs her thoughts but rather over the whole thinking *process*. I suppose that especially many scientists and philosophers are familiar with this experience. They tend to analyze everything, to dissect jokes as well as social relations, to over-think even the smallest matters, and cannot help do it. This might be due to years of training in corresponding thinking and a thereby caused habit, or individuals who are already inclined to think a lot tend to choose scientific professions. However that may be, the important point is this: one in fact can totally lack control over her reasoning process and be utterly helpless, unable to stop thinking. This is not even an uncommon problem at all. Many people report to be unable to stop thinking and to suffer from it, for instance because it prevents them from falling asleep or from living in the moment. This suggests that we can experience a lack of control in *any* way of thinking, be it problem solving, reasoning, imagining, or anything else. The lack of control in these cases does not refer to singular thoughts but to the thinking process as a whole.

It still makes sense to uphold the distinction between voluntary and involuntary thinking since both forms clearly exists. We should be careful, though, to strictly pair them with certain ways of thinking as opposed to others.

3.5. In a Nutshell

In this chapter I have discussed several fundamental concepts and argued that we can do many different things with our thoughts, which is why we have to be careful with general claims concerning the phenomenology of thinking. In doing so, I have referred to different concepts and philosophers, mainly William James, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jan Slaby.

As we have seen in section 3.1, James holds that thoughts form part of the stream of thought and are connected to each other via association. I suggested to differentiate between the stream of thought that only contains thoughts and the stream of consciousness that contains all conscious experiences, which includes the stream of thought as well. In order to find out which thoughts stand out to us from the stream of thought, James identifies interest as the central aspect but fails to explain how interest itself arises. To shed some light on this, I turned to the phenomenological concept of intentionality, which I understand as a general openness and responsiveness to the world, rather as an aspect of being than as a cognitive process. Further, I

considered three more refined modes of intentionality: Husserl's horizonal intentionality, Merleau-Ponty's motor intentionality, and Slaby's affective intentionality. The concept of horizonal intentionality suggests that all objects are related to their surroundings; they are never absolutely independent from the world and other objects but maintain certain relations to each other. This causes a two-way relation in which the world influences intentionality and vice versa. I assume that their relation is co-constitutive which is why it does not make much sense to ask which comes before the other. Alternatively, Merleau-Ponty takes the body itself to be directed at the world. According to his motor intentionality, there is a bodily leaning-towards-the-world that is essential for both gaining and understanding experiences. Last, Slaby maintains that being in touch with the world means being affected by it. A subject is in most cases not cold and detached from the world. Instead, intentionality constitutively involves feelings and is therefore affective. I used these modes of intentionality at different places to argue for my points. We further have seen that intentionality forms the basis for developing interests as well as for the possibility of having experiences, but it cannot explain in detail how and why we have certain interests and not others. However, this is not of great importance for this thesis. Sane human adults know what it is like to be interested, although it is still not entirely clear how these interests arise. In the further examination of the phenomenology of thinking we can neglect this question without causing any problems.

As we have seen in the context of James' considerations, thought experiences are always accompanied by feeling experiences. I have argued that in fact all kinds of experiences are strongly connected with and heavily influence others. Referring to Husserl's notion of horizonal intentionality, I claimed that experiences always relate to other experiences just like objects always stand in relation to other objects.

Drawing on Slaby, I showed that there are good reasons to assume structural similarities between the phenomenology of emotions and the phenomenology of thoughts. Both share several characteristics, such as a phenomenal character, the representation of significant aspects of the world, and the fact that they motivate us to act in specific ways. Further, thoughts and emotions both are experienced directly and as a whole and can be unwarranted or even unwanted at times. Since one could object that all these characteristics also might count for sense experiences, I presented two additional differences between feeling and thought experiences at the one side and sense experiences on the other side. First, the former refer to the world in a mediate sort of way due to the fact that we have no designated emotion- or thought-organs that are directed at the external world. In contrast, sense experiences are gained by corresponding organs and thereby immediately relate to objects in the world. Second, in reference to Merleau-Ponty, we

can identify optimal conditions for sensory perception, while there are no equivalent optimal conditions for feeling or thought experiences. Since they are not immediately connected to objects in the world, factors like lighting condition or distance do not affect them. On these grounds, it seems promising to have another look at Slaby's considerations concerning emotions, which I do in chapter 5.

Last, I turned to different ways of thinking, i.e. different things we do with our thoughts. I set the focus on three examples presented by James, namely recalling a forgotten word, problem solving, and reasoning, all of which he subsumes under the term of voluntary thinking. His phenomenological descriptions of these ways provided a good starting point. The aim of discussing these cases was to discover any possible similarities between them that could reveal some general insights in the phenomenological structure of thought experiences, as well as showing that there actually are many different ways of thinking. We have seen that all three ways share several aspects: a given interest, some sort of control the thinker exercises over her thoughts, and accompanying feeling experiences. All of this supports the considerations and claims in the previous sections. As opposed to voluntary thinking, I then introduced involuntary thinking, in which subjects experience a lack of control, i.e. a feeling of not being able to stop even though one theoretically knows to be able to stop. This is not to be confused with a lack of sense of agency that is typical for pathological cases but otherwise is given in both voluntary and involuntary thinking. Finally, examining imagination led us to the discovery that all ways of thinking can be experienced voluntarily and involuntarily. This is the case because a lack of control can concern singular thoughts as well as whole thinking processes. Hence, we need to be careful in pairing up voluntary or involuntary thinking with certain ways of thoughts.

As has become clear throughout this chapter, examining the phenomenology of thought experiences is far from easy since they are inextricably intertwined with all other kinds of experiences. Moreover, thought experiences themselves are multi-faceted. We obviously can do many different things with our thoughts, i.e. there are many different ways of thinking, but to extrapolate their phenomenological differences in detail is very difficult. Nonetheless, phenomenological concepts such as different modes of intentionality, the streams of consciousness and thought, and my notion of control together with detailed observations and descriptions as well as comparisons to the structure of feeling experiences can help us to gain a better understanding of what it is like to think.

4. Types of Thoughts

In the last chapter, I showed that different modes of intentionality play an important role for developing interests and choosing some thoughts instead of others as well as for gaining and understanding experiences as such.[27] We have further seen that we can do many things with our thoughts, which is to say that we can perform different ways of thinking. These different ways of thinking differ phenomenologically from each other, but it is very hard to pin down the details. The question arises if it is only the whole way of thinking, i.e. a certain process, that can be distinguished phenomenologically, or if there are also different *types of thoughts*. If it turns out that our experiences of some thoughts structurally differ from those of others, the obvious question is whether this can be ascribed to variations in the essential nature of thoughts. In this chapter, I present one suggestion to classify different types of thoughts. Therefore, I first look at the nature of thoughts to see if we can find any characteristics that serve as a basis for this classification. Again, James' considerations serve as a starting point. James identifies ownership and uniqueness as essential properties of thoughts. However, his concept of uniqueness does not persist if we take up a phenomenological perspective, since (although ontologically speaking we might never have the same thought twice) we feel like we can have one and the same thought several times. Further, he suggests that every thought contains an object, that is a propositional content and a form of delivery, yet he fails to point out the difference between a thought and its object, which is why I reject this idea. We will see that the identification of differing forms and contents of thoughts by themselves does not help to distinguish different types of thoughts. What enables us to come up with a classification is rather the way we experience them. This becomes apparent in James' identification of what he calls substantial and transitive thoughts. Albeit this distinction in principle makes sense, it is too wide and fails to capture the multidimensional structure and multifaceted nature of thoughts. Therefore, I propose an alternative based on Seeger that takes our experiences of thoughts into account. I show that we can at least distinguish directed, real inserted, and unsolicited thoughts while the latter can again be subdivided. The suggested classification is moreover closely connected to different phenomenological concepts such as those of ownership and agency, modes of intentionality, the role of the stream of thought, and the notion of control. In the third section, I try to conflate the categorization with these concepts. As we will see, ownership and agency is given for all types of thoughts, while they differ in the amount of control we have over them. Furthermore,

[27] Parts of this chapter are adaptions from an essay I handed in for the seminar „Hallucinations in Philosophy and Psychiatry" in the summer semester 2017 at the Universität Wien.

some types are strongly connected to certain modes of intentionality, while others are not. Finally, I suggest that in contrast to directed and streaming thoughts, disruptive thoughts do not form part of the stream of thought but instead are situated outside of it in the stream of consciousness.

4.1. Characterizing Thoughts

In a first step, let us have a look at James' characterization of thoughts in order to see if he identifies any essential characteristics or differences that provide an adequate basis for an abundant classification of different types of thoughts. As we will see, this is not the case. However, James offers a precise description of two ways in which we experience thoughts and takes this to differentiate between what he calls *substantive* and *transitive thoughts*.

For James (1950a, p. 237), thoughts are continuos. He does not explicitly say if *every* thought forms part of the stream of thought, but as he does not mention any other possibility even though he talks quite a bit about the topic it seems very likely. In addition, he proposes some other characteristics of thoughts: for every thought occurs in a subject and cannot immediately be passed to another subject, a thought is always owned by its thinker (James 1950a, p. 226); it depends on a subject, which means it is constantly dependent on a particular consciousness. If there is no one who thinks it, a thought cannot exist. Besides, according to James, every thought is unique and "only bears a resemblance of kind with our other thoughts of the same fact. When the identical fact recurs, we *must* think of it in a fresh manner" (James 1950a, p. 233). In James' perspective, it is not only the case that two different subjects cannot have the same thought but even one and the same subject never has the exact same thought twice. What can reappear is a similar thought about the same fact, but not the thought as such.

This is a strong claim and we should be careful to accept it without further reflection. What does James exactly mean when he talks about the uniqueness of thoughts? Since he allows that we think of the same matter twice, he cannot be aiming at the content of thoughts, i.e. at the proposition it contains. Does he rather talk of the exact form of the thought, namely if we experience it for example as inner speech or visual images? This does not make any sense, either. We most certainly can entertain the exact same thought clothed in the exact same words several times. For example, if we think 'I should go to bed', hearing these words as inner speech, we can experience the same thought (that means: the same proposition and the same words as inner speech) a number of times. I suppose most people are familiar with this experience or can easily verify the claim via introspection. Additionally, our way of speaking also reflects this – we commonly say 'I thought the same yesterday evening' when it is getting late again. We claim

that we had the same thought. Therefore, it does not makes sense to read James in this way, either. Is he perhaps concerned with the thought's genesis, then? In his understanding, thoughts form part of the stream of thought and are triggered by other thoughts or caused by associations. It might well be the case that two thoughts with the same content and form are caused by completely different stimuli. Whereas yesterday it might have been our tiredness that led us to think 'I should go to bed', today it is a quick glance on our watch, and tomorrow it might be the fact that we have to get up very early the next morning. Obviously, this is an oversimplification of how thoughts arise, but it serves to illustrate what we might understand by the difference of genesis. However, does a difference in genesis necessarily bring along a difference in thoughts? I do not think so. Assuming that we can have the same thought twice, its genesis can be seen as the road we take to reach it, but the thought itself thereby does not change. Just as we can take several roads to get from A to B, we can choose different mental paths to get to the same end, which is the thought. And yet, James proposes that exactly this is not possible, that we in fact cannot reach the same end twice. None of the possible readings considered so far support his thesis. His claim seems to be of ontological nature, but to argue for this on a solid basis, it first would be necessary to determine identity criteria for thoughts, what James does not do.
However, from a phenomenological point of view, it is obvious that we very well can have at least some thoughts several times. This is also reflected in our use of language. In everyday life, we say things like "That thought has already come to my mind", "This is not a new thought to me", or "I had the same thought yesterday". If we talk like this, others do understand what we mean. Admittedly, people occasionally also claim to have had the same thought as another thinker, for instance when someone makes a suggestion and the other one replies: "I had the same thought." Yet in these cases, our way of speaking is simply inaccurate – we do not refer to the thought but to its *content*. No sane adult would claim to have the same thought as anyone else in the sense that one thought is situated in two different minds. On the contrary, we consider people who make such claims as mentally ill. Uniqueness, therefore, in the sense of James, is not an essential characteristic of thoughts.

So for James, a thought is continuous and always appears within the stream of thought, that is an ongoing stream in our minds and works based on association. A thought, further, is always owned by a subject and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, accompanied by a sense of agency as well as some kind of feeling experiences. In contrast to that, although James describes thoughts as unique, which results in the impossibility of ever thinking the same thought twice, he fails to give sufficient proof for this claim. Hence, we cannot accept it as a characteristic of thoughts. These characteristics of thoughts so far are not apt to establish a profound distinction

or classification of different types of thoughts. Let us therefore again turn to James' notion of the nature of thought and see if it serves our purpose.

Albeit James does not offer concrete identity criteria for thoughts, he comes back to its ontology when he discusses *objects* of thoughts and different *parts* out of which thoughts consist. As the object of thoughts James (1950a, p. 275) defines "its entire content or deliverance, neither more nor less". This description is rather peculiar: why does James choose to use the conjunction 'or'? How should we understand it? There are several possibilities to read this: first, we can take content and deliverance as two different expressions for the same thing. James seems to suggest this by his formulation. However, we usually understand these terms very differently, so this reading does not make much sense. The second possibility is that we take the 'or' to be exclusive. In this case, a thought's object would be *either* its entire content *or* its "deliverance". Yet, if James really meant 'either … or' he also should have explained in which cases the object is the content and in which it is the deliverance. Alternatively, he could have stated that it is always one of them, but then he would have needed to show why he comes up with both at the beginning, which one he rejects, and why. Since he does not do that, this second understanding does not make sense, either. Last, we can simply assume that the 'or' is an unfortunate and imprecise wording and James instead aimed at the signification of 'and'. The object of a thought, then, would be both the thoughts' entire content *and* its deliverance. Although James does not say so, this is the only way in which we can make sense of his formulation. Thus, a distinction between content and form (i.e. James' "deliverance") is made, which goes along with common philosophical as well as everyday concepts. What also supports this reading is another remark made by James: he states that the "object of every thought, then, is neither more nor less than all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it" (James 1950a, p. 276). The content, as I take it, is the proposition that the thought contains ("all hat the thought thinks"), whereas the deliverance is the form in which the thought appears in the mind of the subject ("as the thought thinks it"). This two-part nature of thoughts becomes relevant again when I talk about different styles of thinking (chapter 5). According to James, though, with a thought's content and its form we have two different things that together are the thought's object.

There are good reasons to carefully discriminate the content of a thought from its form. At this point, though, we are concerned with another question: if we accept that content and form together are a thought's object, we still do not know what distinguishes a thought from its object. There needs to be something, otherwise James simply could have claimed that content and deliverance is a thought; the bypass over the thought's object would not be necessary. Regrettably,

James does not elaborate on this further. Let us therefore in the next step turn to James' notion of different parts of thoughts and see if we thereby can clarify what distinguishes a thought from its object.

Referring to and contradicting Hume, James (1950a, p. 237) negates "that our thought is composed of separate parts [… because this] entirely misrepresents the natural appearances". Once more, he is being inaccurate here and thus causes a major misunderstanding. At the one hand, he states that a thought is not composed of different parts; yet at the other hand, he himself identifies a thought's object as one part of thoughts, which he moreover divides into two further parts. Nonetheless, there is a possible interpretation to combine these contradictory claims: whereas a thought as an entity might consist of several parts that we can name and neatly list, we still always *experience* thoughts as wholes, as I have claimed in the previous chapter. Thereby, we can contradict Hume insofar as a thought, phenomenologically speaking, is not composed of several parts but always appears as a whole. From an ontological perspective, however, it might be possible to distinguish several parts that together make up what we call a single thought. Whether we understand thoughts as non-divisible entities or rather as containing several parts, depends on the philosophical perspective and background we adopt. As a result, we manage to maintain both of James' theses, although they appear to contradict each other at first.

While both perspectives (the ontological and the phenomenological one) have their own charm, I concentrate on phenomenology. Conveniently, this liberates us of the problem that we still cannot say in what exactly consists the difference between a thought and its object proposed by James. Although it would be most interesting to know what he exactly had in mind, the distinction does not play any further role for us. Since "thought as a rule is of matters taken in their entirety" (James 1950b, p. 325), we do not need to rack our brains with the ontologically relevant parts of thoughts. Since there is no obvious reason to differentiate between a thought's object in James' sense and a thought itself, I do not agree with him in this point. Instead, I take a thought to be a content that occurs in a certain form in a subject's mind. Certainly, much and more can be said about the ontology of thoughts, but I will leave this to others. Instead, I focus on how thinkers experience thoughts, as already mentioned in the introduction. As will become clear in the following section, the phenomenological observations and structures of these experiences further provide a good foundation for a classification of different types of thoughts.

On a related note, James discerns two different parts within the stream of thought.[28] On the one hand, there are "the resting places" or "substantive parts", and on the other hand "the places of flight [,] the 'transitive parts'" (James 1950a, p. 243). A closer look reveals, though, that James here is not talking about different parts of thoughts but rather of different *parts of the stream of thought*, i.e. different *types of thoughts*. This makes him especially interesting for this chapter. With substantive parts, James refers to thoughts that achieve to gain our attention, thoughts that stand out to us in one or another way. Transitive parts, in contrast, are thoughts that occur so to say 'in between' substantive parts. We need them in order to attain more substantive parts, they work like a bridge between them, but we do not attend them in the same way. Therefore, "it is very difficult, introspectively, to see the transitive parts" (James 1950a, p. 243), although in my opinion it is possible to reconstruct them at least sometimes retrospectively by examining closely how we come from one substantive part to another. The fact that James was able to detect these transitive parts, supposedly by introspection, supports this claim. If it really were impossible to observe them, we would not know of their existence. Admittedly, it is rather difficult to grasp them introspectively, but it can be done.[29] However that might be, as I just said, this distinction is not one of different *parts* of thoughts but of different *types* of thoughts.[30] Our experiences of them differ from another.

Interestingly, transitive thoughts resemble our notion of agency. We know that there are several thoughts passing through our head, that is to say we have an experiential sense of these transitive thoughts, even though we do not actively pay attention to them. But when asked for them we are able to recall having them and with some training and/or effort also to describe what it is like to have them. This descriptive part depends on the more fundamental experiential sense, since without the latter we could not describe the former. In contrast, substantive thoughts stand out to us from the stream of thought just like certain objects stand out to us from the world. We consciously notice them. These are the thoughts that we usually refer to when we talk about thoughts.

A second possibility to describe these two types of thoughts stands in reference to Husserl's concept of the horizonal structure of experiences. As we have seen when I introduced his notion

[28] Besides, James also identifies time-parts in thoughts and elaborates on them. For the reasons just stated, we will not take up these considerations here. For further information see James 1950a, 279-283.

[29] James (1950a, p. 244) is of different opinion: "The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks." For the reason I just have displayed, I disagree, at least partly. Whereas it might be impossible to introspectively analyze the transitive parts in the moment they occur, we by all means can describe them in retrospective. Further, James also admits that habitually we tend to focus on the substantive parts alone. It might be, then, that with some training we get better in observing and describing the transitive parts as well.

[30] I will henceforward speak of transitive and substantial *thoughts* instead of *parts* in order to avoid confusion if we talk about parts of thoughts or parts of the stream of thought, which are thoughts.

of horizonal intentionality (chapter 3.2), Husserl maintains that every object is always related to other objects in the world. This mode of intentionality is connected to his more general idea of *inner* and *outer horizons* that are made up by unfulfilled intentions. As Käufer and Chemero (2015, p. 37) summarize, the "inner horizon includes intended aspects of the object that are not fulfilled […]. The outer horizon includes the broader context that forms the background against which the perception […] stands out as meaningful." Drawing on this horizonal structure, I understand transitive thoughts as situated in the outer horizon of substantial thoughts, they are so to say in the background, whereas substantial thoughts are consciously perceived and experienced themselves, so they are not situated in the horizonal structure of a perceptional act but the actual object of it.

Thirdly, considering different modes of intentionality can also help us to better understand James' distinction of substantive and transitive thoughts. As we have seen, intentionality in general is essential for developing interest. Interest, in turn, plays a fundamental role in our focusing on some specific instead of other thoughts. We are usually more interested in reaching our goal or fulfilling our aims than in perceiving the process of doing so. "Ordinarily, our conscious acts go through the features of the acts themselves to the object." (Käufer and Chemero 2015, p. 33) This counts for sense/feeling experiences as well as for thought experiences. Accordingly, our attention normally lies on the relevant thoughts only, which would be the substantial thoughts. They might not even be the 'ultimate' thoughts within the whole thinking process (for instance the solution of a problem) but important milestones on the way. However, as it is neither possible nor expedient to consciously experience all our thoughts, we need to make some selection, and our interest helps us with this.

Last, another possible way to address the matter consists in drawing on affective states. If we take it to be true that being in touch with the world means being affected by it, it makes sense to assume that we tend to focus on thoughts that are accompanied by rather strong feeling experiences. Substantive thoughts, then, would be those thoughts that stand out to us due to strong corresponding feeling experiences, whereas transitive thoughts supposedly come along with rather vague and faint feelings. This also matches Slaby's notion of affective intentionality. However, we could also assume that things are the other way round: when there is already a strong feeling experience, it might block a related thought experience rather than support it. Take for instance a situation that causes a strong feeling of fear or anger. Even though one perfectly well knows that it would be wise to pause a moment, think rationally what to do or to say next, and only then continue moving or speaking, the emotion can be so overwhelming that thinking does not seem to function anymore. But then on the other hand, it is also possible that

certain thoughts suppress specific feeling experiences. Again, it seems like all kinds of experiences can influences each other in a strong way.

Coming back to James' distinction we see that it can be examined and underlined by different modes of intentionality, interest, and Husserl's notion of horizons. The concepts and ideas discussed in the first chapter prove themselves as very useful to gain a better understanding of the phenomenology of having thoughts. Nevertheless, distinguishing only two types of thoughts based on rather brief descriptions does not live up to the variety, complexity, and multifaceted dimension of thoughts that I suppose most thinkers are familiar with. In the next section, I therefore present Seeger's account and complement it with further considerations and examples.

4.2. Classifying Thoughts

As we have seen in the previous section, James maintains that there are different types of thoughts (even though he does not call them such). He identifies substantial and transitive thoughts but does not examine them closer. I showed that we can apply different concepts on his distinction to gain a better understanding of it. However, although James is not wrong, I maintain that we experientially can distinguish more than only two types of thoughts. In this section I therefore present an alternative account. Drawing on Seeger (2015), I establish a classification by identifying different types of thoughts based on phenomenological observations.

Seeger (2015, p. 841) distinguishes three types of thoughts, which are: directed thoughts, unsolicited thoughts and real inserted thoughts.

By *directed thoughts* he understands "thoughts resulting from consciously controlled or directed thinking processes" (Seeger 2015, p. 841).[31] They occur for instance when we try to think through a philosophical problem, focus on solving a mathematical equation, or try to get the grammar of a foreign language right. We force ourselves to concentrate on a specific task and do not allow our thoughts to slip away. Such ways of thinking are greatly exhausting and cannot be maintained all the time, as everyone who has done it will acknowledge.

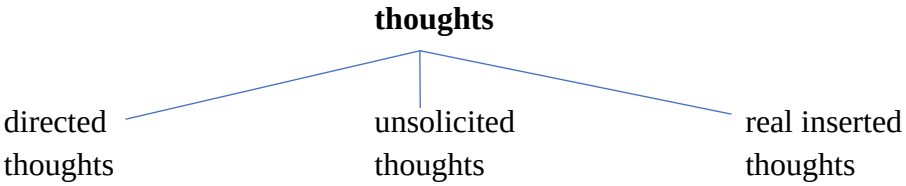
In addition to actively directed thoughts there are "thoughts that simply come to mind" (Seeger, 2015, p. 841), so called *unsolicited thoughts*. As examples Seeger names among others daydreaming, catchy tunes, memories, and fantasies. Further, he states that there is broad agreement upon the phenomenal difference between directed and unsolicited thoughts, although, as far as I can tell, the exact differences are not yet pointed out in detail. We also have to keep in mind

[31] What Seeger calls "thinking processes" corresponds with my notion of ways of thinking.

that some of the examples Seeger gives in my terminology do not count as types of thoughts themselves but are rather ways of thinking. However, the prevalent type of thoughts in these ways of thinking is what Seeger calls unsolicited thoughts, namely thoughts that typically occur in daydreaming or remembering. Catchy tunes, on the other hand, probably can be seen as belonging to a certain type of thoughts.

Finally, Seeger holds that *real inserted thoughts* are at least possible in theory.[32] That would be "if thought insertion were indeed possible, that is if someone or something were able to […] insert a thought into another person's mind." (Seeger 2015, p. 841) So far, there is no evidence that underpins the existence of real inserted thoughts, which is why I will neglect them in the following. Nevertheless, they are theoretically possible and thus to be mentioned.

Taken together, we can depict Seeger's classification as follows:



On the whole, I agree with Seeger's outline but think that it is still not complete yet. Consider again the example from chapter 3: you take a walk in the city, dwelling on thoughts, perhaps fantasizing about your next holidays. You go into a park and pass some children playing on a playground. Across from you, a woman walks her dog and suddenly, out of the blue, this thought appears in your head: "Why not kick the dog and see if I can make him fly some meters?" Now this thought clearly is not actively directed at anything, it is unsolicited. But then it differs from the unsolicited thoughts you just have had when you were passing by the children's playground. Contrary to daydreaming or fantasizing, this thought stands out as single; it is not connected to your other thoughts, not embedded in some sequence. Since it does not fit neatly into the other thoughts passing through your head, it feels differently. You might well say that its phenomenology is different. Thoughts like that can be called *disruptive thoughts*. As I see it, they are significantly different from what Seeger calls unsolicited thoughts. I therefore propose a different classification – I take *unsolicited thoughts* as an umbrella term with *streaming thoughts* (e.g. the associative thoughts that occur in daydreaming) and *disruptive thoughts* (like the one in the example) as subcategories. Besides, as we already have seen in the previous chapter, there might be unsolicited thoughts that do neither form part of the stream of thought

[32] I stick to Seeger's wording of *real inserted thoughts* that he contrasts with merely *inserted thoughts*, which play a crucial role in the pathological case of thought insertion.

nor do they disrupt it. My example for this was a pretty weird first thought I had right after waking up. (For your recollection, I am talking about the thought "I don't want you to be the guy who calls me a stupid fish.") This thought neither stood in relation to my dreams nor did it disrupt an ongoing stream of thought since, as I just had woken up, I was not aware of any stream yet. However, if we take our stream of thought to be present only when we are awake (what I do but one doubtlessly could challenge), there must be a first thought every time we wake up. Therefore, one way to explain these unsolicited first-of-the-day thoughts is to consider them as a special form of disruptive thoughts. They most certainly would disrupt the stream of thought, save that there is none yet, since the thought itself functions as the first thought of the it. Therefore, it is not necessary to assign these thoughts to a newly created category.

Let us have another look at the more common occurrence of disruptive thoughts. In our example, the disruptive thought disturbs the ongoing streaming thoughts but is caused by the dog you see. It is therefore *stimulus-dependent* to some extent. The question is, if there are also *stimulus-independent* disruptive thoughts. In most cases it seems possible to track down a thought to some point, even if it appears to come out of nowhere. From time to time this needs a great deal of effort and it might turn out that the thought was triggered by a misinterpreted sensory perception. It also can be caused by seemingly weird associations as well as by any kind of experiences, as we have seen. Still, there are also thoughts (like for instance ideas or annoying catchy tunes) where we cannot identify any stimulus at all, no matter how hard we try. This does not necessarily mean that there is no stimulus – we might simply have overlooked it for some reason or it might consist in an unconscious processes, which is why we are not able to identify it. Either way, talking to people will tell us that at least some disruptive thoughts are doubtlessly experienced as stimulus-independent. Hence, although there might be some hidden causes, we still can call them stimulus-independent.

This is another aspect in which disruptive and streaming thoughts differ: whereas streaming thoughts are related to each other by association and therefore are stimulus-dependent in nature, disruptive thoughts can but need not be.

What about directed thoughts, then? In this category fall many thoughts we entertain in what James calls voluntary thinking, such as reasoning or problem solving. Albeit it seems natural to assume that they are stimulus-dependent, let us examine this closer. The fact that this type of thought is directed, which basically means that we exert control over it, does not help us to settle the matter. While the directedness aims at the goal, at the interest we pursue with a directed thought, the question whether a thought is stimulus-dependent relates to its cause or origin. Obviously, directed thoughts can be caused by certain stimuli. Take for example the

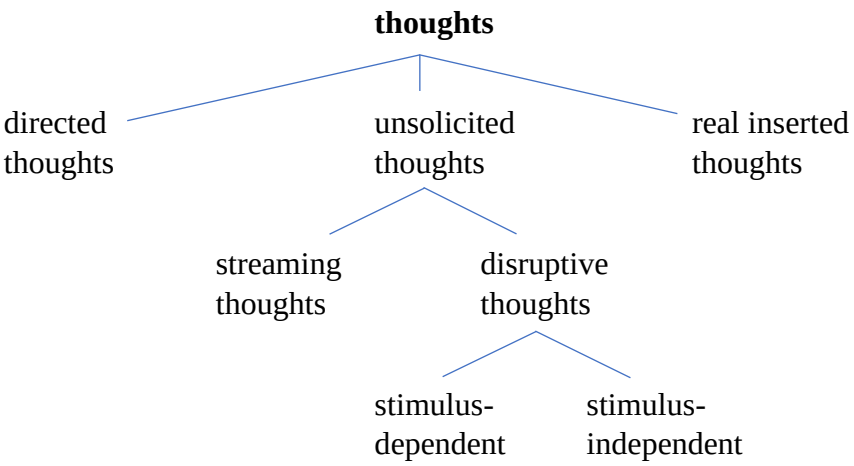
case of solving a complicated mathematical equation. While calculating, one usually is highly concentrated and consciously directs her thoughts from one step to the other. In the search for the solution it is not possible to skip a step for she then does not know anymore how to proceed next. Hence, in difficult calculations some directed thoughts function as stimuli for the following ones.[33]

A similar and yet different example is solving a crossword puzzle. Imagine you are concerned with filling out all the gaps but them stumble upon one that is rather difficult. Apart from the hint that says they are looking for the name of a mountain, you already know the first letter of the name as well as the total number of letters, of course. You try to come up with the mountain's name, apply several strategies such as pumping your association by recalling the names of all mountains you know. Since it does not work, you turn to other gaps. This goes pretty well and suddenly, let us say after roughly two minutes, the name of the mountain pops up in your head. This thought, then, is not dependent on any detectable stimulus, hence it is stimulus-independent. However, as you are not concentrated on the related gap anymore you do not experience the thought as directed. Your overall attention is still dedicated to solving the crossword puzzle, but it does not any longer focus on the mountain's gap. Therefore, the thought is stimulus-independent, but we cannot call it directed anymore. It is unsolicited. Even though the way of thinking is voluntary, controlled, and contains many directed thoughts, it does not only involve directed but also unsolicited thoughts such as those that come to your mind during the association technique (streaming thoughts) and the mountain's name (solicited stimulus-independent thought).

Another interesting question concerns those streaming thoughts entertained during the association process. We seem to be able to somehow lead these streaming thoughts in one or the other direction, albeit only to a certain extent. Are they then still unsolicited? I would say so. Even if we control them to a certain extent, we can neither truly enforce nor completely avoid them. When trying to come up with mountains, most likely some mis-associations like names of rivers or towns will occur, too. From that we see that we do not direct streaming thoughts in the same way as directed thoughts. In calculating, where we proceed step by step, we have a tight grip on them, whereas in association we rather try to stimulate the ongoing stream, guide it into a certain direction and then pick out the seemingly promising thoughts.

[33] Again, this is of course an idealized and simplified example of solving an equation. Nevertheless, it shows that there are stimulus-dependent directed thoughts.

All in all, we end up with the following adapted categorization of types of thoughts:[34]



As we have seen, these types differ phenomenologically from each other, what allows us to distinguish them. I took Seeger's account as a basis for my categorization and further developed it. What is still missing is an examination of how phenomenological concepts fit into the picture. This is what I turn to in the next section.

4.3. Classification and Phenomenological Concepts

In the previous section I identified various types of thoughts. The aim of the current section is to conflate this categorization with phenomenological concepts and ideas that have been discussed so far. I start by some remarks on the notion of ownership and agency in thoughts. James claims that every thought is owned by a thinker but otherwise could not exist (see chapter 4.1). Whereas in principle I agree with him, I argue that even though ownership as such is always given, in unsolicited stimulus-independent thoughts we lack a sense thereof. Concerning agency, I present a quick reminder what the concept involves and how I distinguish it from control. We will see that while agency is given for all types of thoughts, control is not. After that, I examine how different modes of intentionality are related to different types of thoughts and which role the stream of thought plays.

[34] One might wonder if we could also integrate James' substantial and transitive thoughts in this schema. We could certainly give this a try. However, as far as I see it, we do not gain any additional classifications or benefits from it but rather could subsume substantial and transitive thoughts under some already existing categories. Therefore, I will not try to develop a combined account.

4.3.1. Ownership, Agency and Control

The concepts of ownership and agency can be found in many works and there are plenty of different accounts of what they de facto consist of (see for example Bayne 2013; Bortolotti and Broome 2009; Campbell 2002; Gerrans 2001; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008; Graham 2004; Ratcliffe and Wilkinson 2015; Seeger 2015). Basically, the claim is this: "In one sense, I am the subject in which thought occurs. In another or second sense, I am the active thinker or agent of the thought." (Graham 2004, p. 94) The first part refers to ownership, the second to agency.

Let us begin with ownership. Graham's explanation is a good starting point, but we need to have a closer look at what this effectively means. In what sense do we exactly take ourselves to be the owners of a thought? Is it really enough for a thought to occur in our head? In this case, *every* thought would be our own thought, even a real inserted one. Yet, while it is rather obvious that we are the owners of our directed thoughts, we would most probably not call ourselves the owners of real inserted thoughts, if they existed. Hence, this definition of ownership is not precise enough and we need to examine it more closely. In addition, we have to focus on unsolicited thoughts, since it is debatable if we really own them.

Just like Graham, Gallagher (2004) suggests that a thought is one's own if it is experienced in one's head. This means that the thought is located within a person's boundaries and its content is directly and first-personally accessible. However, if we accept this view, we again end up with every thought we experience being our own as just stated above. Further, this understanding does not capture the everyday notion we have of ownership – the view is too short-sighted.[35] (Bortolotti and Broome 2009, p. 216)

More promising sounds Campbell's (2002) view: in his opinion, it is not possible to talk about ownership only based on the faculty of introspection. He suggests an interaction of two strands that constitute ownership together: first, the notion of the thinker, and second, the possibility of self-ascription. This view also harmonizes with the *Causal Analysis* which says: ownership is given if and only if the thought originated in the appropriate way within the subject, which means "as a result of normal involuntary, automatic, and subconscious cognitive processes within a subject's brain" (Seeger 2015, p. 846). Intentions, consciousness, and control do not play any role. As far as I see it, these two accounts complement each other quite well, which is why I rely on a combination between the two of them.[36]

[35] Another reason for rejecting this description of ownership is that in our normal understanding mere spatial conditions don't suffice to justify ownership. See therefore Bortolotti and Broome 2009, p. 217.

[36] There are many different concepts and also the terminology is by far not consistent (compare for instance Campbell 2002; Gallagher 2004; Gerrans 2001; Stephens and Graham 1994). Within this thesis, I concentrate on a few accounts only, and discuss and modify them.

What I understand by ownership is this: a thought is my own thought if I am the originator of this particular thought, meaning that I created it consciously or unconsciously, and that it was not inserted into my head by some external entity. Because it originated in me, I thus have a special kind of insight into the thought and can reasonably ascribe it to myself.[37]

Let us next focus on the question whether ownership is given in unsolicited thoughts. First to the thinker's notion: Campbell (2002, p. 32) claims that "[f]or a token thought to be truly mine, the thought must have been generated by me". As said before, consciousness, intention, and control therefore do not play a role.

If we look at unsolicited (including all sub-categorical) thoughts, the answer seems to be pretty obvious at first sight: of course these thoughts are owned by the thinker since they originate within her mind. However, this is not as simple as it seems. We probably won't get in trouble if we only consider streaming and stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts. But it gets tricky when we look closer on stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts. Now, as remarked before, there might be no such thing as completely stimulus-independent thoughts. Nonetheless, in regards to our experiences, there definitely are. So what we need to look at is not only the theoretical concepts that underlie our considerations, but instead examine the way people actually experience thoughts. And this is the crucial point: even though the theoretical concept of ownership is given in every thought, not every thought needs to feel like, needs to be experienced like it is owned by the thinker.

Let me illustrate this more detailed with an example: imagine you are in the kitchen, preparing dinner. You concentrate on cooking and let your thoughts wander, when it suddenly pops up in your head that two tickets for a football-match would make a great Christmas gift for your mother-in-law. Suppose it is July and nothing of your surrounding or ongoing stream of thoughts reminds you of her. Perhaps she does not even like football and you do not believe at all that this is a very good idea, but the thought just came to you out of nowhere. This is what I would consider a good example for a stimulus-independent disruptive thought.[38] The question is: would you still name yourself the owner of the thought, even though you do not consider its content a good idea and you cannot tell why it came to you at all? I guess you would.

Now imagine you live a hundred years afar from now and scientists have in the meantime invented a machine which they can use to put thoughts into other people's heads. In other words:

[37] This does not make self-ascription as such a part of ownership, only the possibility of doing so in a reasonable way is important. Campbell (2002, p. 36), too, talks about the *possibility*, not the *necessity* of self-ascription.

[38] There might be a bunch of better examples. However, I think this one is sufficient to illustrate the case. Besides, I can tell from own experiences that stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts like this actually happen from time to time, which I also found affirmed by others.

imagine real inserted thoughts exist. Think about the example again: would you still be absolutely sure about whether the thought about the Christmas gift is truly yours? Or would you rather consider it to be someone else's that (for whatever reasons) accidentally got inserted in your head? I think you could not tell.[39]

My idea is this: the reason why we usually call stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts our own is simply because they appear in our head. We do not actually *experience* them as generated by ourselves. On the contrary, we feel like they're coming to us out of nowhere.[40] At the same time, we empirically and rationally know that it is impossible to have thoughts that are not our own. Therefore, we simply assume that we are the generators – because it is the only possible explanation. So the reason why we call these thoughts our own is not based on the actual feeling or experience we have, but it relies on post-reflective, rather rational consideration. As a conclusion, this means that we do not lack ownership in any thought. But there are some thoughts (namely stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts) where we lack a *sense of ownership*.[41]

The second strand Campbell (2002, p. 32) mentions is about the possibility of self-ascription. He states that one has a special access to first-person thought and can therefore self-ascribe them other than on the basis of observation. Again, I assume that we easily self-ascribe stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts to ourselves due to the lack of alternatives. If real inserted thoughts existed, this might be way more difficult to do.

What I propose is this: for some thoughts we actually lack any sense of ownership or self-ascription and only assume both because of missing alternative explanation. By no means do I intend to claim that directed or unsolicited thoughts actually *are* disowned by the thinker – this would only be the case for real inserted thoughts. All I suggest is this: if one concentrates on the experience of stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts, they feel disowned because the thinker does not experience them as emanating from herself. Hence, ownership still does exist but is sometimes rather assumed than actually experienced. What is lacking is a truly felt sense of ownership, not ownership itself.

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[39] One could object that real inserted thoughts might feel significantly different than any other type of thought or that at least we cannot know how they would feel, which makes my example pointless. However, the argumentation does not rely on the experience of real inserted thoughts. What matters is the assumption that stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts are not accompanied by a sense of ownership. The case with real inserted thoughts is merely an attempt to illustrate that observation but is itself not necessary for the argument.

[40] I found this formulation to be very common for describing stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts. In my eyes, this underpins the assumption that the person in fact does not experience herself as the owner of the thought but rather feels like it was somehow given to her.

[41] The distinction between a sense of ownership and ownership itself is consistently made. See for example Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008, p. 179.

So what about agency? Seeger (2015, p. 838) defines agency as "being the source or originator of the thought". Yet, the aspect of being the originator in my terminology falls into the account of ownership, so we already have dealt with this aspect. Seeger (2015, p. 842) further states that Stephens and Graham (1994) understand being the agent of a thought as "intentionally or voluntarily bringing that thought about by directing one's thinking in a certain way". I do not join this idea of agency, as I have already stated in chapter 3.4. Following Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, p. 106), I instead understand agency in the sense that a subject has a certain sense of being the agent of her actions, although she does not always consciously reflect this sense, and she also correctly ascribes her actions to herself. However, what Seeger calls agency is still important for my considerations, save that I refer to it as *control*. Accordingly, I adopt Seeger's definition but modify it slightly: being in control of a thought means to be able to intentionally direct it. This modification offers the possibility to successfully ascribe control to different types of thoughts: talking about the *faculty* of directing a thought does not necessarily mean that one actually directs it. For example, when fantasizing about the next trip to Disneyland, one might not intentionally direct her thoughts but rather let them flow. However, if she wanted to she could easily lead her fantasies in a certain direction. The line between directed and streaming thoughts in this case is a very fine line, but control is given at any rate.[42] At the same time, this does not mean that we always experience a sense of control. On the contrary, as I have argued in chapter 3.4, in many cases the feeling arises that we are unable to stop doing something even though we perfectly well know that we could. As examples I suggested wagging a foot, chewing on one's lip, or thinking of a lost love. Despite this theoretical knowledge, the feeling of lacking control in such cases persists. Thus, although we by definition are in control of our thoughts, we nonetheless experience a lack of it. Parallel to ownership and the sense of ownership, the same holds for control – even though control itself might be given, we still can lack a sense of it. However, control differs from ownership insofar as it is not given for all types of thoughts, as we will see in the following.

As I just said, in some cases one cannot direct or stop thinking. This especially counts for unsolicited thoughts, in fact for both streaming and disruptive thoughts. The matter with disruptive thoughts is pretty clear: as they are neither embedded in the ongoing stream of thoughts nor anticipated in any way, we are not able to direct them intentionally. Hence, for disruptive

[42] We should, after all, not forget that the clear distinction between the different types of thoughts is an idealization. Many or perhaps even most thoughts might lie somewhere in between being directed and unsolicited – these are rather two extreme poles at the ends of a permeable continuum.

thoughts (both stimulus-dependent and -independent ones) control is not given. A vivid example for this is the following: as you are reading this sentence, I ask you to absolutely not think of penguins. I am very sure you just had a thought about penguins, even though you were asked not to. No matter how hard you try, you will not be able to stop thinking about things someone else tells you not to think about. As we thereby can see, these stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts lack any sense of control.[43]

Streaming thoughts in contrast do sometimes but not always lack control. Most (if not all) people are familiar with having a catchy tune stuck in their head. Sometimes, the tune is rather welcome. For instance, you hear your favorite song on the radio and start singing it in your head. Since you know it extraordinarily well, it does not really cost you lots of effort to keep it going and you parallelly can think about other minor things. The song is hence something like a background stream of thought that you do not actively guide but that you could pick up and direct anytime you wanted to. Hence, some sort of control is given. On the other hand, there are also times when a terrible song is stuck in our head and we cannot help running it over and over again. Perhaps we don't even like the song or need to concentrate on something else, but it permanently keeps coming back, distracting us, completely escaping our control. In this case, no control is given.

For directed and real inserted thoughts, the case is pretty clear: directed thoughts are actively directed and hence also controlled, while real inserted thoughts are not. In ideal cases of experiencing directed thoughts, we even feel as if in absolute control. However, for most of us it is quite exhausting to maintain full control over our thoughts during a longer period of time without letting anything distract us. Hence, the longer the duration of ways of thinking that contain a great number of directed thoughts, the higher the chance that our level of control descends. And yet, this does not mean that we experience a lack of control. Indeed, we might notice some distracting thoughts that pass by but can choose not to pay attention to them and instead focus on our initial aim. The feeling of control is then maintained throughout the whole thinking process, especially in reference to the directed thoughts occurring in it.

[43] In this case, the penguin-example is somehow included in the ongoing argumentation and perhaps not completely disruptive. However, pure cases of one or another type are rare, as mentioned earlier. Aside from that, you can easily imagine a situation where there are pretty clear cases of stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts. For example, when you sit in a silent library, concentrating on a book, and someone behind you suddenly screams "cookies!". You won't be able to not have any cookie-related thought then, since this is apparently just how human brains work.

As we have seen by now, leaving real inserted thoughts aside, all types of thoughts come with agency and ownership, although we lack a sense of the latter in unsolicited stimulus-independent thoughts. In contrast, control is neither given nor experienced in all types of thoughts.

4.3.2. Modes of Intentionality and the Stream of Thought

Besides considering how ownership, agency, and control are given for different types of thoughts, it is also interesting to examine the role of different modes of intentionality.

Thinking through a difficult calculation, for example, involves directed thoughts, at least those that lead from one step of the calculation to the next one. This becomes apparent when we are being disturbed during the process. We then lose grip of our thoughts, they become directed at something else (namely the person or object that disturbs us) and we cannot proceed in the calculating process. As we easily see, what I call active intentionality plays a role in entertaining directed thoughts: we focus on the calculation narrowing down our general responsiveness to the world and trying to exclude everything else that might disturb us. Our interest is so central that it even affects our intentionality. This is basically what we do when we concentrate.

Unsolicited thoughts, in contrast, are presumably only possible due to our general intentionality. Being open and responsive to the world enables experiences of any kind, be they sensory, emotional, or thought-related. However, perception is never neutral, some things stand out to us from the world just like some thoughts catch our attention, while others do not but stay unconscious or lurk in the outer horizon. To what extent do different types of unsolicited thoughts differ, then, when it comes to modes of intentionality?

Recalling horizonal intentionality, I take each experience to stand in relation with other experiences. So, in the case of streaming thoughts, each thought experience is at least connected with the one before and influences the next one, which results in what we experience as an ongoing stream of thoughts. Horizonal intentionality thus plays a crucial role in the experience of streaming thoughts. Obviously, this mode of intentionality matters in *all* thought experiences since every thought experience is accompanied by a certain kind of feeling and more often than not stands in relation to many other experiences as well. However, the bond between consecutive thoughts in the stream of thought is notably stronger and, moreover, creates the stream-like experience. Hence, it is justified to attribute a special role to horizonal intentionality when it comes to streaming thoughts.

Regarding disruptive thoughts, things become more complicated. For stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts we can assume that affective intentionality is central. We are affected in a certain way by some stimulus that guides our attention to an object in the world about which

we then have a thought. Certain feeling experiences that we might have even unconsciously or that are just about to arise (which fits James' notion of psychic overtones) can make us perceive certain stimuli and thereby cause thoughts. Take for example the situation that you wander around in a public park, completely lost in thoughts, referring to nothing in particular. You just let them wander. It is a cold but sunny autumn day and lots of people are enjoying the sun, what you barely notice, when you suddenly see a scrawny old man sitting right there on one of the benches, devouring a big sandwich with great relish. Seeing him reminds you of homeless people and that you wanted to inform yourself about local projects and voluntary work. These thoughts clearly disrupt your ongoing stream, you did not actively try to call them up, and they are triggered by an external stimulus (namely the old man), which makes them unsolicited stimulus-dependent thoughts. What made this man stand out to you even though none of the people you passed by before did? Supposedly, it was some feeling that you had when seeing him. He moved you, touched your heart, affected you emotionally. Hence, the sense experience of seeing in combination with a certain feeling experience made him stand out of the world and gave rise to a certain thought experience. This first shows very well that affective intentionality can play a central role in this type of thoughts, and second again supports the claim that all kinds of experiences can be related to another. However, it is by no means certain that affective intentionality always is essential for stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts, and neither if in times it does not play a similar role for other types of thoughts as well. Hence, we cannot draw a certain conclusion but rather make a supposition here.

In respect of stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts, it becomes even more difficult. We do not experience any kind of stimulus, the experience seemingly comes out of nowhere, and even though we are affected by it, this happens during or after the experience but not before. Identifying a certain mode of intentionality as essential or primarily responsible for this type of thoughts is not possible. Yet again, this is also an interesting finding. Whereas we can pair up all other types of thoughts with a prevalent mode of intentionality, for stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts we fail to do so. Intentionality in general of course still is essential for all types of thoughts.

Before I summarize the outcome of this chapter, let me last quickly turn to James' concepts of stream of thought and stream of consciousness. As we have seen in chapter 3.1, James apparently suggests that all thoughts form part of the stream of thought. For streaming thoughts this is obviously the case, and directed thoughts also form part of the stream of thought. The latter even can be so prevalent that they take over the whole stream of thought, suppressing all other conscious thoughts for some time, as it happens in states of extraordinarily high concentration.

Disruptive thoughts, though, by definition disrupt this ongoing stream. Can we then still say that they form part of it, or are they rather situated somewhere else? I propose that we should regard disruptive thoughts as being situated outside the stream of thought. Instead, I take them to form part of the stream of consciousness. This comes closer to how we actually experience them. They are conscious thoughts that we notice, hence they form part of the stream of consciousness. However, they provoke a cut in the ongoing stream of thought, they intrude it, and cause a rupture in it. This is only possible from without. If they would already form part of the stream of thought itself, it would not be possible for them to interrupt it in the way they do. Of course this does not mean that they are subconscious, on the contrary. An accurate distinction between stream of thought and stream of consciousness enables us to locate thoughts outside of the stream of thought. Moreover, this does not mean that they necessarily have to stay excluded. On the contrary, as everyone who pays attention to her own thinking will notice, disruptive thoughts usually do not only punctually disrupt the ongoing stream of thought but rather cut it and serve as the starting point for a new one. In fact, we actually do not have 'the one and only' stream of thought that continuously swirls through our mind, but plenty of them, consistently being disrupted, cut, and started anew.

4.4. In a Nutshell

In this chapter I discussed James' characterization of thoughts in general and Seeger's classification of different types of thoughts, which I expanded with additional observations and subdivisions. Further, I tried to conflate this broadened categorization with different phenomenological concepts already mentioned before, such as those of ownership, agency, and control, different modes of intentionality, and the streams of thought and consciousness.

As we have seen in the first section, James fails to show that every thought is unique. Even though this might be the case ontologically speaking (which I do not discuss and therefore neither assume nor deny), phenomenologically it very well is possible to have the same thought several times. Further, James distinguishes between a thought and its object, which does not hold either, since he misses to point out the difference between both. Nevertheless, the description of a thought's object that James provides is suitable. He claims that it involves not only a proposition, i.e. some content, but also that this content is presented in a certain form. I take this to be the case for thoughts as such and dismiss the claim that moreover there is also some kind of object. James further maintains that thoughts are always experienced as wholes and phenomenologically do not consist of different parts, with what I agree. Last, he introduces two different types of thoughts: substantial ones, that stand out to us, and transitive ones, that are so

to say in between. I suppose that the latter can be seen as located in the outer horizon of substantial thoughts. After linking this typography with this horizonal structure, different modes of intentionality, and interest, I proposed that it is too narrow and does not live up to the variety of thoughts we can detect in our experiences.

In order to get a more fitting account, I looked at Seeger's classification of thoughts, with which I agree in principle, but that I broadened in some way. Seeger identifies three types of thoughts: directed thoughts are consciously controlled, unsolicited thoughts simply come to mind, and real inserted ones are truly inserted into our minds, which might be possible in theory but so far not in practice, so I set them aside. As I have shown, unsolicited thoughts can further be divided into streaming thoughts that form part of a continuous flow, and stimulus-dependent as well as stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts that do not stand in any felt relation with the thoughts entertained before. All of these types we experience differently, i.e. they differ in their phenomenology.

In a last step, I then conflated these types with different phenomenological concepts. I argued that even though all types of thoughts come with agency and ownership, we lack a sense of the latter in stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts. In contrast, control is neither given nor experienced in all types of thoughts. Whereas control is both given and experienced in directed thoughts, there is none in disruptive thoughts. Streaming thoughts, interestingly, are located somewhere in between and we can exert some control over them, save not always and only to a certain extent.

Furthermore, the suggested types of thoughts differ in how strong they are connected with different modes of intentionality. While intentionality plays an important role for all kinds of experiences and thereby for all experiences of thoughts, active intentionality is especially important for directed thoughts. Streaming thoughts, on the other hand, are specially intertwined with horizonal intentionality, whereas affective intentionality might play an important role in stimulus-dependent disruptive thoughts. In contrast, stimulus-independent disruptive thoughts do not seem to maintain any remarkable relation to some mode of intentionality.

Last, I turned to the streams of thought and consciousness. Contrary to James' notion that all thoughts are continuous, which I understand as being part of the stream of thought, I suggest that we view disruptive thoughts as located in the stream of consciousness but outside of the stream of thought. They do not necessarily stay there but can cause further related thoughts and thereby start a new stream of thoughts. We thus see that in fact we do not merely possess one stream of thought but entertain numerous ones that are consistently being disrupted, cut, and started anew.

As has become clear throughout this chapter, there are not only different things we can do with our thoughts, namely different ways of thinking, but we also entertain various types of thoughts when we think. Although we usually don't pay much attention to our thinking itself, it is further possible do discriminate different types of thoughts based on precise observations. Additionally, taking phenomenological concepts in account helps us to gain a better understanding of the multidimensional structure of thoughts and a more detailed descriptive account of the phenomenon.

5. Styles of Thinking

In the last chapters I have shown that we can identify various ways of thinking as well as different types of thoughts. What is still missing for a comprehensive account of the phenomenology of thinking is a description of the forms in which we think. *How* exactly do we entertain thoughts? In order to answer this last question, I refer to James' notion of handiness. According to him, a thinker at all times chooses the handiest form of entertaining thoughts, which always is thinking in words. While I do agree that handiness is an essential criterion, I argue that words, or more general speech, are by far not always the handiest mode we have at hand. In fact, I show that James himself identifies other forms of thinking although in the context of imagination. These different forms of thinking is what I call *styles of thinking* or *thinking styles*, a term that we can also find in the work of Merleau-Ponty. In a next step, I therefore turn to Merleau-Ponty, his notion of thoughts, and his concept of style. As we will see, he develops a twofold concept of the latter: on the one hand, style is an activity and refers to our handling of situations. On the other hand, it is something that is inherent to every object in the broadest sense, a form of existence, that unites an object and constitutes it as a whole. In consensus with Samantha Matherne, I take this second understanding to be more fundamental. Based on this, I present two theses introduced by Matherne and suggest a third one when it comes to thought. In accordance with these theses and drawing on Merleau-Ponty's mode of motor intentionality, I develop the claim that thought experiences are inextricably connected to our body – it persists as an intermediary in thought experiences and enables as well as restricts our capacity to think. Related to that, my narrower and more specific concept of *thinking styles* notably differs from Merleau-Ponty's broader notion of style in general: in my terminology, a thinking style designates the way we draw upon a specific bodily sense when we think, so we can think for example in an auditory, visual, tactile, or gustatory style.

In an excursus at the end of the chapter I shortly come back to Slaby's considerations of emotional experiences and compare them to thought experiences. As we will see, they indeed show some similarities, such as the central role of motor intentionality and the reciprocity of experiences play, as well as a certain vagueness that is given in them.

5.1. James on Handiness

James' last important remark for this thesis is what I would like to call the *styles of thinking* or *thinking styles*. In short, this means simply the way in which one entertains and experiences thoughts; it refers to *how* one thinks. Different subjects may get to the same conclusion and even express themselves in the same way; however, the route they take to gain this conclusion can differ notably. James visualizes this with the following illustration:

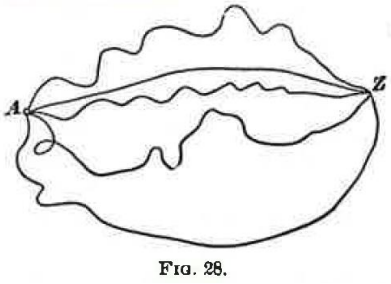

FIG. 28.

"Figure 28" (James 1950a, p. 269)

The lines between start and end point represent the different routes that several individuals take to get from A to Z: "One gets to the conclusion by one line, another by another […] but when the penultimate terms of all trains, however differing *inter se*, finally shoot into the same conclusion, we say and rightly say, that all the thinkers have had substantially the same thought." (James 1950a, p. 269)

All thinkers share the same thought, then, or at least its content if we may call it that. In chapter 4 I have rejected James' distinction between a thought and its object because he fails to show how they differ from each other. However, I still consider his description of a thought's object as valuable but simply apply it to thoughts themselves without taking a detour over some kind of objects. A thought, then, is a content that is presented to the thinker in a certain form (or in James' words, in a certain "deliverance"). The content of a thought is the proposition the thought contains. For example, when you think about going to the opera next week you might wonder which day suits you best, so the content of a corresponding thought might be something like "I want to go the opera on Saturday." The thought can be entertained in exactly this way, as inner speech, so you clearly hear it in your head. However, it might be the case that your inner speech is fragmentary, or that you do not think with an inner voice at all but depict your

calendar before your mind's eye, scanning through the appointments you have. The thought's proposition, i.e. its content, in this case stays the same but something else changes – namely, its *form*. Although two thoughts can have the same content, they do not necessarily present themselves in the same form. If we take a thought to be its content and its form, we get two different thoughts as soon as one parameter changes.

So, if we say that two or more thinkers get to the same conclusion and thus have the same thought, our wording is imprecise. Understandably, in daily life this is of no importance, especially because it would not only be very hard but also irrelevant for ordinary communication to figure out the exact form in which a content is presented to different thinkers. We usually focus on the content only and take it to be identical with the thought as such. At the same time, some difference in thinking does prevail. It consists in the *style* in which we entertain and experience our thoughts. In order to understand what I exactly mean with that, let us first have a look at James and his notion of *handiness*.

James (1950a, p. 266) claims: "The scheme of relationship and the conclusion being the essential things in thinking, that kind of mind-stuff which is handiest will be the best for the purpose. Now words, uttered or unexpressed, are the handiest mental elements we have."

I only agree in part. Whereas I do think that we usually use the handiest kind of what James calls *mind-stuff*, I deny that it always consists of words or speech in general. James confuses what is handiest for *communicating* our thoughts in contrast to *having* them privately in our head. In many cases, it is much easier and handier not to think in speech but for example in images. Take for instance a conversation about one of Schiele's paintings. Surely, one will talk about it in words for this is our preferred and habitual way of communicating with each other. Nevertheless, in our minds, we certainly do not think in words alone but portray the painting with all its colors, forms, brushwork and so on. Hence, we do not primarily or merely think in words, but in images as well. This becomes even more evident in cases when we know exactly what we want to say about the painting, we have it all ready in our head, but we fail to put it into words. If we would merely think in speech, we would not experience such struggles but were always ready to exactly say what we think, which is obviously not the case. Another example for non-linguistic thinking would be Rubik's Cube. In trying to solve it and thinking about the best way to do so, we do not necessarily think in words. Instead, we can imagine the Cube, visualize it, and mentally play through what happens when we move a layer in one or the other direction. Words, in this case, are clearly not the handiest way to think. Besides, 'thinking in words' is not a very detailed description: one obviously can hear words in form of inner speech but also see the letters before the mind's eyes or imagine writing them down, as well as

uttering them or writing them down indeed. All these cases count as 'thinking in words' and surely we choose one or the other depending on the concrete situation in which we find ourselves. The 'handiest kind', thus, varies in dependence of several aspects.

One of these aspects, according to James (1950b, p. 58), consists in individual preferences:[44] "In some individuals the habitual 'thought-stuff', if one may so call it, is visual; in others it is auditory, articulatory, or motor; In most, perhaps, it is evenly mixed." Exactly this difference in appearance of thoughts, how they present themselves or occur in a thinker's mind, a thinker's tendency or inclination towards a certain form is what I call *thinking style*. I do not think that most subjects experience an *even* mix of different forms but that there are individual preferences. Moreover, it might also be the case that certain contents tend to have a specific form and connected thereto are more suited for a certain style. This seems a promising route to pursue, especially when we call to mind that Merleau-Ponty also works with a concept of style, which is why in the next sections, we look at Merleau-Ponty's account of thoughts in general (section 5.2) as well as his notion of style (section 5.3).

5.2. Merleau-Ponty on Thoughts

In his "Phenomenology of Perception", Merleau-Ponty speaks of thoughts in several places, mostly in relation to speech. According to him, we experience thoughts always as speech, yet at the same time, thoughts and speech are different. However, there is no such thing as 'pure' thoughts, since thoughts do not "exist outside the world and outside of words" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 188). He even goes so far as to claim that

> "the thinking subject himself is in a sort of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken or written them […] A thought, content to exist for itself outside the constraints of speech and communication, would fall into the unconscious the moment it appears, which amounts to saying that it would not even exist for itself." (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 183).

Thoughts, thus, are always of linguistic nature. There is no such thing as a non-linguistic thought and there cannot be. Thoughts that are not expressed through inner or uttered speech cannot consciously be experienced and therefore cannot exist.[45]

As I have made clear throughout this thesis, I do not take thoughts to be limited to speech. There are far more possibilities for human beings to think than merely drawing on speech, as every thinker who pauses a moment to carefully examine and observe her thoughts will have to admit.

[44] James talks about imagination here, not about thinking in general. However, I claim that the form of thoughts as well as thinking styles in general vary in all ways of thinking, not only in imagining.

[45] Interestingly, in this account thoughts are not limited to inner speech but can also be developed through talking to others.

However, let us assume for a moment that thoughts are always of linguistic nature. We then are able to communicate everything we think relatively effortless to others. Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 189) accordingly claims that "thought and expression are thus constituted simultaneously", namely in speech. When we express our thoughts to ourselves or to others, we do that by speaking. Speech, thus, in many cases is expressed thoughts.[46] Further interesting is Merleau-Ponty's conclusion that we need to place "thought back among the phenomena of expression" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 196). However, is a thought indeed merely a phenomenon of expression? How is expression to be understood in this context? What exactly does a thought express if not the thought itself? Should we not rather consider speech as a phenomenon of expression and thoughts as the entities that are being expressed?

Later on, Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 409) differentiates two kinds of speech: "a secondary speech, which conveys an already acquired thought, and an originary speech, which first brings this thought into existence for us just as it does for others."[47] Intuitively, this makes sense: we can genuinely think through a problem, trying to find a solution, talking to ourselves in our heads or even aloud and thereby use originary speech. As soon as we have found the solution, we can utter it repeatedly without redoing the whole process of acquisition. That would be secondary speech. Whereas in the first case we use speech as a form of thinking, in the second case speech is barely a tool for expression. Hence, we can maintain the distinction of speech. Nevertheless, does this constitute a difference in thoughts as well? If we maintain Merleau-Ponty's distinction, originary speech is a form of thinking, but secondary speech does not qualify, yet it expresses and thereby contains thoughts. Again, we see that according to Merleau-Ponty speech and thoughts are closely connected, because thoughts are necessarily linguistic.

While I agree with Merleau-Ponty that thoughts are closely connected to speech, I deny that they are always linguistic in nature. On the contrary, I think that many times we do not think in terms of language. However, since we communicate with others mainly by speaking to them, we are used to transform our thoughts into a linguistic form to be able to let others participate in our life and in our way to see the world. Our relation to other subject hence depends heavily on our capacity to convey what we think in any kind of language, but we should not mistake

[46] Note that although thoughts necessarily manifest themselves in speech, there can be cases where speech does not contain thoughts, as can be seen for example in some Dadaistic poems. The point of these poems is not to convey thoughts but to create certain sound effects. It is arguable whether those sound effects are meant to express thoughts. However, the words themselves do not. Consequently, while on this account thoughts always are speech, speech does not necessarily always contain thoughts.

[47] Later on in the same section, he calls these kinds "empirical speech" for secondary speech and "transcendental or authentic speech" for originary speech. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 411) For the sake of readability, I stick to the initially introduced terms.

this as an argument or even proof for the sole claim of language to thoughts. To my mind, Merleau-Ponty's idea of thoughts is by far too restricted. Especially in respect to his notion of motor intentionality it seems curious that he fixates on language and speech to such an extent.

Another interesting remark made by Merleau-Ponty concerns our consciousness and thoughts. He claims that sometimes

> "the energy of our present consciousness […] becomes weaker, such as happens with fatigue, and then my 'world' of thought becomes impoverished and is reduced even to one or two obsessive ideas; sometimes, on the contrary, I am directed toward all of my thoughts, and each word that is spoken in front of me thus engenders questions or ideas, regroups and reorganizes the mental panorama, and appears with a precise physiognomy." (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 132)

This passage contains at least two important points: first, Merleau-Ponty here establishes a connection between our momentary capacity to think and the bodily condition we find ourselves in. Although he does not further elaborate on that, this supports my own claim which I develop in section 5.4, namely that our bodily leaning-towards-the-world does have an immense impact on our thinking. Even though we certainly think with our minds, our whole body, its capacities as well as its limitations, play a crucial role in thinking. Second, Merleau-Ponty mentions a certain "physiognomy" that he achieves to identify of each spoken word, given that he is extraordinarily awake and attentive. This matches his notion of style to which I turn in the next section since in my eyes it also acts an essential part in thought experiences.

5.3. Merleau-Ponty on Style

At some point, Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 477) talks about the general problem of expression: "I formulate a thought. […] This thought, such as I live it, is a certain landscape to which no other person will ever gain access, even if I otherwise succeed in starting up a conversation with a friend". What Merleau-Ponty points out here, is a problem that strikes all kinds of experiences, sensory as well as emotional and thought-related ones: we are limited to ourselves and no way of expression can ever ensure that others understand or share what we experience. We do not know if others experience being in love in the same way we do. We do not know if they perceive an apple tree bathed in the golden autumnal sun in the same way we do. We do not know if they comprehend a thought we articulate in the same way we do. We do not know and we cannot know. This relates to the problem hinted on in the last section, namely that there is no way of directly uttering or sharing thoughts (or any other experiences), but we first have to transform

them to be able to share them with others.[48] Even if we talk about linguistic thoughts, which are comparatively easy to articulate, there is no guarantee that others do understand and associate the words I use in the exact same way as I do. On the contrary, it is much more likely that different subjects differ from each other in their perception as well as in their experience.

Merleau-Ponty also recognizes this problem and offers an interesting solution: besides the exclusiveness of experiences, he proposes certain *styles* that we can and do draw upon. In order to understand what another subject experiences, it is therefore not necessary to share the experience in the exact same way but rather to recognize its underlying style:

> "A style is a certain way of handling situations that I identify or understand in an individual or for a writer by taking up the style for myself through a sort of mimicry […]; and the definition of a style […] never presents the exact equivalent and is only of interest to those who have already experienced the style." (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p. 342)

One might argue that this explanation is not very useful since it presupposes that one already has experienced a certain style in order to identify it. However, there might be no other way, for this is how we learn, how we gradually experience and grasp the world. Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 156) describes the process of learning to see colors as the "acquisition of a certain style of vision, a new use of one's own body". It is obvious that we first need to have the experience of seeing colors (or one specific color in particular) and then, consequently, fully grasp what the corresponding word means. The same counts for any other style. Moreover, since we live in a shared cultural world and continuously undergo and re-evaluate experiences, we are able to recognize a great variety of different styles: even though we might not comprehend a certain argument, we might still be able to recognize a Spinozist idea, to use Merleau-Ponty's example. We might not understand a text but nonetheless be able to discern a Kafkaesque from a Trumpesque structure. This becomes even clearer when we reflect on our engagement with art. No matter how detailed and accurate someone describes a painting or a piece of music to us, we will not have full access to it, we will not be able to fully grasp it as a whole, unless we experience it directly on our own. As Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 153) puts it: "A novel, a poem, a painting, a piece of music are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression cannot be distinguished from the expressed, whose sense is only accessible through direct contact." Without perceiving the object in question it is thus not possible to experience and grasp

[48] There are many forms of sharing our experiences; merely vocal words are too limited in several ways. First, we can use words from other languages such as sign languages. Thereby, we express our experiences in speech, even words, but not in vocal words. Besides, we might also use other forms of communication like gestures or decide to paint or dance in order to illustrate or express what we mean. Unfortunately, we never escape the general problem of possible miscommunication because every available medium is error-prone and we can never be a hundred percent sure whether we and our discussion partners truly understand each other.

its style. Although this becomes especially evident by the example of artworks, in principle it is the same for all objects. Take for instance the situation when a friend of yours has a new partner that you have not met yet. Your friend describes her exceedingly detailed, but when you meet her in person for the first time, you are still surprised because – despite all the previous descriptions – you did not manage to get a clear picture to such an extent that it would match the real person.

What the attentive reader might strike at this point is that Merleau-Ponty defines style as a certain form of activity, but then the examples just given rather refer to a specific characteristic or feature of objects. In fact, both is the case. In addition to the understanding of style as an activity, at another point Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 482) describes it as a certain way of existence, something that every individual possesses: "All of my actions and thoughts are related to this structure, and even a philosopher's thought is merely a way of making explicit his hold upon the world, which is all he is." Hence, style understood in this second sense is no activity but an essential structure that we relate to with all that we think and do, that defines us as the individuals we are. In fact, this second meaning of style appears even more essential than the first one.

This impression is also shared by Matherne (2017, p. 709) who maintains that Merleau-Ponty "uses style […] to refer to an activity or as an aesthetic concept that describes what unifies a number of objects [… as well as] an ontological concept that accounts for the unity of an individual object". Even though Matherne (2017, p. 724) comes to the conclusion that style "is something that is perceptually evident to us, but it resists attempts at comprehensive formulation", she thoroughly examines Merleau-Ponty's notion of it. According to her, it is based on two central theses:

1. Style Thesis: "each object that we perceive has its own unique style that permeates it and gives unity to all its various parts."
2. Style Recognition Thesis: "our perception of objects involve our bodies being able to recognize style and engage in perceptual synthesis on this basis." (Matherne 2017, pp. 708–9)

As far as I see, Matherne argues convincingly for both theses.[49] To apply them on thoughts we need to consider thoughts as objects, what should not be a problem. Since we perceive and experience our thoughts, they form part of our lifeworld, they are objects that from time to time stand out to us. Therefore, I take both theses to be applicable on thoughts, too.

[49] I will not reconstruct her argumentation here. Instead, see Matherne 2017, pp. 708–18.

Referring to Merleau-Ponty, style is thus both a kind of activity, something that we do, or as just cited above "a certain way of handling situations", and an essential way of being, a certain feature all objects possess that makes them up and holds them together as the things they are. On the one hand, this makes things much more complicated, as we have to deal with a two-folded notion of style. On the other hand, thoughts and thinking processes are very complex and multidimensional themselves, which suggests the assumption that it might be possible to apply Merleau-Ponty's concept of style to them in a profitable way, what I do in the following section.

5.4. Styles of Thoughts and Thinking

In chapter 5.1 I introduced the term style as a label to address *how* we think. However, Merleau-Ponty advocates a more complex understanding of style: on the one hand, he takes it to be an activity, on the other hand, it describes "the unique 'manner of existence' that unifies those properties into a single whole" (Matherne 2017, p. 710). When talking about thoughts and thinking, I suggest to refer to the different activities we can do with our thoughts as *ways of thinking*, as I introduced in chapter 3. It seems to me that concerning thought experiences and style, my ways of thinking come very close to this first notion of style. We thereby gain terminological clarity and can use style in reference only to *how* we think but not any longer to what we *do* when we think, as well as in the second sense of style as a specific way of being.
Another confusion that should be avoided is that between form and style. In chapter 5.1 I claimed that a thought has always a content (i.e. its proposition) and a certain form. Both aspects together make up the whole thought. And this thought as a whole I take to have a certain style. Naturally, we do not experience the content apart from its form, but at least in theory they are separable. Although we can discriminate a thought's content and its form intellectually, we are not able to perceive one without the other. The thought's unique style, in contrast, is not another aspect of the thought but rather its essential way of being. The style is what unifies the content and the form, what makes them into one whole thought. Thus, what we experience when we perceive a thought, is not merely a content pressed into a certain form, together with accompanying feeling experiences, but also the thought's style.

Turning back to Matherne's theses on style, we notice that thoughts, despite being objects of perception, significantly differ insofar from other objects as they are situated within our minds. They arise within us, they do not form part of the outer world but can only be communicated

mediately. We do not only perceive and experience but also produce them, i.e. we do not only perceive their style but also create it.[50] For thoughts, then, we need a third thesis:

3. Style and Thoughts Thesis: our capacity to create, perceive and experience thoughts, in short: to *think*, is based on our bodily capacities and subjected to our bodily limitations.

Let me elaborate on this. It is not possible for any human being to perceive and experience the world without drawing on her bodily capacities. These capacities comprise several senses such as those of sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, motion, and perhaps some others that managed to escape my notion here. The direct encounter with an object is only possible if we perceive it through at least one of these senses. Since we lack any sense for perceiving for instance ultrasonics, we cannot experience them, save for using technical gadgets to somehow make them accessible through the senses we possess. This is basically already covered by the Style Recognition Thesis.

Now, if we turn things around and talk about creating objects, the very same senses that enable and limit our perception come into play. In thinking, which is nothing else than producing and perceiving thoughts, i.e. thought-objects, we can and do draw on all of these senses. We can think in terms of an inner voice, which is a common example and resembles our sense of hearing. But we can also think about our figure skating spin, recalling how exactly we moved last time we did it and how we could possibly improve it. In this case, our thoughts most likely draw on our sense of motion. Or we go back to the example from chapter 3, where you imagined trying to describe the taste of an exotic fruit. It is not a purely abstract process that you thereby undergo: you probably try to recall the taste in your mouth, the feeling you had on your tongue. Perhaps you remember the tightening of your oral mucosa because it was sour, or you recall a slimy consistence that reminded you of lychee. What better way to remember this could there be than to recall your bodily reactions? In thinking, we can and do draw on our whole body, on all bodily capacities we are provided with and sense experiences we already have undergone. It would not only be highly impractical but supposedly impossible to always think in terms of speech and thus merely in an abstract way. It can be seen easily that we are able to think with all our senses just like we can perceive objects of the external world with all our senses, always depending on the object in question.

Parallelly to the various possibilities that our bodily senses provide for our thinking, they also set limits to it. It is not possible to think in any form we cannot experience bodily. We cannot

[50] This does not mean that we do this consciously. On the contrary, I take this to be out of both our control and consciousness. We cannot decide which style a thought has but merely perceive it.

think in any form that does not resemble any of our bodily senses. Even when we imagine what it would be like to fly, we draw upon them. We imagine to see the world from far above (sense of vision) and to feel the air brushing through our hair (sense of touch and motion). In contrast, we cannot imagine highly abstract entities like infinity or death. Of course we know they exist, we can work with them, think about them in abstract ways, and use the words with the appropriate meaning. But we fail to imagine an infinite number of anything, say sheep – we perhaps see much and many sheep, but it still is a finite number. Since we never experience infinity with our bodily senses, we also fail to think of it as something else than an intellectual, abstract concept. The same counts for death. We know we will die. And – depending on our religious and spiritual believes – we might honestly assume that we simply will cease to exist. We might think of it as falling asleep, being surrounded by complete darkness, or not hearing, seeing, and feeling anything anymore. What we think of, then, are still experiences connected to our senses. However, we fail to imagine not having any of these senses anymore. And it is unmatched harder to think in a manner that would even exceed our bodily senses. Indeed, I claim that this is impossible.

We see, then, that our body plays a crucial role in our thinking styles. This relates to Merleau-Ponty's concept of motor intentionality. As pointed out in chapter 3.2, the body plays an important role in his whole work and in motor intentionality – it is not the "I think" that structures our experiences but the "I can". Consciousness, Merleau-Ponty (2012, p. 140) claims, "is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body". This counts for thought experiences just as much as for sense and feeling experiences. Despite the assumption one could make that thoughts are cognitive in nature and therefore independent of our body, motor intentionality plays a crucial role in them as well. Being toward the things, being toward the world, engaging with and living in it as a human being, involves thinking about it. The "I can" structures all our experiences which includes though-related ones. As we have seen, it is even impossible in a certain way to think outside of the "I can": while we can mentally rearrange and recombine perceptions, impressions, and experiences that we made before and thereby create new ones, we cannot transcend our bodily limitations and surpass what we experience through our senses. Our cognitive capacities enable us to creatively engage with the world but at the end are still subjected to the same limits as our bodily capacities, albeit in a rather abstract sense. The body's role as an intermediary persists in *all* experiences, thus the bodily leaning-towards-the-world remains in our thought experiences as well.

The body, thus, plays an essential role in thinking. It enables us to entertain and experience certain thoughts but at the same times sets limits to it. The style of our thoughts is closely connected to our bodily capacities. As we have seen in the previous section, Merleau-Ponty suggests that every single object has its own unique style. If we accept this claim, it counts for *all* objects, which includes thoughts too. We therefore can assume that each thought has its own style, an own specific way of being, a certain structure that unites it and makes it into one whole. This probably is even more intuitive to us than the idea that a toothbrush or a rubbish bin have a certain style. Due to the different forms of thoughts, we are supposedly more willing to ascribe a certain style to thoughts than to do the same with toothbrushes. However, what I had in mind when introducing the term style differs from this concept in two aspects: it first is narrower since it only refers to thinking, and second it takes up notion of style as an activity. With reference to thought experiences, I relate different thinking styles to our bodily senses. As a *style of thinking* or *thinking style* I understand the way in which we draw upon a specific bodily sense when we think. Obviously, we do not actually see or taste something when thinking about it but there is still a strong connection to the corresponding sense given. Hence, I propose that we call these forms *thinking styles*. Thus, we are able to explain how we think without confusing it with having sensory perceptions. For example, when we think with an inner voice, we think in an *auditory style*. When we picture images, we think in a *visual style*. When we remember the typical smell of summer rain, we think in an *olfactory style*, and so on. In general, I take *every* bodily sense to have a corresponding thinking style that we can and do use when we think. Since thinking processes and experiences are directed at the world as well as influenced by it, it only seems reasonable to assume that thoughts also correspond with our bodily capacities. Furthermore, I assume that there are tremendous individual differences in the application and mix of different thinking styles. Apart from handiness, different thinkers might have preferences for different styles, perhaps even corresponding to preferences in bodily senses.[51] Most people presumably entertain a mix. However, as the phenomenon of aphantasia shows, not everyone is able to entertain each style: persons with aphantasia are incapable of visualization. Even though they are not blind and their visual sense works perfectly fine, they cannot depict images before their mind's eye. (Bainbridge et al. 2021)[52]

It comes as quite a surprise that Merleau-Ponty, who ascribes an essential role to the body, fails

[51] These are mere assumptions and further research is needed to find out, whether there actually are different preferences and how they evolve. However, talking to others strengthened my opinion since many thinkers notably differ in the descriptions of their thinking styles.

[52] It would be most interesting and probably provide valuable insights to the phenomenology of thinking to deal with such and other pathological cases. Unfortunately, this goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

to recognize that such a central process as thinking also involves a bodily aspect and is not limited to speech. To be fair, though, his focus is not set on thoughts and thinking, so he simply might have overlooked that connection. James (1950b, p. 58), on the other hand, identifies several *styles of imagination*: "In some individuals the habitual 'thought-stuff, if one may so call it, is visual; in others it is auditory, articulatory, or motor; In most, perhaps, it is evenly mixed." And yet, he misses two points: first, these styles are not limited only to imagination but concern all ways of thinking. Second, the limitation to the four styles he names is not justified. In fact, he does not give any reason why he limits himself to those senses but ignores others, such as for example those of smell and taste. Nevertheless, drawing on James and Merleau-Ponty has provided fruitful insights to the nature of thinking. Although both of them fail to think their concepts through to the end, their ideas of motor intentionality, style, and different forms of 'thought-stuff' serve as a great foundation for further considerations and development, as I have just shown.

5.5. Excursus: Similarities in Feeling and Thought Experiences

Before I end this chapter, let me quickly come back to feeling experiences since they resemble thought experiences in some ways, as I have shown in chapter 3.2. Interestingly, even though feelings are also situated within ourselves instead of the external world, they differ from thoughts insofar as they can be completely new to us. It is not necessary to have experienced an emotion before in order to be able to feel it – in fact, that would make the whole matter impossible. Further, it is also not necessary to dispose of certain other experiences in order to have feeling experiences. This might be the case because feelings are themselves bodily. James even goes so far to argue that every feeling experience presupposes a bodily change and can be reduced to physical phenomena. According to him, if we take every bodily reaction away, there is no more feeling left, hence the feeling itself is a mix of various physical processes. (James 1950b, pp. 449–51) Although I think this is an interesting approach to which I am not antipathetic, I will not further investigate it here. However, it shows one crucial difference between feeling and thought experiences: whereas both do not form part of the external world but are situated in the subject itself, the former are bodily in nature whereas the later only draw on bodily sense experiences but still remain cognitive.

And yet, feeling and thought experiences are similar in various ways. Both involve essential bodily aspects albeit in a different manner. In his article, Slaby (2008, p. 434) "opt[s] for a more thorough inclusion of the 'feeling body' in the intentionality of emotions". As *feeling body* he understands one aspect of what Merleau-Ponty calls *lived body*. Whereas the lived body can be

seen as "the vehicle of experience of the world" (Slaby 2008, p. 441), covering all experiences be they affective or not, the feeling body is "itself the vehicle of the intentional feeling" (Slaby 2008, p. 440). This results in that "we rather have to say we 'are' our body" (Slaby 2008, p. 441), since we do not merely perceive it as an object (which would be the *felt body*) but rather feel with it, so to say. Whereas the feeling body apparently plays an important role in feeling experiences, it is not as crucial for thought experiences as such. However, both kinds of experiences show several structural similarities that become apparent in some of Slaby's characterizations.

First, he points out that the bodily feelings in question are not clearly localizable but rather hard to locate: "Overall, the structure of our body as an object of inner awareness is much vaguer than in the case we observe our body visually. This vagueness of one's experiential grip of one's own felt and feeling body is what I mean by 'diffuse localization'." (Slaby 2008, p. 435) As far as I see, the same counts for thoughts. When we visualize a tree or recall the melody of our favorite song, the experience is much vaguer than the corresponding sense perception. No matter how hard we try, imagining the flavor of a chocolate tarte will never be as rich as eating and actually tasting one. Our experiential grip, as Slaby puts it, is somehow vague and there is nothing we can do about it.

Second, Slaby (2008, pp. 435–36) proposes that "perception (or thought) and feeling [should not be seen as] separable components, but rather [as] a phenomenal unity: the felt body is itself that *through which* we grasp what goes on around us." Although Slaby does not explicitly say so, this view matches Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality. Besides, it also goes along with what I have stated in this thesis: all kinds of experiences, sensory as well as emotional and thought-related ones, are inextricably intertwined and subjected to our bodily capacities. Although thought experiences are not bodily themselves, they rely on our body and always go along with feeling experiences, which makes them part of the suggested *phenomenal unity*. Our body, then again, is directed at the world, it is leaning towards the world, and the felt body responds with certain reactions. When we undergo feeling experiences "we are not consciously focusing on our body, but rather have a bodily feeling towards something outside our body" (Slaby 2008, pp. 436–37). In principle, I agree with that. However, I doubt that this focus on the world instead of the own felt body or the own experiences is a particular characteristic of feeling experiences only. Instead, it seems to me that in most cases our experiences are directed at something else than ourselves and our way of perception. If we do focus on the experience itself, which means on our bodily reactions or the way we think or feel or see something, we already have adopted a phenomenological perspective. This might happen in times, especially

if something unexpected occurs or our ordinary way of experience does not work anymore, as we can see in cases such as the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon or hallucinations. We then pause for a moment and start to wonder about our perceptions and experiences as such instead of paying attention to their objects. In ordinary daily life, though, we are mostly not interested in the experience itself but rather in its content.

Third, Slaby (2008, p. 438) ascribes a double structure to emotions because "they reveal to us not only what is significant out in the world, but also what is going on with ourselves". This is also true for thoughts. On the one hand, they tell us things about the world we live in, they are directed at and caused by it, and can influence as well as be influenced by other experiences. At the same time, we are not aware of all our thoughts but some stand out to us – just like objects in the external world stand out to us, too. Thereby, they do not only tell us something about the external world but also about our inner life, our interests, and intentions. Our thoughts show us, at least to a certain extent, what is important enough for us to catch our interest. And they resemble emotions in yet another way: their "bodily nature is not a separate 'aspect' that is merely *added on* to an otherwise purely intellectual appreciation of what's going on; rather, it is the very core of the […] experience." (Slaby 2008, p. 439) Again, Slaby emphasizes the crucial role that our body plays in the experience of emotions. The same can be said about thought experiences – they are precisely not purely abstract but bound to our bodily capacities and limitations.

5.6. In a Nutshell

In this chapter I focused on *how* we think, referring to both Merleau-Ponty and James. Merleau-Ponty holds that thoughts are always linguistic in nature, which I consider far too restricted. As far as I see, we need to convert our thoughts in speech or something alike to be able to communicate them. However, this does not mean that they themselves necessarily are linguistic. Merleau-Ponty seems to confuse thinking thoughts and communicating them. Nonetheless, he is right in maintaining a strong connection between thoughts and speech, especially due to the fact that we tend to communicate with others through speech. Therefore, it is handy to convert or already think in terms of language.

James also talks about handiness and suggests that we usually choose the handiest form to think. He too ascribes a special role to speech and claims that it is in most cases handiest to think linguistically. As I have shown throughout this thesis, there are many and more manners how we can think, so I reject this idea. In contrast, I think that the handiest kind varies in dependence of several aspects such as the way of thinking we entertain, the content of our thoughts, as well

as probably some individual preferences. This is what I first refer to as style of thinking or thinking style.

Style, then, is a term also used by Merleau-Ponty. In his understanding, style involves two different aspects. On the one hand, it is an activity, a certain way of handling situations. As I see it, this resembles what I call ways of thinking. We thereby gain terminological clarity and can use style in reference only to *how* we think but not any longer to what we *do* when we think.

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty's style is a unique manner of existence, a structure, something that constitutes an object's unity. As every object comes with a certain style, each thought does so as well.

In respect of the second, more fundamental meaning of style, Matherne proposes two basic theses that the concept rests upon: the Style Thesis says that "each object that we perceive has its own unique style that permeates it and gives unity to all its various parts", and the Style Recognition Thesis that holds that "our perception of objects involves our bodies being able to recognize style and engage in perceptual synthesis on this basis." (Matherne 2017, pp. 708–9). I agree with both theses but introduce a third one explicitly in respect of thoughts. Since thoughts differ from other objects insofar as they are situated within the perceiving subject itself, not in the external world, we do not only perceive but also create their style, even though this might happen unconsciously. In the Style and Thought Thesis I therefore propose that our capacity to create, perceive, and experience thoughts, in short: to *think*, both is enabled by our bodily capacities and subjected to our bodily limitations. As I have shown, our thinking is inextricably intertwined with our body. Its capacities as well as its limitations count for thoughts as well. We are bound to our body and cannot transcend it. Even though we can rearrange and recombine our experiences and thereby create new scenarios and thoughts about things that could never happen, we are not able to create absolutely new things that are completely independent from our bodily capacities. Hence, motor intentionality also plays a crucial role in thinking. The body as an intermediary persists in thought-related experiences; it enables as well as restricts our capacity to think. The "I can" is fundamental; and the "I think" only becomes possible on its basis.

My specific notion of thinking style, then, significantly differs from Merleau-Ponty's general concept of style. In my terminology, a thinking style designates the way we draw upon a specific bodily sense when we think, so we can think in auditory, visual, tactile, or gustatory style. It thus refers to the first meaning of Merleau-Ponty's style, namely the activity, and is further much narrower since it only concerns thought experiences. In general, I take each bodily sense to have a corresponding thinking style. In thinking, we can and do draw upon all these senses.

Although there might be individual preferences and tendencies to choose one style over another, depending on various factors such as the way of thinking we entertain, the thought's content, and perhaps individual preferences, most thinkers presumably entertain a mix. However, there are exceptions, such as persons who experience aphantasia – they do possess a functioning visual sense but fail to visualize images before their mind's eye, hence they cannot entertain thoughts in a visual style. It would be most interesting to further examine such and other pathological cases in order to gain more and new insights into the phenomenology of thinking.

At the end of the chapter I inserted a short excursus, coming back to Slaby (2008) and examining whether some of the characteristics he identifies in the structure of emotional experiences also count for thought experiences. As became clear, the central role of motor intentionality that I proposed is supported by Slaby's arguments. Further, he also maintains that all kinds of experiences are strongly connected and should not be seen as separate but rather as a phenomenal unity. This term matches what I called reciprocity of different kinds of experiences, i.e. the fact that different kinds of experiences cause and influence each other or. Moreover, we have seen that thought-related as well as feeling experiences are vaguer than sense experiences; our experiential grip is not as tight with them as with the latter ones.

6. Conclusion

The central aim of this thesis was to get a better understanding of the experience of thinking and to contribute to a richer picture of thoughts than the one we have at the moment. I tried to capture the multidimensional structure of thought experiences and get a refined descriptive account of the phenomenon. I consider this valuable since most of the available philosophical concepts of thoughts are of analytical nature and try to capture the properties and ontic state of thoughts, which doubtlessly is important but risks being too reductive. There is much more to thoughts than merely their ontological nature. I therefore set the focus on the subjective experience of thinking. Accordingly, my research questions were: what is it like to have a thought? What is it like to think?

The structure of the thesis already shows that our experience of thinking is multidimensional: there is not merely 'the one and only' phenomenology of thought experiences but several factors come into play. First, I introduced different ways of thinking, claiming that we can do numerous things with thoughts. Second, I worked out a classification of different types of thoughts that differ notably from each other. Third, I proposed that we entertain many styles of

thinking that are inextricably connected with our bodily capacities and limitations. In all of these, phenomenological concepts and experiential differences were brought into account to establish and explain the suggested distinctions. It became clear that thinking is a multifaceted phenomenon and therefore quite difficult to capture. It occurs in many different forms and most likely also differs between individual subjects. Nonetheless, the considerations, descriptions, and classifications that I developed and presented in this thesis offer a solid foundation for further research in this area.

Especially interesting, in my opinion, are the different thinking styles. As I have shown, our body is essential for having thoughts in general. This goes along with the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and his notion of motor intentionality. Like him, I maintain that body and mind cannot be completely separated from one another and thus should not be treated as if they could. If we want to get a better understanding of thoughts and thinking as it occurs, we have to consider our body as well. We *are* embodied subjects; our body does not only provide sensory access to the world but enables us to think in the first place. At the same time, it also sets limits to this exact same thinking. This might count for all experiences; it certainly does for thought-related ones. Thought experiences, thus, are determined and shaped by bodily capacities and limitations, by practices of being in the world, by other experiences, by our surroundings, and social life; in short: thought experiences are shaped by the world the thinking subject finds herself in.

Again, this underlines the immense complexity of the phenomenon. It does not only contain several aspects itself and varies between different individuals, but it further cannot be examined detached from the world. Thoughts themselves cannot be found in the world like objects of sensory perception, they are necessarily situated within a subject and cannot be transferred to any other place. Whenever we share our thoughts, we share them mediately. And yet, there is a strong connection between the experience of thoughts and the thinker, her being in the world, the world as such, as well as other experiences. Our thoughts play a crucial role in maintaining relationships to the world and to other people. They are just as important, essential, and natural to us as any other kind of experiences.

Moreover, it turned out that thought experiences in some respects resemble feeling experiences. This might be the case because feeling experiences are also only situated in the experiencing subject but cannot be found in the shared world like objects of sensory experiences. Hence, there are some structural similarities between feeling and thought experiences – both are somehow vaguer than sense experiences, i.e. our experiential grip of them is less tight, they support

the central role of motor intentionality and the body, and they strengthen my claim of reciprocity of all experiences. In particular the last point is of great importance for anyone who chooses to apply phenomenological methods: whereas it might make sense to examine a phenomenon as if it would occur detached from anything else, this is not the case when it comes to real life. All kinds of experiences – sensory, emotional, and thought-related ones – stand in close connection and can cause and influence each other. Whereas for methodological reasons we might neglect these relations in times, they still persist, and it would be wise not to forget about that.

Speaking of phenomenology as a method, I have also shown that we can access the experience of thinking using phenomenology, although there is still an ongoing debate on the existence of cognitive phenomenology. While some philosophers claim that we sometimes undergo purely cognitive experiences, others hold that all our experiences can be explained in terms of sensory phenomenology. Tye and Wright (2011, 329), for instance, introduce the Quintet of Phenomenological States, where they identify five states that allegedly suffice to describe all experiences:

i. Perceptual experiences (e.g. seeing, hearing, tasting)
ii. Conscious bodily sensations (e.g. pain, tickles)
iii. Imagistic experiences (e.g. imagining)
iv. Conscious linguistic imagery (inner speech, thinking in words)
v. Primary emotional experiences (e.g. feeling fear, grieving)

Interestingly, their notion of imagistic experiences and conscious linguistic imagery resemble what I call thinking styles, i.e. the way in which we draw upon a specific bodily sense when we think. It is debatable whether drawing on bodily senses and the related experiences thereof should be called cognitive or not – in any case, perceiving something does part from imagining something, as we all know. In this regard, two important points can be taken from my considerations: first, there might be going on some terminological confusion in the debate on cognitive phenomenology. It is not clear after all what several philosophers understand by thinking or by cognitive experiences. While for some it might be sufficient to mentally rely on a bodily sense to have a cognitive experience, for others this might not count since there is still a bodily component involved. Whereas for the former it is clear, then, that cognitive experiences exist, the later firmly denies this. And yet, it might be that both agree on central claims, but fail to see it due to inconsistent terminology. Second, and more important, I consider it highly improbable that we have cognitive experiences in the first, pure sense, when it comes to thinking. As I have shown, having thoughts depends on our bodily capacities and limitations, which means in turn

that thoughts cannot absolutely transcend sense experiences. We can recombine and rearrange them and thereby create unknown, new, creative, and unrealistic scenarios. But we cannot think in or of completely unknown forms that have nothing to do with our sense and feeling experiences, entirely detached from our bodily abilities. Therefore, pure cognitive experiences are not possible when it comes to thinking. Of course, this does not settle the debate on cognitive phenomenology, since there might be other purely cognitive experiences apart from thinking. However, philosophers who look for arguments in favor of a pure form of cognitive phenomenology can now stop searching within the realms of thoughts and thinking.

All in all, this thesis points out the multidimensional structure of thought experiences and contributes to a richer picture of what it is like to think. And yet, many and more questions remain open. At one point, I mentioned that the study of aphantasia could provide more insights into the phenomenon. In general, the examination of thought-related pathological cases would be most interesting and could further broaden our understanding of what it is like to think. Connected thereto, we should also take people into consideration who miss one or more bodily senses, such as blind or deaf persons. How does this constraint affect their thinking styles? Talking to different people obviously helps us to get a better understanding of experiences in general. To get an even richer, more reliable account of what it means and what it is like to think, some well-planned and thoroughly conducted empirical research would therefore be most helpful.

This could also help to answer other worthwhile questions, for instance: given that there are style preferences after all, can we influence, shape, or change them? How do habits affect our ways of thinking? Concerning thought experiences, are there differences in terms of culture, education, social structures, gender, age, or others? To answer these questions, both intra- and interdisciplinary research would be well-suited. Philosophers could combine ontological concepts with findings from analytical philosophy and phenomenology.[53] Moreover, scientists from the areas of neuro-sciences, psychiatry, and psycho-pathology, as well as different social sciences could further enrich the considerations. However, this would be quite a big project and therefore rather difficult to implement. In the meantime, we might just focus on smaller, singular aspects of thought experiences and thereby step by step expand our understanding of them, contribute to a richer picture of what it is like to think, and further refine our descriptive account of the phenomenon.

[53] One contemporary philosopher who deals with thoughts and combines phenomenological considerations with an analytical background is for example Alshanetsky (2019).

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Abstract in English

The aim of this thesis is to get a better understanding of the experience of thinking and to contribute to a richer picture of having thoughts than the one we have at the moment. I want to get a refined descriptive account of the phenomenon and capture its multidimensional structure. Therefore, I pursue a phenomenological approach and mainly focus on works of Merleau-Ponty, James, and Seeger.

The thesis is structured in a threefold way, addressing what I call ways of thinking, types of thoughts, and styles of thinking.

Drawing on James, I describe some examples of what we can do with our thoughts (ways of thinking) and show that there are many and more possibilities. Moreover, I discuss different phenomenological concepts such as the streams of thought and consciousness, different modes of intentionality, reciprocity and affectivity in different kinds of experiences, and agency and control in thinking.

Further, I take Seeger's typology of thoughts, which I enrich and broaden (types of thoughts). The classification that I thereby gain is then related to phenomenological concepts, namely ownership and agency, modes of intentionality, the role of the stream of thought, and the notion of control.

Last and in reference to Merleau-Ponty, I address the question how we think (styles of thinking). Combining James' notion of handiness and his considerations on imagining with Merleau-Ponty's concepts of motor intentionality and style, I propose that we entertain different thinking styles that are inextricably connected with our bodily capacities and limitations.

Abstract in German

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, ein besseres Verständnis und umfassenderes Bild dessen zu gewinnen, was wir als die Erfahrung des Denkens bezeichnen können. Wie fühlt es sich an, einen Gedanken zu haben? Wie fühlt es sich an, zu denken? Im Laufe der vorliegenden Arbeit wird eine detaillierte, beschreibende Darstellung entwickelt, um die komplexe und vieldimensionale Struktur des Phänomens abzubilden. Dabei verfolge ich einen phänomenologischen Ansatz und beziehe mich hauptsächlich auf Werke von Merleau-Ponty, James und Seeger, die stellenweise durch verschiedene phänomenologische Konzepte sowie Ansätze anderer Autor*innen ergänzt werden.

Der Aufbau der Arbeit orientiert sich an drei verschiedenen Aspekten des Denkens, nämlich

Denkarten (*ways of thinking*), Gedankentypen (*types of thoughts*) und Denkstile (*styles of thinking*).

In Anlehnung an James gebe ich einige Beispiele dafür, was wir mit unseren Gedanken tun können (*Denkarten*) und zeige auf, dass es dabei viele verschiedene Möglichkeiten gibt. Zudem diskutiere ich einige phänomenologische Konzepte wie die des Gedanken- und Bewusstseinsstroms, verschiedene Modi von Intentionalität, Wechselwirkungen und Affektivität in Erfahrungen sowie Wirkmacht (*agency*) und Kontrolle bei Gedanken.

In einem nächsten Schritt ziehe ich Seegers Typologisierung von Gedanken als Grundlage für eine eigene Kategorisierung heran (Gedankentypen). Auch in diesem Zusammenhang werden verschiedene phänomenologische Konzepte diskutiert, nämlich Inhaberschaft (*ownership*) und Wirkmacht, verschiedene Modi von Intentionalität, die Rolle des Gedankenstroms und das Gefühl von Kontrolle.

Weiterhin beschäftige ich mich mit der Frage, wie genau wir denken (*styles of thinking*), und beziehe mich dazu auf Merleau-Ponty. Dessen Konzepte von Motor-Intentionalität und Style sowie James‘ Vorstellungen von Handlichkeit (*handiness*) und seine Überlegungen zu Vorstellungskraft (*imagination*) bereiten die Grundlage für eine eigene Idee: Ich schlage vor, dass wir verschiedene Denkstile unterhalten, die untrennbare mit unserem Leib, dessen Fähigkeiten und auch seinen Beschränkungen verbunden sind.

Some Last Words

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