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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The role of imagination and recollection in the method of phenomenal contrast

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Abstract

The method of phenomenal contrast (in perception) invokes the phenomenal character of perceptual experience as a means to discover its contents. The method implicitly takes for granted that 'what it is like' to have a perceptual experience *e* is the same as 'what it is like' to imagine or recall it; accordingly, in its various proposed implementations, the method treats imaginations and/or recollections as interchangeable with real experiences. The method thus always contrasts a pair of experiences, at least one of which is imagined or remembered rather than occurrent. Surveying all eighteen forms of implementing the method, I argue that in all of the proposed pairings, the substitution of imagination or recollection for perceptual experience in the method, is either inconceivable or impermissible. I identify four reasons why I think imagination cannot be substituted for real experience, and three reasons why recollection cannot be substituted for real experience. If my argument works, there is no form of implementing the method that is useful for discovering the contents of experience, and thus the method is not a well-functioning tool to study the contents of perception.

KEYWORDS

Imagination, perceptual experience, phenomenal contrast, phenomenology, recollection

1 | INTRODUCTION

The methods of studying the contents[1] of perceptual experience could be divided into two groups: those that aim to discover the contents *directly*, and those that aim to discover the contents *indirectly*. The main direct method employed for discovering the contents of perceptual experience is *introspection*; the indirect methods, meanwhile, could be divided into *naturalistic*, *behavior-first*, and *phenomenology-first* methods. The naturalistic method takes causes and

[1]By contents of perceptual experience, I mean the accuracy conditions of the experience. See Siegel (2010b: ch1).

covariations as the means to discover the contents of experience[2]; behavior-first methods invoke the behavior of an agent to explain what contents a state of her mind may have; and phenomenology-first methods take the phenomenal character[3] of the state to be an indicator of its contents. The method of associative agnosia[4], which is confined to the discovery of a certain class of contents; the conflict cross-modal method[5]; and the method of phenomenal contrast are three phenomenology-first methods.

I will be concerned here with the method of phenomenal contrast (MPC), in which imagination and recollection seem to play crucial roles. MPC has been deployed frequently in recent years both in the philosophy of perception and cognitive phenomenology. In the philosophy of perception, MPC is regularly used to show how relevant changes in the phenomenology of a certain perceptual experience can help us to know if the contents of that experience have changed. In cognitive phenomenology, meanwhile, MPC has been used to determine whether a certain cognitive state – such as thinking – could have a sui generis phenomenology.[6] The latter is not my concern in this article. Siegel's pair for the natural kind property of *being a pine tree* is the paradigm case of using MPC in perception:

> Suppose you have never seen a pine tree before, and are hired to cut down all the pine trees in a grove containing trees of many different sorts. Someone points out to you which trees are pine trees. Some weeks pass, and your disposition to distinguish the pine trees from the others improves. Eventually, you can spot the pine trees immediately: they become visually salient to you. Like the recognitional disposition you gain, the salience of the trees emerges gradually. Gaining this recognitional disposition is reflected in a phenomenological difference between the visual experiences had before and after the recognitional disposition was fully developed. (Siegel, 2006: 491)

Proponents of MPC invite us to *imagine* being in the state of undergoing an experience and consider its phenomenal character, and then *imagine* being in the state of undergoing another experience in relatively similar conditions and consider its phenomenal character as well. It is claimed that comparing the phenomenology of the two overall experiences will render the subject intuitively able to affirm a phenomenal contrast between them. Once the contrast is established, the question is why such a phenomenal contrast takes place. This is where the explanations arrive.

Here, I will not focus on any particular phenomenal contrast argument. Rather, I will focus on the method per se and attempt to demonstrate whether or not MPC is dependent on anything besides perceptual experiences, namely imagination and recollection.[7] In part II, I elaborate on the different types of MPC and its machinery. In part III, I shed light on what I mean by the heterogeneous terms *imagination* and *recollection*.[8] In part IV, I argue that imagination of a perceptual experience is unlikely to have the same phenomenology as the very perceptual experience, introducing four arguments in favor of this. I think all the different implementations

[2]Stalnaker (2003) and Tye (1995).
[3]By the phenomenal character of an experience, I mean "what it is like" to have that experience or the qualitative character of that experience.
[4]Bayne (2009).
[5]Cf. Tippens (2019).
[6]The implementations of MPCs in both areas include detailed elaborations, and differ in the claims to which purpose they are implemented. For some non-perceptual implementations see: Strawson (1994), Horgan and Tienson (2002), Pitt (2004), Chudnoff (2015a/2015b), Kriegel (2015), Siewert (2011), Horgan et al. (2003), and Sfeir and Aleksander (2023).
[7]Note that the phenomenal contrast constitutes only a component of the MPC, and any argument based on phenomenal contrasts and the 'discovery' of experiential contents relies on evaluating various hypotheses that seek to elucidate the nature of this contrast. The objective of this paper is to discuss solely the implementations of the method. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
[8]Cf. Kind (2013).

of MPC are either uncontroversially conceivable or controversial. After all, uncontroversially conceivable pairs do not help to study perceptual experiences – and the controversial ones are, indeed, inconceivable unless via some clean-up strategy, we engage in a process of reducing them into their corresponding forms in the conceivable set of MPCs. In part V, I show how the proponent of the method might engage in an *imagination clean-up strategy* to preserve a refined form of the method that does not use imagination on either side of any pair. It seems that the best option to omit imagining is to invoke recollection. I call this a *reduction process* through which the advocate of MPC tries to implement it flawlessly. Then, I elaborate on the reduction process in more detail. In part VI, I discuss how invoking recollection to replace imagination in the refined pairs is maybe even worse than using imagination itself, proposing three arguments to this effect. Finally, in part VII, I discuss the minimum requirements of a plausible MPC and reply with two objections.

2 | THE METHOD OF PHENOMENAL CONTRAST

As we read in Siegel's pine tree case, MPC first invites the subject to *imagine* being in the state of experiencing the first experience – namely the contrasting experience – and consider its phenomenal character. Then the subject is to *imagine* being in the state of experiencing the second experience – namely the target experience – and consider its phenomenal character as well. The target experience is an informed form of the naïve contrasting experience,[9] which is (at least in some cases) obtained after a period of time during which the subject encounters the object of experience frequently and gains a recognitional capacity to identify it. Comparing the phenomenology of the two overall experiences will render the subject intuitively able to affirm a phenomenal contrast between them. Next step in using the method is finding the best explanation for this phenomenal change. Here is the point where a phenomenal contrast argument (PCA) comes to exist. For instance, the alleged best explanation for Siegel as the proponent of the rich content view[10] is that a certain content (K)[11] is involved in the visual part (E2) of the target experience (O2), which the visual part (E1) of the contrasting experience (O1) lacks (Figure 1). In other words, K's contribution to the phenomenology of E2 is the best candidate to explain why such a contrast happens.[12] Following the method of inference to the best explanation, it is clear that ruling out the opponent's explanation is another key part of the proponents' burden.[13]

The pine tree case is based on two experiences obtained by one subject at two moments (T_1 and T_2). Taking the visual part of the naïve experience as E1 and the visual part of the informed one as E2, the relevant PCA runs as follows:

(0) The target experience differs in its phenomenology from the contrasting experience.
(1) If the target experience differs in its phenomenology from the contrasting experience, then there is a phenomenological difference between El and E2.

[9] *Naive* and *informed* are terms borrowed from Helton (2016: 6).
[10] Rich Content View: In some visual experiences, some K-properties are represented (Siegel, 2010b: 97).
[11] K-properties are high-level properties like kind properties.
[12] *Contrasting* and *target* are terms borrowed from Siegel (2010b).
[13] Note that the method of contrast (MPC) differs from phenomenal contrast arguments (PCA). While PCAs are set to argue for certain hypotheses, MPC is neutral to the hypotheses of PCAs. Thus, the commitment to the idea that the method works properly does not entail any commitment to any hypothesis on perceptibility of a high-level property, cognitive penetration of a state of mind, effects of attention, and so forth. One can set a contrast to show that a certain content is involved in one of the experiences, while another one can set the very contrast to argue that cognitive penetration of a certain belief is responsible for the contrast. The conclusion drawn from a PCA depends on how the proponent excludes rival explanations. So, arguing against a PCA does not entail that MPC is not functioning properly. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of this point.

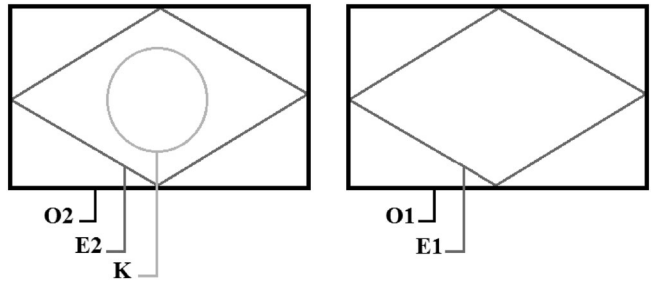


FIGURE 1 O1 is the contrasting experience, O2 is the target experience, E1 is the visual component of O1, E2 is the visual component of O2, and K is a certain content of the visual part of the contrasting experience.

> (2) If there is a phenomenological difference between E1 and E2, then El and E2 differ in content.
> (3) If there is a difference in content between El and E2, it is a difference with respect to K-properties represented in El and E2. (Siegel, 2010: 101)

Premise (0) is getting intuitive support from our introspective judgments about the phenomenology of O1 and O2. However, one might not accept that the method requires us to actually introspect on the target and contrasting experiences in order to detect the contrasts, and it might seem that the method can easily be seen as a sort of intuition pump or thought experiment.[14] The idea that to run a phenomenal contrast, we only need to intuitively confirm the contrast does not undermine the idea that the intuition stems from rapid introspections on the phenomenal character of the overall experiences. Siegel's sense of the role of introspection in MPC shows that I am not giving introspection this minimal role misleadingly:

> Some examples will be more powerful than others. But the kind of intuition on which the contrast method rests is simple and modest. Such intuitions concern whether there is a change in phenomenology between two sorts of situations. It would be quite radical to deny that there were any such cases in which introspection could detect a phenomenal contrast between overall experiences. In assuming that we have introspective access to such contrasts, we need not assume that such access alone can determine the exact contents of the visual parts of an overall experience. (Siegel, 2010: p. 91)

> … Whichever theses the method is employed to test, it provides a way to limit the use of introspection in theorizing about visual experience. All that introspection is relied upon to do is to detect the phenomenal contrast. (Siegel, 2010: p. 96)

The objective of the pine tree case is to endorse the *rich content view*, which claims 'In some visual experiences, some k-properties are represented' (Siegel, 2010: 97). However, trying to explicate the contrast by reference to the rival explanations is a different form of using the method to deny the target theory. In the literature, there are also several theories claiming that a variety of high-level properties could take part in perceptual content – properties like artifactual kind features (e.g., being a chair), causal features (e.g., being the cause of the increased illumination of the room), agency features (e.g., being the agent of voluntarily raising a hand),

[14]Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this objection.

action features (e.g., being graspable), the states of minds of others (e.g., being surprised), social features (e.g., being masculine), and moral features (e.g., the badness of igniting a cat).[15] Regarding the latter, Werner's case is the best known:

> Consider two individuals coming across the situation described in Gilbert Harman's (1977): 8) famous chapter on moral observation. They each 'round a corner and see a group of young hoodlums pour gasoline on a cat and ignite it'. Both Norma, the normally functioning adult human being, and Pathos, the EEDI,[16] come across the same scene. There is [a] good reason to believe that Norma and Pathos are in phenomenally different states when perceiving the scene. EEDIs tend to not respond to distress cues, whereas for normally functioning individuals, distress cues can invoke powerful phenomenological states. (Werner, 2016: p. 302)

Norma, as expected, enjoys a phenomenology that Pathos does not. Pathos is a specific kind of figurative zombie whose cognitive life and thereby,, her perceptual experience are not phenomenologically responsive to others' distress or suffering. Intuitively, there seems to be a phenomenal difference between Norma's and Pathos's experiences in the relevant situation. Excluding all rival explanations,[17] Werner explains this phenomenal contrast in terms of representing the property of *badness*, which is manifested in Norma's phenomenology but not in Pathos's.

Two key differences between the machinery of MPC in the pine tree case and Harman's case are (a) the number of subjects by which the experiences are obtained in each case, and (b) the specific moments at which the experiences are obtained. In the former, the contrast is drawn between two experiences obtained by one subject at two different moments (T_1 and T_2). In the latter, conversely, the contrast is drawn between two experiences obtained by two subjects at one single moment (T_3).

As discussed, even though the method is initially envisaged as a means to study perceptual experiences, it invites us to *imagine* experiences to confirm the contrast. In this manner, the method of contrast, at least sometimes, replaces the imagination of experience with the experience itself on one or both sides of the pair. This means that the method takes for granted that imagining a perceptual experience does have the same phenomenology the experience actually may have. This is the idea we study in detail in the following.

The proponent of the method, as in Siegel's and Werner's cases, implicitly believes that the method can contrast two real perceptual experiences, and in case of replacing imagination or recollection on one or both sides, they can faithfully reflect the perceptual phenomenology that the subject in a real perceptual experience has enjoyed (in the case of recollection) or may enjoy (in the case of imagination).[18] All the forms by which the method may be set up are as shown in the table below:

To understand how the above pairs work, a number of examples picked out of Table 1 are provided in the following. Pair 1 (Figures 2) is an implementation of MPC in which both sides are real experiences attained by S1 at two different times. Siegel's pine tree case is an instance of this implementation of MPC. Pair 2 (Figure 3) is an implementation of MPC in which one side is a real experience attained by the first subject at t_1, and the second side is an imagination of an

[15]Cf. Siegel (2005, 2009, 2010b, 2014), Bayne (2009, 2011), Begby (2011), Wisnewski (2015), Block (2014), Butterfill (2009, 2015), Cullison (2010), Fish (2013), Helton (2016), Masrour (2011), Nanay (2011, 2012), Scholl and Gao (2013), Scholl and Tremoulet (2000), Toribio (2015a, 2015b), Van Gulick (1994), and O'Callaghan (2008).

[16]Emotionally empathetic dysfunctional individuals.

[17]Including a non-representational difference, a difference in cognitive phenomenology, a difference in non-moral properties represented, and finally a difference in representations of internal states.

[18]The method was originally proposed to compare two experiences, but it can also be used to evaluate the similarities and differences between recollections and imaginations. Having the ability to contrast recollections and imaginations would be a great bonus for the method, especially if it could not contrast two real experiences.

TABLE 1 IMG by S1: S1 imagines perceptually experiencing an episode. REC by S1: S1 recalls perceptually experiencing an episode. EXP by S2: S2 perceptually experiences an episode.

Number of Subjects	Pair number	Side1	Side2
1 subject	1	EXP by S1	EXP by S1
	2	EXP by S1	IMG by S1
	3	EXP by S1	REC by S1
	4	IMG by S1	EXP by S1
	5	IMG by S1	IMG by S1
	6	IMG by S1	REC by S1
	7	REC by S1	EXP by S1
	8	REC by S1	IMG by S1
	9	REC by S1	REC by S1
2 subjects	10	EXP by S1	EXP by S2
	11	EXP by S1	IMG by S2
	12	EXP by S1	REC by S2
	13	IMG by S1	EXP by S2
	14	IMG by S1	IMG by S2
	15	IMG by S1	REC by S2
	16	REC by S1	EXP by S2
	17	REC by S1	IMG by S2
	18	REC by S1	REC by S2

experience that would be attained by the very subject at t_2. Pair 10 (Figure 4) is an implementation of MPC in which S1 and S2 are experiencing O1 and O2, respectively. Werner's case is an instance of this implementation of MPC. Pair 9 (Figure 5) is an implementation of MPC in which both sides are remembered/recalled by S1. A certain understanding of Siegel's pine tree case could be an instance of this implementation of MPC. That is like when S1 today remembers her naïve experience of seeing the pine tree two weeks ago and finds a contrast between that memory and the one she formed just yesterday. Pair 18 (Figure 6) is an implementation of MPC in which you intuitively confirm that there is phenomenal contrast when S1 (Norma) remembers that he saw that a group of young hoodlums pour gasoline on a cat and ignite it and when S2 (Pathos) remembers the very scene. The following visualization may help you to conceive of the pairs easier:

Taking imagining and recalling in various pairs as two mental states that represent perceptual experience, we can generally distinguish between the following to categorize different forms of implementation for MPCs:

1. Phenomenal contrasts between a mental state M_1 representing an experience O_1 and a mental state M2 representing an experience O_2;
2. Phenomenal contrasts between an experience O_1 (which is represented by mental state M_1) and an experience O_2 (which is represented by mental state M_2); and
3. Phenomenal contrasts between an experience O_1 and a mental state M_2 representing an experience O_2.[19]

[19]Thanks to Elijah Chudnoff for drawing my attention to this distinction.

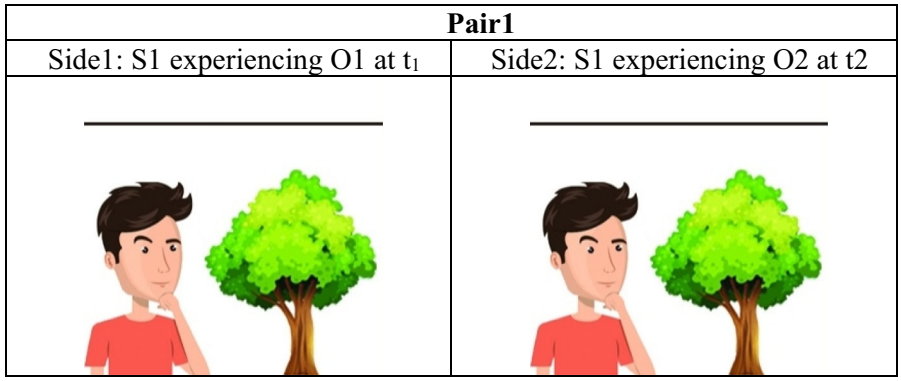


FIGURE 2 A contrasting pair that consists of two experiences that occur at two different moments.

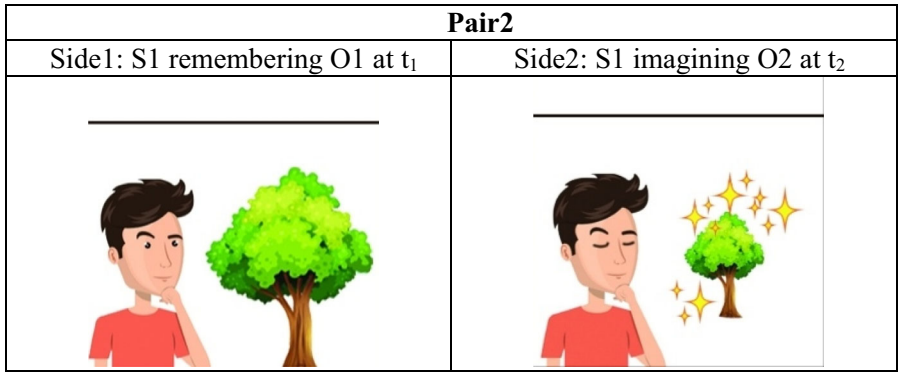


FIGURE 3 A contrasting pair that consists of a recollection and an imagination that occur at two different moments.

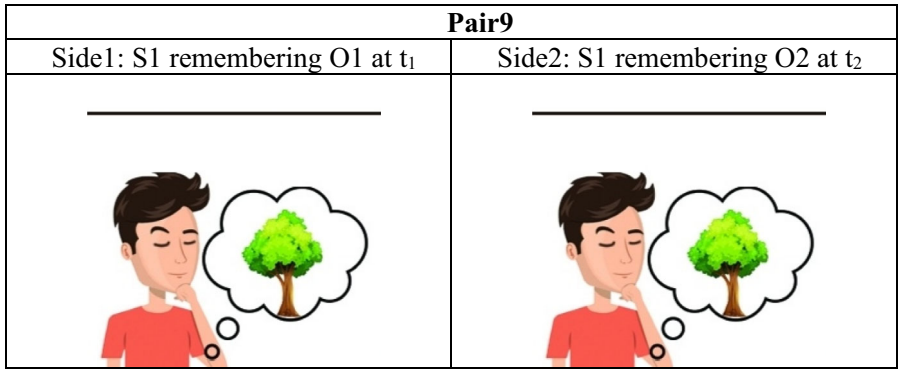


FIGURE 4 A contrasting pair that consists of two experiences that occur at the same moment.

Pairs 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, and 18 all are A-structured implementations of MPC; pairs 1 and 10 are B-structured implementations of MPC; and pairs 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, and 16 all are C-structured implementations of MPC.

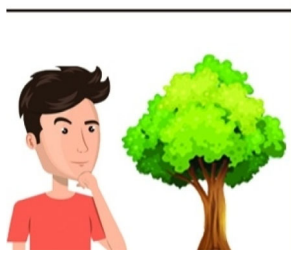
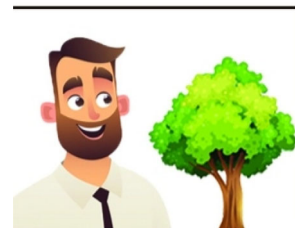
Pair10	
Side1: S1 experiencing O1 at t_1	Side2: S2 experiencing O2 at t_1
	

FIGURE 5 A contrasting pair that consists of two recollections that occur at two different moments.

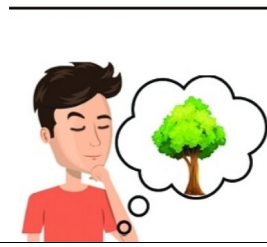
Pair18	
Side1: S1 remembering O1 at t_1	Side2: S2 remembering O2 at t_1
	

FIGURE 6 A contrasting pair that consists of two recollections that occur at the same moment.

MPCs in perception are initially supposed to draw B-structured contrasts. So, pairs 1 and 10 are the only well-formed implementations of MPC. But taking imagining or recalling as perceptually experiencing is to confuse A, B, and C. I submit that the method of contrast can never be used to draw a contrast between two real experiences (as it is claimed in pairs 1 and 10). To draw the contrast, the method is always bound at least to use imagination or recollection on one side and an experience on the other side. This point is of great importance since it reveals that, contrary to what the proponent proclaims, the contrast is not built upon mere experiences. This *unilateral collapse* will turn into an objection to the technicality of the method if I can show that imagining and/or recollecting an episode does not have the same phenomenal character as the phenomenal character of experiencing the very episode may have.[20] In the following, I first elaborate on what exactly I mean by the imagination and recollection involved in the MPC.

3 | SOME PRELIMINARY POINTS

3.1 | Imagination

For the purpose of this article, it is not necessary to map a comprehensive taxonomy for imagination,[21] but we do need to explain what kind of imagination we encounter in MPC. To

[20]There are different objections imposed on MPC. See Furst (2017), Koksvik (2015), and Laasik (2015). Here I pose a technical objection to the way its machinery works.
[21]For a taxonomy of imagination, see Leslie Stevenson (2003: 238).

begin to illuminate what kind of imagining is meant by the method, consider the following sentences:

I_1: Maryam imagines a cat suffering distress.
I_2: Maryam imagines seeing a cat suffering distress.
I_3: Maryam imagines the overall experience of seeing that a cat is suffering distress.

Is there any significant difference between I_1 and I_3? It seems there is: In I_1, Maryam imagines a state of affairs, while in I_2 she imagines undergoing an experience or being in a specific state of mind. In other words, I_2 'is to stand in a first-personal mental relation to some (imaginary or real) behavior or perception' (Liao and Gendler, 2018). In addition, I_2 is imagining *x-ing*, which is to represent some sort of mental activity or experience (Walton, 1990). There is also an important difference between I_2 and I_3. While Maryam in I_3 imagines the overall experience of seeing something, in I_2 she imagines only the visual part of the overall experience.

Now it is important to specify which type of imagining we are going to deal with in our discussion, since each type of imagining may have a distinct psychological nature.[22] The kinds of imagining employed in the method of contrast are imagining undergoing an overall perceptual experience and the phenomenology enjoyed thereby. Let us call this kind of imagination *episodic imagination*, or *e*-imagining (experiential imagining). Since we are seeking to diagnose the role of imagination in MPC, the imagination in question is e-imagining, and here I am concerned with its role in the machinery of the method. Cases of e-imagination are mental states in which the subject bears an imagination relation to a perceptual state – for our purposes, we may take this perceptual state to be one of *seeing*.

Note that e-imagining is not akin to *visual imagination*, which is the 'imaginative representation of the visual properties of objects and events' (Jackson, 2018: p. 210). Since the experience that we are invited to e-imagine in the method is an overall experience consisting of various parts, including the visual part, in implementing the method we are not only to imagine the visual part of the overall experience. Rather, we are required to imagine being in states of an overall experience (the target/contrasting experience) which may involve other components, for example, the ongoing sensations; background mood, raw feelings, beliefs, desires, representations of internal states, and so forth, apart from the visual parts (E1 and E2).

3.2 | Recollection

To begin to address what kind of recollection/remembering we are concerned with in MPC, consider the sentences below:

R_1: Maryam remembers that cheetahs can run at over 100 km/h.
R_2: Maryam remembers how to swim.
R_3: Maryam remembers seeing a cheetah running at over 100 km/h.
R_4: Maryam remembers the overall experience of seeing that a cheetah runs at over 100 km/h.

Schacter and Tulving (1994), Tulving (1972, 1985, 2001, 2002) traditionally divides the varieties of long-term memory into semantic memory, procedural memory, and episodic memory.[23] For Tulving, 'Semantic memory is the memory necessary for the use of language. It is a mental

[22]Jackson (2018) thinks that at least 'the psychological nature and the epistemic role of objectual imaginings (I_1) and propositional imaginings (I_3) are quite different'.
[23]For five major systems of human memory, see Tulving (1994: 26–29).

thesaurus, organised knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meaning and referents, about relations among them, about rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulations of these symbols, concepts, and relations' (1972: 386).[24] This is the mode of memory by which we remember general facts (Tulving, 2001: 1506). Byrne (2010) takes the sentential complement – as in R_1 – to be a non-exclusive grammatical sign of the semantic memory.

Procedural memory is the *memory-how*, or the mode of memory by which we remember habits and skills like swimming. 'It is involved in various kinds of behavioural and cognitive skills and algorithms, its productions have no truth values, it does not store representations of external states of the world, it operates at an automatic rather than consciously controlled level, its output is noncognitive, and it can operate independently of the hippocampal structure' (Tulving, 1994: 26). According to Byrne the grammatical hallmark of sentences reporting this kind of memory is an infinitival complement, as in R_2.

Episodic memory, finally, 'very roughly speaking, is the kind of memory that allows one to remember past happenings from one's life' (Tulving, 2001: 1505), or 'memory for personally experienced events', or 'remembering what happened where and when' (Tulving, 2001: 1506). Another aspect of episodic memory that is significant for us is that episodic memory 'makes possible mental time travel through subjective time, from the present to the past, thus allowing one to re-experience … one's own previous experiences' (Tulving, 2002: 5). Byrne (2010) takes the gerundival complement – as in R_3 and R_4 – to be the grammatical hallmark of sentences referring to episodic memory.

Episodic memory[25] is the kind of memory by which some specific pairs of MPC are implemented. For instance, in pair 7 (Table 1), by mental time travel to the past (T_1) and remembering what phenomenology O1 had, we establish a phenomenal contrast between recalling/remembering O1 and actually experiencing O2 at T_2. Relatively similar to e-imagining, in MPC we need to remember the overall experience of seeing. So, I assume that episodic remembering also includes remembering percepts we have undergone.

4 | THE OBJECTION FROM *UNILATERAL COLLAPSE*

MPCs never draw contrasts between real experiences; they always contrast a pair of experiences, at least one of which is e-imagined/ recollected rather than had. By this, I mean to emphasize that in any conceivable form of a contrasting pair, we must always replace a real perceptual experience with an e-imagination or recollection of another one on at least one side. The reason why in pairs with a single subject, the subject who establishes the contrast cannot contrast two real experiences is that she never can undergo both experiences at once, and so in order to draw the contrast, it is unavoidable that she must, at best, imagine O2 while experiencing O1 or recall O1 while experiencing O2. Therefore, the first line of the table is not a contrast that MPC can establish – pair {EXP by S1, EXP by S1} ruled out. Furthermore, in pairs with two subjects, S1 and S2, S1 cannot enjoy the phenomenology that S2 enjoys, since S1 has access solely to her own phenomenology. Therefore, line 10 of the table is not a contrast that MPC can establish – pair {EXP by S1, EXP by S2} ruled out.

If, in setting up MPCs, it is unavoidable that one episode be imagined or recalled instead of really experienced, then the displaced state should fully reflect the same phenomenology the subject enjoys while experiencing that very episode. Otherwise, the contrast could trivially be accounted for in terms of the deficiency of the non-reflective state that is now playing the role of the real experience, and there would be no need to invoke an intellectualized explanation. To provide a contextual background for my arguments challenging the idea of the phenomenal reflective capability of

[24]Tulving (1972) refers to Quillian (1966) as the first to have used the term 'semantic memory'.
[25]'Personal memory', 'direct memory', and 'event memory' are other terms Byrne (2010) uses for semantic memory.

imagination and recollection, it would be beneficial to initially acknowledge key foundations within the existing literature. This will aid in positioning and understanding the core of my argument.

Some philosophers have posited that under certain conditions, visual e-imagination can closely resemble perception.[26] Likewise, a number of psychologists concur with this viewpoint, often citing the findings of Perky's experiments. Perky (1910) conducted an experiment where participants were instructed to imagine certain objects on a stationary point of a blank screen. Unbeknownst to the participants, Perky then projected a blurry image of the actual object onto the screen. The participants mistakenly believed that what they were perceiving was a result of their own imagination. This phenomenon has often been described in terms of the phenomenological equivalence between imagination and perception.

Perky's experiments are called into question in later replications of her experiments (Segal, 1971, 1972). Segal, finally, concludes that the Perky effect does not show that mental images and faint percepts are inherently indistinguishable. Rather, as Neigel (2014) puts it, 'the confusion between image and percept seems to occur because the processes involved in forming a mental image of the requested type interfere with the normal utilization of the mechanisms of perception, and raise perceptual detection thresholds' (Segal, 1971; Segal and Fusella, 1970). In recent psychological research, 'the Perky effect' has been redefined from its original meaning of confusing images with percepts. Instead, it now refers to the decrease in visual performance that typically occurs when an individual consciously holds an image in their mind (Craver-Lemley and Arterberry, 2001; Craver-Lemley and Reeves, 1992). These are besides the unreliability of the introspective method, which she relies on. This method in science has long since fallen into disrepute.[27]

Let us assume that Perky is right. The result is that perception and e-imagination are the same in kind, but still differ in vivacity – as Hume (1740) believes. Hume thought that mental images are equivalent to weak internally generated percepts, except that percepts are more vivid than images. But if experiencing a given object e (EXP]e[) is more vivid than e-imagining it (IMG]e[), then there will be a difference in the subjective character of EXP]e[and IMG]e[, just like when we look at an object with and without glasses. If changes in vividity make a phenomenal difference, then we would not be allowed to substitute the states with different vividity degrees for each other because this phenomenological collapse between IMG]e[and EXP]e will trivially entail a phenomenal contrast. In other words, once the phenomenal change in MPC could be accounted for in terms of changes in vividity, there was no need to invoke complex explanations. If such a possibility is already provided by the machinery of the method, then the method itself is probably why we have a phenomenal contrast.

In the following, I give some explicit reasons why I think imagination, however, does not fully reflect the phenomenology of experience.

4.1 | Intuition

Imagination may plausibly give us justification in many thought experiments, insofar (at least) as we are not invoking its capability to reconstruct the phenomenal character of a given perceptual experience; but intuitively, e-imagination does not completely reflect what it would be like to be in the state of experiencing a perceptual experience. To see this, consider (1) and (2), below:

1. e-imagining the overall experience of riding a bicycle on the Taleghan riverside,
2. having the overall experience of riding a bicycle on the Taleghan riverside.[28]

Intuitively, one can affirm that there is a phenomenal contrast between (1) and (2); generalizing, this intuition shows that e-imagining is not capable of conveying the exact same phenomenology as

[26]See, for instance: Hume (1740), Hopkins (2012, 2013), and Nanay (2012).
[27]Schwitzgebel (2008), Danziger (1979, 1980), Blumenthal (1975), Bringmann and Tweney (1980), and Fancher (1996).
[28]To avoid some controversies about my example (the Taleghan riverside case), we can consider a perceptual experience in which bodily features are less obtrusive; though generally the method is intended to contrast two overall experiences (not just the visual components).

we may enjoy in a real experience. And if it is the case that e-imagining an episode (1) phenomenally contrasts with experiencing the very episode (2), it's not clear that the contrast between e-imagination of this very episode and really experiencing another episode would be a valuable contrast. If the real naïve experience of a pine tree (O1) phenomenally contrasts with the e-imagination of that very experience, then the contrast between the e-imagination of O1 and the informed real experience of the pine tree (O2) would trivially be expected but not of any value or even relevance – since the contrast could be accounted for in terms of an intuitive phenomenal collapse between perceptually experiencing an episode and e-imagining that very perceptual experience.

It is notable that the Taleghan riverbank is a familiar place to me, where I've strolled many times. To heighten the differing intuition, we can compare the e-imagination of a novel experience with the novel experience itself. For in novel cases, I think we enjoy stronger phenomenologies:

3. e-imagining a novel experience of seeing a temple in Tibet,
4. having the overall experience of seeing a temple in Tibet.

There is intuitively a phenomenal contrast between the e-imagined and real forms of seeing the temple. There might be different explanations for why such a contrast occurs. Maybe real experiences are more vivid, or imaginations are less fine-grained than real experiences and unconsciously fail to represent some properties represented in real experiences. Whatever is responsible for such a contrast is beyond this paper's scope.

4.2 | Content externalism

Content externalism about the perceptual experience is the thesis that the contents of our perceptual states are at least partially individuated by the natural or social environment.[29] Content determination might happen in different ways, including causation. If for a perceptual state P to have content C it is necessary to be in causal interaction with the external item E, the contents of another perceptual experience P′ which is not in causal interaction with E would not be C. If this is the case, given that the contents of perceptual experiences should either make a contribution to the phenomenology of that experience or they would not be counted as contents,[30] P and P′ would not be phenomenally identical. Now, suppose that the Taleghan riverbank is not a familiar place to you and that you have never strolled along its banks or ridden a bike in that area. This means that you have not thus far engaged in (direct) causal interaction with the Taleghan riverbank. Now, in the absence of such interaction, let us suppose that P would have the content C and the phenomenology R. Then let us suppose that right now you put down this paper and go biking on the Taleghan riverside. Let P′ be the perceptual experience you obtain while biking along the river; let C′ be its content and R′ be its phenomenal character. If C and C′ and thereby R and R′ were identical, then the causal interaction would be irrelevant and therefore content externalism would not be permissible.[31]

To talk in terms of the twin earth, take Oscar, on the earth, *seeing* the external item E, and Toscar, on the twin earth, e-*imagining* seeing the external item E. If Oscar's seeing and Toscar's e-imagining were equal in content, then no causal interaction with E would be necessary for content determination. Oscar's seeing can have certain contents by virtue of his causal interaction with E which Toscar lacks. If there should be a difference in content between Oscar's seeing and Toscar's e-imagining, then there should be a phenomenal difference too since, as Siegel puts it, 'nothing counts as a content of experience if it does not reflect the phenomenal character of experience, either by co-varying with phenomenal character or by otherwise reflecting it' (Siegel, 2013: 850).

[29]For content externalism, see Putnam (1975) and Burge (1979).
[30]Phenomenal content.
[31]I think the idea of this argument will still make sense even if we prefer to explain the individuation process in non-causal terms.

Since the relation between Siegel's assumption and content externalism might still be misunderstood, let me formulate this argument in the following way:

1. Content externalism is plausible.
2. If content externalism is plausible, then there are content differences between IMG[e] and EXP[e].
3. If there are content differences between IMG[e] and EXP[e], then IMG[e] and EXP[e] are different in phenomenology.
4. Therefore, IMG[e] and EXP[e] are different in phenomenology.

I take premise 1 as plausible because it seems uneconomical to give up externalism to save MPC. In defending premise 2, I only rely on externalist intuitions about the contents of perception and how causal relations are relevant to the determination of contents. Note that I assume the temporality of causation is a difference-maker.

For premise 3, I rely on the notion of perceptual content for Siegel as one of the prominent advocates of MPC who has suggested MPC as a proper method for studying perceptual contents. Per Siegel, for any C to be counted as a content of a perceptual experience *e*, C needs to co-vary with the phenomenal character of *e* or otherwise reflect it (Siegel, 2013: 850).

Why should two different states with different contents not have the same phenomenology? One might say that since we are focused solely on the overall phenomenology of the states in question (not their perceptual phenomenology), the following scenario is conceivable: Take *e* and *e′* as two overall experiences (just like O1 and O2). Let us suppose that *e* lacks a certain content that *e'* conveys. This would cause a phenomenal collapse in *e*. Therefore, *e* and *e′* will have different perceptual phenomenology. But let us conceive that they also differ in some other respects and features. *e'* may have an extra component among its non-perceptual features. This non-perceptual feature of *e'* might be able to amend the collapse and make the overall phenomenology of *e'* equal to the phenomenology of *e*. Hence, both *e* and *e′* may have similar phenomenology despite having distinct perceptual contents.

I would respond; however, this scenario is a coherent possible scenario, it relies on a very mechanistic view of how different features of states of mind contribute to the overall phenomenology of *e* and *e′*. It is not clear how a non-perceptual feature of *e′* can make the same phenomenal contribution that a missing perceptual content could make to *e*.

After all, if seeing E is phenomenally different from e-imagining E, it is not permissible to substitute e-imagining for seeing. The advocate of the method seems to be forced to choose between externalism and the method, and rejecting externalism does not seem to be the preferable choice, by any means.

4.3 | Phenomenological mistakes

Hopkins (2018) believes that e-imagination and episodic remembering are the same in kind.[32] To argue for this, he starts with their phenomenal overlap. He puts:

> [I]t is possible to be uncertain whether one is remembering a past episode, or merely imagining it. (In contrast, it is very hard to conceive how one could be uncertain between remembering and perceiving.) An obvious explanation for how such uncertainty is possible is that the phenomenologies of imagining and of memory overlap to a considerable degree. (Hopkins, 2018: 54)

[32]Recently, some philosophers have argued that imagination and episodic memory are products of a single cognitive faculty. See: Michaelian (2016a, 2016c) and Sant'Anna et al. (2020).

Hopkins accounts for this phenomenological confusion in terms of the common components shared by e-imagining and remembering. But the other side of the coin, then, is why don't we otherwise confuse e-imagining and remembering on one hand with perceiving on the other hand? Why is it hard to conceive of a case in which I am not sure whether I am perceiving or e-imagining/ remembering?[33] If the similarity in nature is responsible for the confusion between the two, what is the proper explanation as to why we do not confuse them with real percepts? A proper explanation of why such confusion does not happen, in my view, is the considerable phenomenal difference between e-imagining/ remembering and perceiving. The confusion does not occur, since perceiving is phenomenologically distinct from the other two. If this is the case, we may not be allowed to substitute e-imagining for perceiving in MPC, for their phenomenologies are different.

4.4 | Presentational phenomenology

The problem of whether the conscious character of experience has any epistemic power to confer justification is highly debated in the literature. First, e-imagine there is a pine tree before you, and then actually stand before a pine tree and look at it. Intuitively, while your e-imagination does not confer any justification on your belief that *there is a pine tree before you*, your perception of the pine tree makes you justified in believing that there is a pine tree before you. What is the difference between these two states that contributes to a difference in justification?

One explanation proposes a difference in the nature of the conscious character of e-imagination and perception as responsible for such an epistemic dichotomy.[34] 'The rough idea is that, when you visually experience, as opposed to when you visually imagine, things are presented to you as actually being the case' (Silins, 2015). Silins uses the term *presentational phenomenology* to refer to the conscious character of perception. Even if presentational phenomenology is not the only kind of phenomenology that confers justification on perceptual beliefs, given that the phenomenal reality in presentational phenomenology is not all reflected by non-presentational phenomenology, and thus there is a contrast between presentational phenomenology and non-presentational phenomenology, substituting a state with non-presentational phenomenology for a state with presentational phenomenology would not be permissible in MPC. This is because what is needed to draw the pine tree pair, for instance, is to contrast two real experiences with two contrasting presentational phenomenologies.

Changes in the nature of phenomenology might also have consequences for the representational character of the state in question. Given that the proposition that *there is a pine tree* is part of the contents of my perceptual experience while looking at a pine tree, and given that my experience has this proposition as part of its contents in virtue of the presentational manner of its phenomenology, then e-imagination of the pine tree would not have this proposition as part of its content. For e-imagination does not have a presentational phenomenology. This implies that how a given state's phenomenology is (presentational or non-presentational), or what nature it has, can play a crucial role in determining at least part of its contents. If this is the case, then we are not allowed to substitute a state with non-presentational phenomenology for a state with presentational phenomenology in MPC. Since, by Siegel's definition of content, any change in content should co-vary with the phenomenal character or otherwise reflect it.

Note that, as I mentioned in the argument from content externalism, I do not mean that any change in the phenomenal character entails a change in the contents. I take it that states with

[33]One may consider borderline cases of e-imaginings, like perceptual hallucinations and dreams, as kinds of e-imagining that phenomenologically may be confused with real perceptions (as O'Shaughnessy, 2000: 341 and McGinn, 2004: 15 take hallucinations to be internally triggered imaginings). The point here is that the difference between the e-imaginings in MPC and the borderline cases 'lies in whether they are active or passive' (Noordhoof, 2018). In MPC, contrary to the borderline cases, we *willingly* engage in active e-imagination and active imaginations are not subject to this kind of confusion.

[34]Cf. Martin (2002).

presentational phenomenology include at least a proposition as part of their contents which the states with non-presentational phenomenology lack. I never meant to attribute Siegel that such a difference in content stems from a difference in the nature of phenomenology. The reason why such a difference takes place and how it is related to the presentational/non-presentational nature of the phenomenal character is not of my concern here. If you accept that the states with presentational phenomenology, include at least a proposition as part of their contents that the states with non-presentational phenomenology lack, then this plus Siegel's intentionalist assumption results in that the phenomenal character of states with presentational phenomenology differ/contrast with the phenomenal character of states that have non-presentational phenomenology (the idea of co-variation). And if the phenomenal character of states with presentational phenomenology differ/contrast with the phenomenal character of the states that have non-presentational phenomenology, then we are not allowed to substitute non-presentational states (IMG]e[) for presentational states (EXP]e[). To sum up, it seems a difference in the nature of phenomenal character will result in a change in content, at first step, and then the change in content will render the phenomenal character as contrasting to the states with other natures of phenomenal character. This is a relevant change, since any substituted state needs to have the same contents at least.

All in all, if e-imagination is not capable of reconstructing/reflecting perceptual phenomenology, then pairs (2), (4), (5), (6), and (8) are not reliable pairs for drawing the contrast.[35] So, we may seek to engage in some strategy to remove the role of e-imagining from the method of contrast. In the following, I will discuss this strategy to see if it helps the proponent revive MPC.

5 | THE IMAGINING CLEAN-UP STRATEGY

The 'clean-up strategy' I consider here is to remove e-imagination from the method and so avoid the challenge altogether. How this strategy proceeds depends on the type of MPC in question. Here, I will show how it proceeds both in one-subject MPCs and two-subject MPCs.

In MPCs with two subjects, I, as one side of the pair, can substitute myself for the first subject (S1) and actually experience the situation in which I was sitting and purely e-imagining. But on closer inspection, it seems this strategy does not succeed in removing e-imaginations completely; we still need to e-imagine what phenomenology the second subject (S2) may enjoy in the same situation simply because in the pairs based on two real experiences with two subjects, I cannot be both S1 and S2. This failure is even clearer in the contrasts in which S2 is in principle different to me in cognitive abilities: For example, in Werner's pair, I can put myself in place of Norma in a real Harman's cat case, but it is not clear to me how would I judge Pathos's phenomenology without e-imagining what it is like to be that Pathos, or what it is like to be in Harman's cat case while having no phenomenal response to what distress the cat suffers.[36]

The main idea of the clean-up strategy in the MPCs with one subject is to remove e-imagination by letting us actually experience both sides of the pair on our own. By this means, the overall contrasting experience (O1) would be the one I obtain at T_1 after learning what the

[35]Since I am still discussing the nature of the phenomenology of e-imagination, I do not mention the pairs that include recollection in one or both sides. Later, when we discuss recollection, we can add all those pairs to the ones that lack presentational phenomenology. This is because recollection does not seem to have a presentational phenomenology. Therefore, the argument from presentational phenomenology applies to recollection as well.

[36]Even invoking the empirical data (e.g., the different neural status of the subjects, different skin conductance responses, and different startle responses) to establish, for instance, a neural contrast between S1 and S2, partially depends on e-imagination. For empirical data only makes us confirm an empirical contrast first, and then mediately confirm a contrast in the phenomenological level. So, we still might need e-imagination to get the phenomenological meaning of the data. A prominent difference between a *data-mediated* contrast (e.g., Harman's cat case) and a *first-person* contrast (e.g., the pine tree case) is the inferential status of the judgments about the phenomenology of S2 in the former, contrary to the directly introspected phenomenology in the latter. To know what it would be like to be in the neural status of the pathos zombie, I need to either empathize by e-imagination or by an implicit inference as the following: (a) I (as S1) am in the neural state N enjoying the phenomenology P; (b) any change in neural level would contribute to a distinct phenomenology; (c) S2 is in a different neural status than S1, namely N': therefore, (d) S2 is enjoying a different phenomenology P'.

term 'pine tree' refers to and thus acquiring the concept of 'pine tree'. The overall target experience (O2) would be the one I obtain after a while, during which I gain a recognitional disposition to identify the pine trees. It seems this course of action would facilitate us in eliminating e-imaginations and having in hand two real experiences that still phenomenally contrast with one another and are good elements for a new setup of the method.

But this strategy fails too. For the proper moment when I can draw the contrast is T_2 (or a while after T_2), and at T_2 there is no actual O1. This is because experiences are 'like flashes, bangs, conferences, cricket matches, parties and races. They are particular things that occur or happen; they are (at least paradigmatically) extended in time, and have a beginning, a middle and an end' (Byrne, 2009: p. 431). But if O1 is an event that has terminated before T_2, and I'm not experiencing O1 anymore. So how would I draw the contrast? I think insisting on removing e-imagination leaves *recalling* O1 as the only plausible option. So, the refined setup of MPC is arrived at only by positing a recollection on one side and a real experience on the other. But recollection, if not worse, is not a better choice than e-imagination for recollection's phenomenological capacity seems poor and not fully reflective as well. In the following, I will pinpoint the reasons why I think so.

6 | RECONSTRUCTING THE OBJECTION FOR THE REFINED FORM OF THE METHOD

If it is the case that there is no way to find out the phenomenal character of Pathos's experience, then pair 10 (contrasting an experience obtained by the first subject with an experience obtained by the second subject) is not conceivable; and pair 11 (EXP1. REC2), even accepting its conceivability, is not permissible according to the above arguments against substituting e-imagining for real perceptual experiences. Pair 12 is also impermissible for reasons of the arguments, given below, in favor of the impermissibility of substituting recalling for experiencing. The crucial difference between pairs 2 (EXP1. IMG1) and 11 (EXP1. IMG2) is that the imagined side of the pair in the former is imagined by the very the first subject, but in the latter is entertained by the second subject. This is why 12 (EXP1. REC2) is inconceivable: for I, as the first subject, do not know what phenomenology the second subject is enjoying by her e-imagining.

Pairs 11 (EXP1. IMG2) and 12 are not conceivable for another reason too. As we cannot conceive of a contrast between an experience obtained by the first subject and an experience obtained by the second subject (pair 10) without e-imagining the second subject's experience, it is not conceivable that we can contrast an experience obtained by the first subject and an imagining by the second subject without e-imagining the second subject's e-imagining. Pairs 13–16 do not even keep experience on one side of the pair and are wholly based on non-reflective states – e-imagining and recollection.

After all, pairs 10–18 fall into the category of the inconceivable pairs. I think one option to refine these pairs is to reduce their second side to an experience, imagining, or recollection by the very first subject. This means that in order to refine the contrasts with two subjects, we should refine reduce them into contrasts with one subject.

The reduction strategy saves these pairs from the crisis of inconceivability. In this way, we render them all conceivable; but even these pairs are subject to the objection from unilateral collapse. Let us first choose the meaningful resulting pairs to diagnose them further (Table 2).

Pair (10.1) does not make sense. It has a real experience of the first subject on one side and an experience of the second subject on the other. What does it mean to experience one's experience? Pairs (11.1), (12.1), (13.1), (14.1), (15.1), (16.1), (17.1), and (18.1) do not make sense for a similar reason.

TABLE 2 Each pair number in the second column refers to those pairs in Table 1 that involve two subjects.

	Pair number	Pair	Pair number	Refined
2 subjects	10	EXP1. EXP2	10.1	EXP1 EXP1(EXP2)
			10.2	EXP1. IMG1(EXP2)
			10.3	EXP1. REC1(EXP2)
	11	EXP1. IMG2	11.1	EXP1. EXP1(IMG2)
			11.2	EXP1. ING1(IMG2)
			11.3	EXP1. REC1(IMG2)
	12	EXP1. REC2	12.1	EXP1. EXP1(REC2)
			12.2	EXP1. IMG1(REC2)
			12.3	EXP1. REC1(REC2)
	13	IMG1. EXP2	13.1	IMG1. EXP1(EXP2)
			13.2	IMG1. IMG1(EXP2)
			13.3	IMG1. REC1(EXP2)
	14	IMG1. IMG2	14.1	IMG1. EXP1(IMG2)
			14.2	IMG1. IMG1(IMG2)
			14.3	IMG1. REC1(IMG2)
	15	IMG1. REC2	15.1	IMG1. EXP1(Rec2)
			15.2	IMG1. IMG1(REC2)
			15.3	IMG1. REC1(REC2)
	16	REC1. EXP2	16.1	REC1. EXP1(EXP2)
			16.2	REC1. IMG1(EXP2)
			16.3	REC1. REC1(EXP2)
	17	REC1. IMG2	17.1	REC1. EXP1(IMG2)
			17.2	REC1. IMG1(IMG2)
			17.3	REC1. REC1(IMG2)
	18	REC1. REC2	18.1	REC1. EXP1(REC2)
			18.2	REC1. IMG1(REC2)
			18.3	REC1. REC1 (REC2)

Note: In column 3, each individual pair is mentioned. Since the subjects cannot access the mental states of one another, in the refined pairs, it is suggested to substitute the mental states (EXP2, IMG2, REC2) of one of the subjects for the mental states of the other subject (EXP2, IMG2, REC2).

Pair (10.3) substitutes the first subjects's recollection of an experience obtained by the second subject for an experience obtained by the second subject. But this does not make sense. For how can the first subject recall an experience she has never had? The first subject can only recall experiences obtained on her own. Pairs (11.3), (12.3), (13.3), (14.3), (15.3), (16.3), (17.3), and (18.3) do not make sense for a similar reason.

Pair (10.2) substitutes the first subject's imagining of the second subject's experience for the experience obtained by the second subject. I (as the first subject) can imagine what experience the second subject undergoes. So, this pair is conceivable. Pairs (11.2), (12.2), (13.2), (14.2), (15.2), (16.2), (17.2), and (18.2) are conceivable for a similar reason. But in spite of being conceivable, these sets of pairs are not permissible; for they use the non-reflective state of e-imagining which I argued against. So, the genuine pairs of 10–18 are not conceivable, and the meaningful reduced pairs are not reflective and thus not permissible.

How about substituting the recollection of an experience obtained by the first subject for an experience obtained by the very subject (pair 3)? In the following, I will argue why recollection

of an experience does not fully reflect the phenomenology we enjoy while undergoing a perceptual experience. If it is the case that recollection does not reconstruct perceptual phenomenology, then pairs (3), (6), (7), (8), and (9) are not permissible, and thus there remains no pair satisfying both the conceivability and permissibility constraints.

6.1 | Intuition

For more elaborations, let O_3 and R_5 be as below:

O_3: perceptually experiencing a near-death experience[37] at T_3.
R_5: recollection of O_3 at T_4.

Intuitively, I can affirm a phenomenal contrast between O_3 and R_5. This intuition, suitably generalized, shows that remembering is not capable of recalling the whole phenomenology we enjoyed in real experiences. And if it is the case that the recollection of an episode (R_5) phenomenally contrasts with the episode itself (O_3), it's not clear that the contrast between the recollection of this very episode and another real episode (O_4) would be a valuable contrast. If the real naïve experience of the pine tree (O1) phenomenally contrasts with the recollection of the very experience, then the contrast between the recollection of O1 and the informed real experience of the pine tree (O2) would be trivially expected but not valuable, or even relevant.[38]

6.2 | Phenomenological mistakes

Again, consider Hopkin's case of mistake, which I mentioned in part IV. The motive for Hopkins was to find a common factor between e-imagining and episodic memory. It is not my intent here to take a stand on that problem, but the cases of mistake, I think, could be considered from another perspective too – a perspective in which the emphasis is on the fact that we never mistake perceiving for recalling, although we might sometimes mistake recalling for e-imagining. The explanation as to why it is hard to conceive of mistaking perception for recollection is the fact that they are phenomenally different. This is another reason why we should not substitute recalling for perceiving in MPC.[39]

6.3 | The imagery nature of recollecting

For Hopkins, the best explanation for the existence of memories that phenomenally overlap with e-imaginings and cannot be distinguished from them is 'the fact that memory involves imagining' (Hopkins, 2018: 55). But mistaking e-imagining for memory does not happen regularly. How can the fact that memory involves e-imagining explain cases in which we do not mistake them? Hopkins finds the solution in *being controlled by the past*. 'The fact that memory involves imagining explains the overlap in phenomenology, while the fact that memory is imagining controlled by the past explains the difference' (ibid.).

[37]By near-death experience, I do not mean the experiences one might have during a cardiac arrest, or the mythical experiences one might have before dying (e.g., perceiving god). Rather, I mean the ordinary perceptual experiences one obtains veridically in unordinary situations, which usually lead to death. For instance, a perceptual experience of the head-on scene obtained right at the moment before a serious car crash, which the subject survives. These experiences seem to be powerful phenomenological states.
[38]See Bigelow et al. (2023) for a very recent empirical work on this subject.
[39]For a discussion on the continuities and discontinuities between e-imagination and recollection, see: Michaelian et al. (2020) and Robins (2020).

If recollecting the past at least partially involves e-imagining, and if, according to the arguments in part IV, e-imagining does not reflect the exact phenomenology we have enjoyed in a perceptual experience, then recollecting the past cannot substitute for experiences either.

Another line of thought might run as follows: If e-imagining is similar to recollection in phenomenology, and if e-imagination differs from perception in phenomenology, then recollection would be different from perception in phenomenology. One might object that similarity is not a transitive relation. I would reply that similarity is a non-transitive relation insofar as we have not fixed the aspects or the properties of the relate that we are comparing to one another. If I look like my father and he looks like his father, that does not imply I look like my grandfather, since what makes me look like my father are similar noses but what makes my father look like his father is similar lips. But if the compared aspect was fixed and thus my nose was similar to my father's nose and his nose was similar to my grandfather's nose, then, given a coarse-grained view about properties, this would entail that my nose is similar to my grandfather's nose. Analogously, after fixing the phenomenal character as the compared aspect between e-imagining, recalling, and perceiving, if e-imagining is similar to recalling but not similar to perceiving, then recalling would not be similar to perceiving either.

After all, the general argument against MPC goes as follows:

1. If MPC is a proper method to discover the contents of experience, then it should either contrast two real experiences – or in case of contrasting subsequent states, they should be fully reflective.
2. MPC never contrasts two real experiences – it at least substitutes a recollection or imagination for a real experience on one side.
3. The subsequent states (IMG/REC) are not fully reflective.
4. Therefore, MPC is not a proper method to discover the contents of experience.

7 | MINIMUM REQUIRED SIMILARITIES

Even if it is totally right that e-imagining and recollection play pivotal roles in MPC, and even if they never accurately reflect the phenomenology of perceptual experience, would they still be able to reflect *everything that we need* in order to run MPC in the traditional way (that Siegel does)? This invites the interesting question of what similarities are required to make the MPC work.[40]

For MPC, the minimum required similarity between the state substituted for an experience and the experience itself is the identical phenomenal character of both states. MPC is supposed to contrast a pair of experiences at a phenomenal level and is supposed to study the contents of the given states by invoking the phenomenal contributions of the contents. Substituting a non-reflective state for real experiences may distort genuine phenomenology and be misleading.

Should both sides have the same nature of phenomenology? I would say having or lacking presentational phenomenology for two different states of one episode, and thus contrasting them at the epistemic level, is considered only to the point that that difference could be rooted in a difference between the contents of the two different states (experiencing and e-imagining) of one episode. If both states, regardless of having their phenomenal character in a presentational manner or in a non-presentational manner, and thus regardless of their epistemic power, could have the same contents, we would be allowed to use them in MPC interchangeably. But, as I argued, a change in the nature of the phenomenology of a state might cause/ be caused by a change in its contents. Therefore, in MPC both the states (e-imagining/ recollecting and experiencing) that are used interchangeably should have similar natures. Since MPC in

[40]Thanks to Michael Milona for bringing this point to my attention.

perception is supposed to contrast between real experiences, and real experiences have presentational phenomenology, the successor of the real experience should have presentational phenomenology too. This phenomenal constraint is also necessary for the other side of the pair. It implies that both sides should have presentational phenomenologies.

Setting aside the problem of phenomenological nature, one question is: why do we need a full reflection by e-imagination/ recollection in order to set up permissible contrasts? Why does partial phenomenal reflection not work? The answer is that substituting experience for any state that fails to fully reflect the phenomenology of experiencing may be deceptive, since the opponent may claim that the proposed contrast is rooted in the non-reflective nature of e-imagination/recollection and is not an effect of identifying a specific property in the phenomenal character.

8 | TWO OBJECTIONS

One may object that what is needed, for sure, is that e-imaginings/ recollections are similar to perceptual experiences in ways that allow a relevant contrast to be drawn. But this is consistent with there being systematic differences between the types of experiences and their phenomenal characters. Thus, confirming that there are phenomenal differences between e-imaginings/ recollections and percepts does not entail that we are not allowed to substitute them in MPC.[41] In other words, we can divide every imagination/recollection/perception into two parts: the state and its contents. The overall phenomenology we enjoy in an e-imagination/ recollection/ perception is a function of the phenomenology of the state plus the phenomenology of the contents. We accept that the phenomenology of the state of imagining/ recollecting O is different from the phenomenology of the state of perceiving O. However, because their contents are mutually shared, the phenomenology of the contents would be equal. Since the contents are equal, the phenomenal collapse is based on the difference in states. So, we can set aside the states contribution to the overall phenomenology and then set the pair between their contents. This will give us a solution to set up the MPC without considering the phenomenal difference between perception and e-imagination/recollection.

In reply, I believe that:

1. As a type of mental state changes, the overall phenomenal character of the experience changes too.
2. Different features of the overall experience do not play an atomic role but a holistic one. In other words, the components of consciousness are interdependent and interrelated.[42]

The opponent's strategy here is to substitute e-imagining/ recollection for perception and subtract e-imagination's/ recollection's/ percept's state phenomenology from the overall phenomenology, compare the rest of the overall phenomenology as an equal part among all the three, and then establish the contrast.

As I mentioned in B, I think this strategy will not work. For, according to phenomenal holism, we do not know how the overall phenomenology will change after the subtraction because the subtraction will change the construction of the hole and consequently its properties. Therefore, to have relevant pairs, we need to contrast two real experiences instead of substituting one or both of them.

[41]Many thanks to *** for this objection.

[42]Phenomenal holism has various version. Here I assume only a weak version: the phenomenal parts of our conscious experiences are not independent of each other, leaving it open whether the influence is causal or constitutive (Furst, 2017). For a defense of a strong version of phenomenal holism, namely that all parts of all experiences are necessarily interdependent, see Dainton (2010) and Chudnoff (2015b: 120f).

The opponent might insist that I am committing myself to phenomenal holism, and this will make my position more complex than my opponent's view and thus not economical. But taking a stand on the phenomenological construction and choosing between holism and atomism is inevitable for both me and my opponent because, to process her objection, the opponent is also invoking a view on the phenomenological construction: atomism. She thinks every part has a certain contribution to the overall phenomenology that is subtractable from it without making any change in what other features contribute to the overall phenomenology.

This is besides the skepticism about the capability of introspection to detect the states' contribution to the overall phenomenology. It is highly dubious whether we can introspectively detect what should be subtracted and what should be left. Note that avoiding introspective disputes was one of the main motives for the proponents of MPC to invent it.

Also, one might ask that why do you think it's impossible to separate the phenomenological contribution of the state of being a memory from the phenomenological contribution of the state of being a perception and focus on the remainder? Why cannot the proponent of MPC say: Sure, the two states differ phenomenologically, but they differ phenomenologically only in virtue of the fact that one is a memory and the other is a perception?[43]

In reply, I think so because of at least three reasons: First, as Siegel (2010) puts it, introspection is not *domain-specific*: We cannot introspectively detect what amount of the ongoing overall phenomenology is routed in type of the state itself. Second, the reason why introspection might not be able to separate the phenomenological contribution of the state is the same reason why we came to use MPC: introspective humility. This is plus other skceptical arguments against the reliability of introspective judgments in the studies of consciousness. The only modest judgment from introspection here is to confirm that there seems to be a phenomenal contrast between the two overall experiences (O1 and O2). Third, this objection assumes an atomistic view on the conscious character of experience.

9 | CONCLUSION

MPC in any pair needs to use e-imagining or recollection on one or both sides. However, for numerous reasons, these two do not fully reflect the phenomenal character of experience. Therefore, contrasts drawn upon non-reflective states on one or both sides could be a result of the non-reflective nature of these states. If this is the case, there would be no proper contrasting pair for discovering the contents of perceptual experience. This conclusion could, at least, suggest a new rival explanation as to why such contrasts occur.

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[43]Thanks to a colleague for this objection. Although regrettably, I cannot remember their name.

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