# *APPEARANCES WITHOUT CONCEPTS*

## *A Critical Evaluation of Conceptualism*

PHILIPPE CHUARD
PhD Candidate, Philosophy Program
The Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

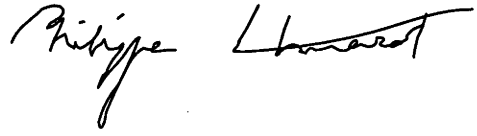
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## STATEMENT

This is a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University. I thereby certify that all the material contained in this thesis is the result of my own original research Ëand was not carried out jointly with any other researcherË

Philippe Chuard



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## ABSTRACT

Perceptual experiences represent objects, properties, relations, etc., in the environmentË they have a *representational content*. For instance, PaulineËs visual experience of a kangaroo in the bush, if veridical, represents a kangaroo to her. Can PaulineËs experience represent that kangaroo if Pauline has no idea of what kangaroos areË she lacks the concept *KANGAROO*? More generally, is it possible for a subjectËs experience to represent an object or property *x* if that subject has no concept for *x*?

Conceptualists like John McDowell and Bill Brewer think it isnËt. Conceptualism is the view that perception of *x* necessarily requires the possession Ëand deploymentËof a concept for *x*. This thesis consists mainly in a critical evaluation of Conceptualism. The thesis has three parts.

First, I consider what Conceptualism amounts to exactly. In particular, I provide a new elucidation of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËused by Conceptualists and their critics. My proposal avoids a variety of difficulties traditionally surrounding such a notion.

The second part focuses on arguments advanced in support of Conceptualism. It consists of a critical evaluation of Bill BrewerËs Ë999Ë Epistemic Argument for Conceptualism, and of four more minor arguments for the conceptualist doctrine. That doctrine, I argue, remains unmotivated by the considerations allegedly advanced in its support.

The third part considers objections to ConceptualismË and in particular, what I call ËPhenomenological ArgumentsËagainst Conceptualism. I discuss two such arguments in detail: an argument based on the claim that perceptual experiences represent in a fine-grained way, and an argument exploiting the idea that experiences can be very rich in information. Both objections fail, unfortunately. But, I suggest, their resources can be combined in such a way as to give rise to a more potent objection against Conceptualism.

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# PREFACE

This is a thesis about Conceptualism: the doctrine that perceptual experience necessarily requires conceptualisationË as it has been recently defended by John McDowell and Bill Brewer, for instance. Conceptualists make a claim about how perceptual experiences represent the environment, and argue that the representational content of experience is entirely constrained by concepts the perceiver possesses.

When I started working on this thesis, I had great plans. I would not only refute Conceptualism definitely, but also defend my own view about the representational content of experience. I didnË have any apodictic proof that Conceptualism was false, but hoped to add my own arguments to a whole battery of already existing objections against McDowell and BrewerËs conception of experience. Such a barrage of arguments, I thought, would suffice to convince anyone remotely tempted by Conceptualism to see the error of their ways.

But I also intended to argue against the middle ground and defend what is often regarded as an extreme option. In particular, against philosophers like Peacocke Ë1992Ë who reject Conceptualism but still allow for some conceptualisation in experience, I wanted to suggest that experience requires no conceptualisation whatsoever. Thoughts involve conceptualisation, and thoughts can accompany experiences. But thoughts and experiences should be kept clearly apart. And so, the idea was to dig for considerations undermining the coherence of the middle ground. ËAfter all, if you reject Conceptualism, why not go all the way?Ë

None of this was to be. Though I still believe Ëalmost Ëall of the above, I shall not argue for it here. Fortunately, a certain sobriety was instilled in me during my four years in Canberra. This was not just the result of patientË and, hopefully, moderately successfulË efforts by staff and students alike to provide me with some philosophical training. But by looking at the recent literature on this topic, it was becoming increasingly clear that the terms of the dispute between Conceptualists and their criticsË and the notions of Ëconceptual contentËand Ënon-conceptual contentËin particularË were causing trouble. Furthermore, having forced myself to think a little harder about some of the

classic arguments raised against Conceptualism, it became obvious that some of these arguments fail miserably.

Hence, the targets of the present work are more modest. The first target is to clarify the nature of the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents. And to that effect, to provide some specification of the notion of Ëconceptual contentË That specification, I should warn, is incomplete. Nevertheless, it suffices to shed some light on what Conceptualism is about, and in what respects it is opposed by a variety of philosophers.

This is the topic of chapters 1 to 5. **Chapter 1**Ë the introductionË is all about location: location of the dispute among a broad range of issues that make up the philosophy of perception; and location of Conceptualism among a range of related ËognitivistËaccounts of experience. **Chapter 2** introduces a variety of problems to do with the notion of Ëconceptual contentË Some of these problems concern the notion of ËontentËand are discussed in **Chapter 3**. Others relate to concepts: they are the topic of **Chapter 4**. These chapters are longer than I had hoped. Many of the problems discussed in these chapters are not as troublesome as some have suggested, but it takes some time to explain why this is so. They provide, however, a useful background to what I think is a better way to think of Conceptualism.

**Chapter 5** presents my own characterisation of Conceptualism, and outlines some of its advantages. Though I wished this represented my last word on the subject, the proposed account is a least a helpful working hypothesis. I suggest that supervenience provides a tractable wayË as with many other philosophical disputesË to make sense of the *Conceptualists vs Non-conceptualists* conflict.

The second target of this thesis is to take a look at the battlefield. And more precisely, to focus on some of the most famous arguments for and against Conceptualism. The aim, here, is to carefully evaluate some of these arguments, and simply to keep track of the score. Thus, I argue that the kinds of considerations Conceptualists advance to motivate their view fail, in more ways than one, to support that view. Surprisingly, there arenË that many arguments offered in favour of Conceptualism, and so this will be the topic of just two chapters. **Chapter 6** contains a detailed discussion of what seems to be the ConceptualistsËmain argument. **Chapter 7** briefly reviews other possibleË but unsuccessfulË motivations for Conceptualism.

Next: arguments against Conceptualism. There are many and I shall deal only with a sample. **Chapter 8** explains what I mean by ËPhenomenological

ArgumentsËand why I focus on those primarily. **Chapters 9** and **10** discuss two such related arguments in detail, and show why, unfortunately, these arguments fail to refute the conceptualist doctrine. **Chapter 11**, however, presents a somewhat novel argument, the purpose of which is to undermine the coherence of ConceptualismË and in particular, the coherence of the ConceptualistsËreplies to the other two arguments. Sadly, this is no silver bullet, but it raises serious difficulties for the tenability of ConceptualismË or so I hope to show. Finally, **Chapter 12** concludes by drawing a provisional scorekeeping sheet, but also outlines a variety of further difficulties Conceptualists have to meet.

On this ground, I think, there is little prospect for Conceptualism to be a viable account of the representational content of experience. To many, this should come as no surprise. But what matters is how we arrive at this conclusion. Most of the arguments proposed to motivate the rejection of Conceptualism, part of this thesis argues, are far from cogent. The fact that Conceptualism remains poorly motivatedË together with the fact that its internal coherence ought to be questionedË provide, I think, better reasons not to be a Conceptualist.

Of course, this prompts the question: what other view of the content of experience should we then adopt? And in particular, do non-conceptualist accounts of experience really fare any better? I think they do. Motivations for Non-conceptualism can be negative: the list of difficulties encountered by Conceptualists seems to be reason enough. Furthermore, without the drastic restrictions Conceptualists impose upon the representational content of perceptual experience, it is much easier to arrive at a coherent account of such content. This, however, is material for another Ëmerely possibleËwork. No positive characterisation of experience, of its representational properties, or of its epistemology, is to be found in this thesis. Lack of space, of course, is my main excuse. And as I said, the aims of this thesis are modest.

CHAPTER 1

# *Introduction*

Strolling through the Australian bush, you suddenly find yourself facing a red kangarooË Skippy, as it happens. The marsupial keeps hopping towards you, and you get a chance to have a close look at it.

What conditions must be satisfied for you to have a visual experience *of* that kangaroo? Many, no doubt. There must be light, you need to have eyes and a well-functioning visual system. And in normal cases, at least, there had better be a kangaroo in front of you. Assuming that all of the above hold, we can refine the question slightly. Suppose we are interested in the *nature* of your experience Ëand not just in the background conditions necessary for your experience to occurË Your experience represents the kangaroo in such-and-such a way Ëill in the details about how the marsupial appears to youË having such an experience feels like such-and-such Ëill in the details about the phenomenology of that experienceË and so forth. Again, we can ask: what conditions must be satisfied for you to have an experience like *that* Ëthe very experience youËre havingË

In this respect, we might ask how your experience differs from *thoughts* you might have about this kangaroo. For instance, you could believe that there is a kangaroo in front of you even when your eyes are closed. We might ask whether your experience of Skippy differs from your belief Ëa thoughtËabout Skippy. More generally, we might ask whether experiences are a *kind* of thought Ësimilar to beliefs in some crucial respectËor whether they are altogether different from thoughts. And if so, what does such a difference consist in?

There are, as we shall see, different dimensions along which your experience of Skippy could be compared with your belief that there is a kangaroo in front of you. This will depend, in part, on what we take the essential properties of thoughts to be. One thing your belief about the kangaroo might seem to require is that you have the appropriate conceptual capacities to understand what such a thought is about. In particular, you must have a concept of

*KANGAROO*, it seems natural to assume.[1] Otherwise, how can you have thoughts *about* kangaroos?

And so, we can ask: is it necessarily the case that, in order to *experience* the kangaroo in front of you, you must have some concept like *KANGAROO* applicable to that animal? *Conceptualists* think so. On their view, perceptual experiencesË such as the experience of seeing a red kangaroo, of hearing the ËaughËof a kookaburra, of touching the fur of a koala, of smelling the lamb chops grilling on the barbeque, of tasting a cold VB, and so onË share with thoughts two related features.

First, such experiences are *representational* psychological states Ëor eventsË They represent objects, properties, relations, events, states-of-affairs, etc., Ëpick your favouriteËin the subjectËs immediate environment:

CLAIM 1: for any perceptual experience *e*, *e represents* Ëparts ofËthe subjectËs immediate environment.

Second, Conceptualists make a distinctive claim about the nature of perceptual representation. Perceptual experiences, they argue, represent parts of the subjectËs environment in virtue of the fact that the subject exercises certain relevant conceptual capacities in having the experience:

CLAIM 2: for any experience *e*, *e* represents object, property, state-of-affairs, ..., *x* only if the subject applies a *concept* to *x*.

The conceptualist doctrine can be roughly characterised Ëat least for nowËas the combination of these two claims: it says ËËthat there is such a thing as perceptual representation, and ËËthat it is of a certain kind.

Sounds innocuous? It shouldnËt. The thesis Conceptualists advance about the nature of perceptual representationË CLAIM 2Ë is controversial. It entails, among other things, that it is *impossible* to perceive an object, property, relation, etc., without having a concept for that object, property, or relation. Thus, suppose you didnËt have a concept for the kangaroo in front of you: Conceptualism seems to entail that Skippy would look different than it actually does, or even that Skippy wouldnËt appear to you in any way at all! Such consequences are rather startling.

[1] Throughout this work, I use the following familiar convention: concepts are referred to by using capital italicised letters, as in the concept *RED*, ArthurËs concept of *POTATO*, etc.

The conceptualist doctrine has had two main champions lately: John McDowell Ë1994, 1998Ëand Bill Brewer Ë1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2005Ë But the view has been defended in one form or another by a variety of philosophers.[2]

This work is about Conceptualism.[3] It is mainly negative, I should warn, as it attempts to show what, exactly, is wrong with the conceptualist conception of experience. To be more specific, CLAIM 2 will be our target Ë*not* CLAIM 1, which IËË take for granted in what followsË Along the way, various considerations either in favour of, or against, Conceptualism will be critically reviewedË some dismissed, others defended. ËUnfortunately, not all such considerations are addressed: some will have to be ignored.ËThe main objective of this work is to establish which argumentËsË can successfully refute Ëor vindicateË the conceptualist conception of experience. I shall also try to provide a precise formulation of that conception, as well as of various opposing conceptions of experience.

The latter is important. The way in which I have phrased the two main conceptualist claims above is rather vague, and some precision seems required. One reason for this is that any discussion of Conceptualism should first ensure that it is concerned with a unique set of conceptualist claimsË and if it isnË, to carefully separate different versions of the conceptualist conception of experience, and to explain what they have in common. Another reason is that the dispute between Conceptualists and their criticsË if substantive at allË ought to be approachable in such a way that one can keep sight of the central pointËsËof contention. And this means that what is common ground Ëf anythingËbetween Conceptualists and their foes can be laid down clearly too.

Little help, however, is to be gained from traditional formulations of the view found in the literature, which often resort to the following slogans: that

[2] Including: Alex Byrne Ë2005Ë D.W. Hamlyn Ë1994Ë Michael Luntley Ë1999Ë Alva NoË Ë1999, 2002cË Christopher Peacocke Ë1983Ë William Seager Ë1999Ë Sonia Sedivy Ë1996Ë Wilfrid Sellars Ë1956, 1967Ë and P.F. Strawson Ë1979, 1992ËIt is also possible to see various figures in the history of philosophy as proponents or opponents of Conceptualism. For instance, in the Hellenistic era, the dispute between Stoics and Epicureans about the nature of perception concerns the difference between perception and judgementË see, e.g., Long & Sedley, 1987; Annas, 1992; Everson, 1990. More recently, if it is natural Ëbut wrong, I argue: Chuard, 2000Ëto regard Kant as a Conceptualist, Jerry Fodor Ë2003Ëhas suggested that Hume belongs to the other side.

[3] That is, Conceptualism *in the philosophy of perception.* Other viewsË as in metaphysics, for instance Ëee, e.g., Wiggins, 2001: chapter 5ËË come under the same name. This work is not about them.

experience is Ëthoroughly permeatedË saturated [...] with conceptsË ËStrawson, 1992: 62Ë; that Ëthe representational content of perceptual experience is fully Ëwholly, entirely, etc.Ë conceptualËË or Ëconceptual through and throughË ËMcDowell, 1994: 46Ë; that Ë[e]xperiences have their content by virtue of the fact that conceptual capacities are operative in themË ËMcDowell, 1994: 66Ë; that such experiences are Ëconceptual episodesË; Ëactualisations of conceptual capacitiesË ËMcDowell, 1998: 438Ë; or that they are states of a kind Ëwhose content is the content of a possible *judgement by the subject*Ë ËBrewer, 1999: 149Ë

Obviously, many of these formulations are as much in need of clarification as are CLAIM 1 and CLAIM 2 above. In particular, talk of the Ëconceptual contentË of experience raises many questions. For instance, what does it mean exactly to say that experiences have a representational content? What are concepts? What is it to have Ëor possessË a concept? And more importantly, what is the relationship between concepts and the representational content of experience which appears to be at the heart of CLAIM 2? Although there is now widespread scepticism as to whether such clarifications can be provided, the first few chapters of this work shall attempt to warrant a more optimistic outlook.

All this in due course. For now, I want to start mapping out Ëif only schematicallyË various background issues to ensure that the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics is properly located. One might wonder what the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics is really about. One might also wonder how Conceptualism differs from what sound like similar views in the philosophy of perception. Thus, certain clarifications of a more basic kind are needed to ensure that no confusion arises, regarding ËaË what sort of questionËsË Conceptualists attempt to answer, and ËbË what type of answer they offer to such questionËsË Clarifications of this kind are the business of this introductory chapter.

I proceed as follows. The first section Ë§1.1Ë attempts to locate the kind of problem in the philosophy of perception that Conceptualists and their opponents propose to resolve. The second Ë§1.2Ë distinguishes the conceptualist conception of experience from some of its closeË and not so closeË cousins. A more detailed specification of Conceptualism will have to wait until chapter 5.

## 1.1. Three Problems of Perception

What philosophical questions does perception raise, and which of those questions divide Conceptualists and their opponents? The answer to be

sketched here is rather impressionistic and involves a certain degree of simplification. I distinguish three different aspects of perceptual experiences, and draw attention to some of the different questions such aspects raise. Having divided the territory in such a way, I will then locate the dispute between Conceptualists and their foes, so that we can get a clearer sense of what the dispute is really about.

When you see a kangaroo in the bush, you are in a certain state, and you are related to a certain objectË the kangaroo. We can ask questions about *that*Ë and thus attempt to uncover the *metaphysics* of perception Ëncluding the metaphysical status of the state you are in, of the object you are being related to, and of the relation itselfË

When you see a kangaroo in the bush, you also are in a position to gain knowledge about the environment around you. In this respect, your perceptual experience seems to be a source of knowledge of Ëor of justification for your beliefs aboutËthat environment. And we can ask questions about *that*Ë about the *epistemology* of perception.

Finally, you are in a certain *psychological* state when you see a kangaroo in the bush. And we can ask questions about the nature of such a state, about its relations with other psychological states, its similarities and differences with those other states, and more generally, about the role it plays in your psychological life.

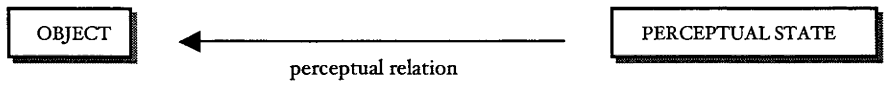
The philosophy of perception can thus be divided into three parts. Each part deals with a particular kind of problemË hence the Ëhree problems of perceptionË[4] I take each in turn.

### 1.1.1. *The Metaphysical Problem*

The issues that have most puzzled philosophers about perception are of a metaphysical kind. They revolve around the nature of the relation between perceptual states Ëor events, or the bearers of such states or events: subjects of experienceËand the so-called Ëbjects Ëof perception.[5] Call this relation the ËPerceptual RelationË

[4] Compare CraneË Ë2001: 130Ëslightly different way of compartmentalising these questions.

[5] Talk of the Ëbjects of perceptionËis supposed to be non-committal in the following way Ëcompare Crane, 2001: chapter 5Ë ËËit need not Ëbut canËrefer to day-to-day physical objects like kangaroos and chairs, but also sounds, smells, etc., ËiËit need not even refer to particulars, but might include properties, relations, etc. An object of perception, in this sense, just is *whatever* is being perceived by a subjectË or whatever Ëhings Ëa subject is being Ëperceptually Ë related to, or Ëput in Ëperceptual Ëcontact withË




The questions it prompts are of three types. First, there are questions about the nature of the Perceptual Relation itself. Is it a causal relation,[6] or rather an intentional relation, in virtue of which the subjectÍs perceptual state is ÍofÍ ÍaboutÍ or Ídirected atÍ a perceptual object?[7] Is it both causal and intentional?

Questions of this first type also encompass questions about the specific properties of the Perceptual Relation. For example, is such a relation *symmetric*, *transitive*, or even *reflexive*? If itÍs asymmetric, what is its *direction*: from the object to the perceptual state or from the perceptual state to the object? Is the Perceptual Relation *direct* or *indirect*Í in other words, does the relation include a third term, which Ímediates Íbetween perceptual states and the objects of perception?[8]

In order to understand the nature of a relation, one must also consider its *relata*. And questions of the second and third type each concern one *relatum* of the Perceptual Relation. Thus, questions of the second type deal with the metaphysical and ontological status of perceptual objects. For instance, are the so-called Íobjects Íof perception really just *objects*, or do they also include properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc.? Do they include objects at all, or only properties and relations? And if they include properties, what kind of properties: colour-properties and shape-properties, spatial properties like the property of being-to-the-left-of, or more interesting properties such as the property of being-a-kangaroo, of being-a-nose, of being-a-Swiss-citizen Ísee Siegel, 2004; 2005; and also Millar, 2000Í

Assuming that the objects of perception are physical objects, one might ask: in what sense are such objects physical? Are they what we can call Íday-to-day physical objects Ílike kangaroos, noses, and chairsÍ or perhaps, just surfaces of such objects Ísee, e.g., Stroll, 1988Í Are they rather the stuff of theoretical physics: electrons, neutrons, quarks, or collections thereof?

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[6] As described by causal accounts of perception Í namely, accounts of the form Íx perceives *y* only if *y* causally affects *x*Í See, e.g., Grice Í961Í S. Campbell Í002Í Child Í996Í Jackson Í977Í Lewis Í980Í Vision Í997Í

[7] To use the traditional metaphors. See, e.g., Anscombe Í965Í Crane Í001Í Searle Í983Í

[8] For various attempts to specify the notion of Ídirect perceptionÍ see, e.g., S. Campbell Í004Í Jackson Í977Í Searle Í983Í Snowdon Í992Í Stroll Í988Í

But one might also wonder whether the objects of perception really are *physical* in any acceptable sense of the term, or whether they are abstract objects, platonic forms, or mental objects such as *sense-data*?[9] The latter is a particularly salient option in what is often considered to be *the* problem of perception (see, e.g., Smith, 2002). Such a problem arises out of consideration of two of the most famous arguments in the philosophy of perception: the Argument from Illusion and the Argument from Hallucination (see, e.g., Robinson, 1994; Smith, 2002). These arguments are designed to establish that day-to-day physical objects cannot be the objects of direct perception.[10] Taking such arguments at face value commits one to the view that the objects of perception aren't really physical objects in the external world. The problem of perception mainly consists in finding a way to resist such a conclusion.[11]

The third type of metaphysical question about perception concerns the other *relatum* of the Perceptual Relation: namely, perceptual states themselves. Here, we face questions about the ontological status of experiences: whether experiences are states, events, or processes. But also about their metaphysical status: are perceptual experiences identical to, or supervenient upon, neural states of the brain, as Physicalists would have it?[12]

So much for the metaphysical problem of perception and the questions it covers. I now turn to the second problem of perception: the epistemological problem.

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[9] See, e.g., Jackson (1977); Foster (2000); Robinson (1994).

[10] Here is, very sketchily, how the problem arises. It is quite natural to assume that the objects of perception are what I have called day-to-day physical objects. But the Argument from Illusion and the Argument from Hallucination undermine this assumption. Both arguments exploit more or less the same starting point: that (i) in illusion or hallucination, we do not have direct access to day-to-day physical objects (since there may not be any such object in front of one in cases of hallucination) or to some of their properties (since we might have access to a property an object doesn't have in cases of illusion); that (ii) what we have in fact access to are *sense-data*, a type of psychological entity distinct from day-to-day physical objects; and that, (iii) since veridical experiences are phenomenologically indiscriminable from illusions and hallucinations, they too must have sense-data as their object.

[11] There are many ways in which to resist such an argument: one for each premise, at least (see Smith (2002) for a useful survey). There are also other arguments for the same conclusion (see Robinson (1994), as well as Jackson (1977) and Armstrong (1961) for a critical discussion).

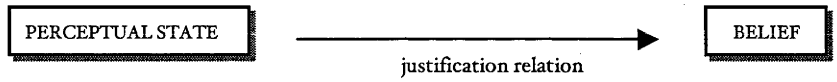
[12] See, e.g., Armstrong (1968); Jackson (1998); Kim (1998); Lewis (1972a); (1994).

### 1.1.2. *The Epistemological Problem*

What good is perception? What function does it serve? It's to do with knowledge of the 'external' world, the usual answer goes. Perceptual experiences put us in epistemic contact with objects 'properties, relations, etc.' in our immediate environment' thus allowing us to navigate our way through that environment.

The epistemic problem of perception concerns the nature and scope of such perceptual knowledge, and how it is possible. The 'problem' can be described in different ways, depending on whether one focuses on knowledge *per se*, or on epistemic justification instead. Since it is customary to regard justification as necessary for' and thus, somewhat more basic than' knowledge, I shall begin with the former.

The epistemic problem of perception centres on the following relation:

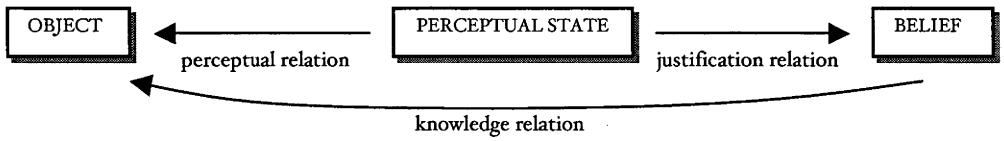



Again, we face three types of questions. Questions of the first type are the most difficult, as they concern the nature of the epistemic relation itself. Is such a relation merely causal 'so that perceptual experiences simply 'trigger' beliefs about the environment'? Or is the epistemic relation between experiences and beliefs a logical 'or inferential relation'? Is it rather a relation of probilification, of mere coherence, or some relation of some other kind?[13]

As with the metaphysical problem of perception, questions of the second and third type concern the *relata* of this epistemic relation. For instance, what properties must perceptual experiences instantiate in order to justify '(i.e., stand in the justification relation to') beliefs? And similarly with beliefs.

The epistemic problem can be described in a more complex way if one focuses rather on perceptual knowledge. Drawing on what has been assumed so far, such a relation might be pictured as follows:

[13] For these various conceptions of the epistemic relation and the various theories of justification that attempt to account for such a relation, see, for instance, Alston (1989'; Bonjour (1985, 2002, 2003'; Brewer (1999'; Davidson (1986'; Fales (1996'; Foley (2002'; Fumerton (2002'; Millar (1991b'; Plantinga (1993'; Pollock and Cruz (1999'; Pryor (2000, 2005'; Sosa (1980/2000, 2003'

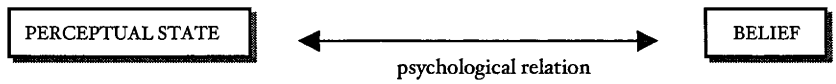



It's not too difficult to see what kinds of questions such a picture raises. Does the 'perceptual knowledge' relation supervene on both the perceptual relation and the epistemic relation? If so, what must these relations and their *relata* be like for the relation of perceptual knowledge to hold? Is the knowledge relation merely causal, or is it a relation of some other kind? Is there in fact such as thing as perceptual knowledge? If not, why not?

Hopefully, this brief list suffices to give some taste of the kinds of questions that make up what I have called the 'epistemic problem of perception'.

1.1.3. *The Psychological Problem*

The metaphysical and epistemic problems of perception, despite their complexity, each encapsulate a more or less unified theme. Less so with what I shall call the 'psychological' problem of perception. One question to be addressed here concerns the relation 's' between perceptual experiences and beliefs and perhaps, other mental states too' *qua* types of psychological states:




For instance, can such states be causally related? If so, what is the direction of the relation? It seems that experiences can cause beliefs. But what about the converse? Is it at least possible that beliefs sometimes influence or affect perceptual experiences 'causally or otherwise'? Are there other psychological relations which hold between instances of these two *types* of psychological states' functional, rational, sub-personal, etc.?

There are also questions about the similarities and differences between these two types of psychological states. And there are different dimensions along which one could compare perceptual experiences with beliefs. What about their *phenomenology*, for instance? Perceptual *experiences* (as opposed to perceptual *states simpliciter*) are, by definition, conscious psychological states with a certain *phenomenal character*' a way it is 'for' feels' like to be in such a

state. Thus, there is a particular way it is like to experience the blueness of the Pacific Ocean, the smell of lamb chops grilling on the barbeque, the sound of an airplane over the suburbs. Each such experience has a distinctive phenomenology, which separates it, not only from other experiences across different sensory modalities Ëcompare experiencing the taste of garlic with feeling the chill of the ocean on your skinË, but also within such modalities Ëcompare hearing an airplane with hearing BachËs Suite for CelloË

Beliefs, on the other hand, are usually characterised as lacking such phenomenal character.[14] Is there anything it is like to believe that George W. Bush has won the election, or to believe that 2 + 3 = 7? Many such beliefs may be accompanied by various phenomenologically salient sensations, emotions, and moods Ëlike the sadness and despair caused by BushËs re-electionË But the fact that beliefs can cause such psychological states need not entail that beliefs themselves have any phenomenology.

We can also compare experiences and beliefs in terms of their relationship with the environmentË a *semantic* dimension of comparison. Beliefs, like many other psychological states, are *representational.* Pauline might believe that there is a kangaroo in front of her, that 2 +3 = 7, that she has still much to offer to Australian politics. Likewise, you might believe that there is a kangaroo in front of you, that 2 + 3 = 5, that Pauline has nothing to offer to Australian politics. Such beliefs represent facts or states-of-affairsË the fact that there is a kangaroo in front of Pauline, that 2 + 3 = 5 and that Pauline has nothing to offer to Australian politics; and the ËmereËstate-of-affairs that 2 + 3 = 7, that Pauline has much to offer to Australian politics, and that there is a kangaroo in front of you. ItËs because beliefs represent facts and states-of-affairs that they can be said to be *true* or *false.* They are true if what they represent is a fact, false otherwise.

Some terminology seems inevitable at this stage. In respect of their truth or falsity, beliefs carry with them Ëas it wereËcertain conditions of correctness, or *truth-conditions*: conditions which determine, given the way the world is,

[14] Orthodoxy has it that beliefs are *dispositional* states: a belief is a psychological state of a subject with a certain duration Ëwhich could be as long as the subjectËs lifeË and which need not manifest itself Ëcausally, consciously, or otherwiseËat all times. Hence, it is possible for beliefs not to be conscious. But even when beliefs manifest themselves by becoming consciousË sometimes, the term ËjudgementËis reserved for such manifestations, or for the formation of beliefsË itËs unclear whether they really have any typical phenomenology. For discussion of this orthodox picture, see, e.g., Audi Ë994Ë Carruthers Ë996Ë Crane Ëoo1: 103-7Ë Nelkin Ë989Ë Schwitzgebel Ëoo2Ë Searle Ë992Ë

whether such beliefs are true or false. These conditions Ëbut not their satisfactionËare fixed by what the beliefs represent, and how they represent it. We can call the latter the *representational properties* of a belief: they are properties that determine what the belief represents and which truth-conditions are associated with it. Another term for the same thing is the *representational content* of a belief.[15]

A little more terminology: the representational content of a belief, it is traditionally assumed, is a *proposition*. The propositions that 2 + 3 = 7, that Pauline has much to offer to Australian politics, are taken to be abstract entities which exist even if, in fact, 2 + 3 = 5, and Pauline has nothing to offer to Australian politics. Strictly speaking, it is propositions that are true or false Ëbeliefs are true or false only in virtue of the fact that their propositional contents are true or falseË Finally, psychological states the representational content of which are propositions typically go under the name of *propositional attitudes*. Such attitudes include beliefs, presuppositions, desires, hopes, wishes, intentions, etc.[16]

What about perceptual experiences? Part of the psychological problem of perception is ËiËwhether perceptual experiences are representational, and if so, ËiiËwhether their representational contents are propositional, and ËiiiËwhether their correctness-conditions Ëif anyËare also truth-conditions, etc. In other words, the question is whether perceptual experiences too are propositional attitudes, and how their representational content resembles that of other propositional attitudes like beliefs, desires, etc.

Another dimension of comparison between experiences and beliefs is *functional*. Both beliefs and perceptual experiences play a certain functional role in a subjectËs psychological life. Such functional roles include the causal relations between beliefs, experiences, and other types of psychological states, as well as their respective contribution to a subjectËs rationality, etc.[17] In this

[15] I assume here that the content of a belief just is the sum of its representational properties.

[16] See, e.g., Crane Ë2001: ch. 4Ë; Richard Ë1990, 1997Ë; Searle Ë1983: ch. 1Ë; Stalnaker Ë1984: ch. 1Ë In what follows, I will sometimes use the term ËthoughtsËfor the same thing. On my usage, thoughts are the class of psychological states which count as propositional attitudes, and thus have a propositional content. It is not to be equated with the contents of such states. In this sense, believing, presupposing, desiring, hoping, wishing, intending, etc. are all thoughts.

[17] Armstrong Ë1968Ë; Crane Ë1992Ë; for the notion of a Ëfunctional roleË see, e.g., Churchland Ë1988Ë; Botterill and Carruthers Ë1999Ë; Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson Ë1996Ë

respect, it may be that perceptual experiences and beliefs entertain causal relations with different types of psychological states.

Finally, another dimension of comparison concerns the various *neurophysiological* mechanisms underlying beliefs and perceptual experiences. Are such mechanisms related? Is there some overlap between those mechanisms giving rise to experiences and the ones which underpin beliefs?[18]

All these questions about the various relations between experiences and beliefs Ëand other thoughtsË, as well as their similarities and differences, make up what I have called the *psychological problem of perception.* Such a ËproblemË covers the ËiË phenomenological, ËiiË semantic, ËiiiË functional, and ËivË neurophysiological relationsË among others, perhapsË between experiences, beliefs, and other thoughts. Given that many such relations are interwoven Ësometimes rather tightly, as we shall seeË, it makes sense to treat them as a Ëperhaps not too unifiedËwhole.

So much for stating the obvious.[19] With this map of the territory in hand, we are in a position to answer the first basic question about Conceptualism: namely, what the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is really about.

### 1.1.4. *Location, location*

To situate the sort of issueËsË Conceptualists and their opponents are concerned with, I proceed by elimination. The conceptualist position was characterised earlier as the combination of two claims: ËiËa claim about the nature of perceptual experiences, to the effect that they are representational states; and ËiiËa claim about the nature of perceptual representation itself, to the effect that perceptual representation requires the application of concepts on the perceiverËs part. Opponents of Conceptualism reject ËiiË, but not ËiË Hence, the dispute is about the nature of perceptual representation, and not whether perceptual experiences are representational. But what kind of dispute is that?

First of all, the dispute isnËt a metaphysical oneË at least, not in the sense in which I have characterised the metaphysical problem of perception.

[18] See, e.g., Farah Ë2000, 2004Ë; Pylyshyn Ë1999, 2003Ë

[19] It seems uncontroversial that questions and problems in the philosophy of perception can be divided in this threefold way. A more controversial issue concerns the connections between these three problems of perception. But I lack the space to address this rather complex question here.

Conceptualists and their opponents can agree, as they in fact do, that the objects of perceptual experiences are day-to-day physical objects like chairs, noses, and kangaroos and their properties and relations. They can also agree, as they do, that the perceptual relation between experiences and such objects is direct – metaphysically direct, that is, in the sense that it is not mediated by a third term. In this respect, both Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists tend to be *Direct Realists*: perception is a direct relation to what I have called day-to-day physical objects.[20] Finally, they can agree that perceptual experiences are physical states of a subject, at least in the sense that a subject's perceptual experiences supervene in some way or other on some of the subject's brain states – with, perhaps, some properties of the environment.

Although Conceptualists and their opponents typically are Direct Realists, they need not be. The claims that – perceptual experiences are representational and that – in order to be so, experiences require the application of concepts, are compatible with a range of options – as is the denial of – Conceptualism – or its negation – could still be true, even if perceptual experiences did not represent day-to-day physical objects, or if there were no direct relation between experiences and such day-to-day physical objects. Conceptualism only says that *whatever* is represented in experience requires the possession and application of concepts: in itself, this carries no commitment about – what is in fact represented in experience, or about – the nature of the perceptual relation. Having said this, I shall assume in what follows that Conceptualists and their foes both are Direct Realists – as they in fact are.

Is the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics about the epistemology of perception, then? It isn't, although Conceptualists have often claimed that the dispute has important epistemological ramifications

[20] I ignore two difficulties, here. First, if such a relation holds in cases of *veridical* perceptual experiences, it is less clear it holds in non-veridical cases. Second, there is a question as to whether talk of representational content is compatible with the claim that the perceptual relation is direct and thus unmediated. Sometimes, the view that the perceptual relation is direct is called 'Naïve Realism' – see Robinson, 1994: 41; Searle, 1983: 57 – More recently, however, 'Naïve Realism' has been used for a stronger claim according to which – in perception, we are directly related to day-to-day physical objects – this is Direct Realism as specified in the text – but that – perceptual experiences have no representational content – see Martin, 2002, 2004; and Travis, 2004 – But as I understand it, Direct Realism is compatible with the view that experiences have content, since that content need not be seen as some sort of intermediary between the subject and object of experience.

ËMcDowell, 1994; Brewer 1999Ë As we shall see in chapter 6, there are reasons to doubt the correctness of such claims.

In any case, note that Conceptualism itself seems compatible with a variety of possible views about the epistemology of perception. The claim that perceptual representation has something to do with concepts is neutral on whether or not perception *is* a source of knowledge; on whether or not perceptual experiences can justify beliefs, and on what form such justification might take. In this respect, the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics is *primarily* about the nature of perceptual representation, and *not* about the epistemology of perceptual experiences. Granted, Conceptualists do motivate their view on the basis of a certain picture of the epistemology of perception.[21] But what prompts the dispute in the first place is the ConceptualistsËCLAIM 2 aboveË the claim that perceptual representation is constrained by the possession and application of concepts.

Hence, the main issue at stake between Conceptualists and their opponents is neither metaphysical, nor epistemological. By elimination, then, it must have something to do with the psychological problem of perception. But if this helps to locate the source of the disagreement between Conceptualists and their critics, it doesnËt help very much. For we still donËt know which facetËsË of the psychological problem of perception is at stake.

As we saw, the psychological problem of perception ranges over a variety of relations Ëphenomenological, semantic, functional, neurophysiological, etc.Ë that might hold between perceptual experiences, beliefs, and other types of psychological states. In order to narrow down the field a little bit, it will prove helpful to compare Conceptualism with some of its close cousins. This should also help us to see what Conceptualists do *not* claim about perceptual experiences.

## 1.2. Beliefs and Perceptual Experiences

So far, we have come to the Ëhopefully unsurprisingË conclusion that the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics has to do with the psychological problem of perceptionË the set of questions concerning the

[21] The idea appears to be that, even if Conceptualism is compatible with a variety of epistemological options, Non-conceptualism isnËt. As we shall see in chapter 6, however, the epistemological differences between conceptualist and non-conceptualist accounts of perception are in fact minimal. In particular, critics of Conceptualism can, to a great extent, accept whatever Conceptualists say about the epistemological role of perceptual experiences and how they fulfil that role.

various psychological connections between perceptual experiences, beliefs, and other types of psychological states, as well as their differences and similarities.

In this respect, Conceptualism belongs to a family of views that essentially attempt to reduce perceptual experiences to thoughts and beliefs in some way or other, to some degree or other. Hence, the general issue dividing Conceptualists and their opponents is, in part, *taxonomic*. Whereas Conceptualists take perceptual experiences to be very much like beliefs and other thoughts in a particular respect, their critics deny that experiences are akin to thoughts in precisely that respect. But what respect is that? Again, the answer ought to be transparent. The way in which I characterised the conceptualist view of experience focuses on the nature of perceptual representationË or what I called in §1.3Ëthe *semantic* dimension of comparison between experiences and beliefs.

Here, we need to distinguish the conceptualist view from two similar accounts of perceptual experienceË *Doxasticism* and *Propositionalism*. First, I introduce these three views §1.2.1Ë Then, I briefly outline a series of difficulties raised against Doxasticism §1.2.2Ë Such difficulties will help clarify in what respectËËthe main claim Conceptualists make about perceptual experiences is qualified, and why so §1.2.3Ë

### 1.2.1. *Three èisms*

Attempts to reduce perceptual experiences to beliefs and thoughts have a long historyË as do attempts to resist such reductions. Call any theory which reduces perceptual experience to thought a *cognitivist* theory of perception.[22] Some cognitivist theories simply identify perception with belief in the sense that perceptual *states* are supposed to be identical with belief *states*. Others, while not reducing experiences to beliefs, insist that both kinds of states have one crucial property in common.

Why beliefs, you might ask? That is, why try to reduce experiences to beliefs rather than to some other psychological state? For various ËelatedË reasons, there is a sense in which beliefs make the obvious candidate for such a reduction. First, perceptual experiences, like beliefs, are representational states. More importantly, perceptual experiences, unlike other types of propositional attitudes, have correctness-conditions similar to those of beliefs. BeliefsË or their propositional content, to be preciseË can be evaluated as true or false: as truly or falsely representing the environment. Perceptual

[22] This is DretskeËs Ë993/2000Ëterm; see also Vision Ë997Ë

experiences can likewise be evaluated as being veridical or non-veridical: as correctly representing the environment or not. Finally, perceptual experiences, like beliefs and unlike other types of psychological states, seem to play an important role in how we gain knowledge of the external world.[23]

There are three main cognitivist theories to be encountered in the literature. The first is the most radical, as it simply identifies experiences with beliefs: experiences *are* beliefsË though not all beliefs are experiences. Call this view *Doxasticism*:[24]

> ***Doxasticism***
> If subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* as being *f*, then *S* believes that *o* is *f* and *S*Ës experience is identical with her belief.

On this view, to perceive an object as having a property is to believe that it has that property. And so, perceptual states are a kind of belief. Such a view does not say that all beliefs are perceptual statesË only that the latter constitute a sub-class of the former. As we shall see, the view must be refined to avoid a variety of difficulties. But letËs leave it at that for now.

A weaker cognitivist theory is *Propositionalism*.[25] It rests on the rather uncontentious assumption that beliefs are propositional attitudes, and so have a propositional content:

> *Assumption èıè*
> If a subject *S* believes that an object *o* has the property *f*, *S* is in a psychological state *M* the representational content of which is the proposition that *o* is *f*.

*Assumption èıè* is supposed to embody an absolutely central characteristic of beliefs and other propositional attitudes. Propositionalists then claim that perceptual experiences are essentially like beliefs, at least in that crucial respect: namely, that they are a kind of propositional attitude and that their content is propositional:

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[23] Cognitivist theories of perception, it is important to note, go beyond acknowledging such similarities: they try to account for them by arguing that experiences *are* beliefsË or, at least, that they are identical with beliefs in a crucial respect. Non-cognitivist theories of perception, in contrast, also accept the three similarities above, but refuse to go any further and identify experiences with beliefs.

[24] see Armstrong, 1961, 1968; Craig, 1976; Pitcher, 1971.

[25] Propositionalism has been explicitly defended by Pendlebury Ë1986, 1990, 1994Ę Runzo Ë1977Ę and Searle Ë1983Ę among others.

***Propositionalism***

A subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* as being *f only if S* is in a psychological state, the representational content of which is the proposition that *o* is *f*.

Propositionalism thus characterised does not attempt to reduce perceptual experiences to beliefs. Rather, it claims that perceptual experiences and beliefs are similar, not just in the fact that they are both psychological states with a representational content, but in that their content is similar: it is propositional.

The third cognitivist account of perception is Conceptualism. The conceptualist view also exploits what it regards as a central trait common to beliefs and other propositional attitudes:

*Assumption è2è*

A subject *S* is in a psychological state *M*, the representational content of which is the proposition that an object *o* has the property *f*, *only if S* possesses and applies in *M* concepts for *o* and *f*.

Given *Assumption è1è* and *Assumption è2è*, Conceptualists insist that perceptual experiences are similar to beliefs in the following way:

***Conceptualism***

A subject *S* has a perceptual experience *e of* an object *o* as being *f only if S* possesses and applies in *e* concepts to *o* and *f*.

This is supposed to capture, at least in some respect, CLAIM 1 and CLAIM 2 above: the view that ËperceptualËexperiences are representational and that Ëthe nature of perceptual representation is conceptual. I say Ëat least in some respectË because it doesnËt provide a complete characterisation of the conceptualist view Ëfor this, wait till chapter 5Ë

The main point of the conceptualist doctrine is that, just like beliefs, perceptual experiences have a conceptual contentË a representational content that necessarily requires the possession and application of at least certain concepts. This is not to say, however, that experiences *are* beliefs. To repeat, Conceptualists only claim that perceptual experiences are *like* beliefs in a crucial respect: their content is of a kind that requires the possession Ëand applicationËof concepts.

There is thus an important difference between Doxasticism on the one hand, and Propositionalism and Conceptualism on the other. While

Doxasticists simply identify one kind of psychological state Ëperceptual experiencesË with another kind of psychological state ËbeliefsË; Propositionalists and Conceptualists restrict their reductive claim to the content of experiences and beliefs.[26]

1.2.2. *Why not Doxasticism?*

Conceptualists usually reject Doxasticism. They deny that perceptual experiences are a species of belief. In this section, I attempt to explain why.[27] Doxasticists, as we have seen, identify perceptual experiences with beliefs:

> ***Doxasticism***
> If subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* as being *f*, then *S* believes that *o* is *f* and *S*Ës experience is identical with her belief.

One main source of dissatisfaction with Doxasticism is *ontological* Ësee, e.g., Armstrong, 1968: 214; Smith, 2001: 285Ë Perceptual experiences and beliefs belong to different ontological categories. Beliefs, we have seen, are usually taken to be dispositional *states*: a subject can be in a belief state almost all her life and itËs possible that such a state rarely manifests itself. Perceptual experiences, on the other hand, are occurrent *events* which endure for a rather short temporal interval. Such an ontological discrepancy raises a problem for any attempt to identify experiences and beliefs.

To avoid this difficulty, Doxasticists typically rephrase their view as follows Ësee Armstrong, 1968: 209-11, 220, 264Ë

> ËDË if a subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* as being *f*, then *S* *acquires* the belief that *o* is *f* and *S*Ës experience is identical with the acquisition of such a belief.

[26] A word about the entailment-relations between these three cognitivist theories Ëcompare Vision, 1997: 87-8Ë On the one hand, most Doxasticists and Conceptualists grant *Assumption è1è* and are Propositionalists. Many Doxasticists and Propositionalists grant *Assumption è2è*: in this respect, they are Conceptualists too. However, some balk at *Assumption è2è*Ë in which case, they are Propositionalists or Doxasticists, but not Conceptualists. ItËs also possibleË though rareË for Doxasticists or even Conceptualists to deny that experiences are like beliefs with respect to *Assumption è1è*: for some reason or other, they might deny that experiences have a propositional content. In the case of Conceptualists who arenË Propositionalists, *Assumption è2è* will have to be replaced by something very similar, but with a different antecedent.

[27] The following discussion comes with the usual *caveat*: I do not try to outline all the objections raised against various versions of Doxasticism. Instead, I briefly sketch some of the main reasons why Doxasticism might seem unappealing. For an excellent critical survey of such a dispute, see Smith Ë2001Ë

Acquisition of a belief, unlike the *having* of one, is an *event*. And thus, it belongs to the same ontological category as perceptual experiences.

This modified doxasticist account encounters problems of its own, though. What if the subject already believes that object *o* has the property *f* and then comes to see *o*'s *f*-ness? It can't be that the subject acquires a belief she already has (perhaps, she could be acquiring a belief about how *o*'s *f*-ness *looks*, but she could already have a belief about that too).

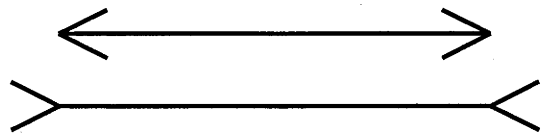
Doxasticists have considered various ways of patching up (D), none of which quite does the trick (see Smith, 2001: 286). One such patch up would have (D) restricted to cases where the subject doesn't already have the belief in question (Armstrong, 1968: 224). But this seems rather unfortunate: the doxasticist account would then have nothing to say about cases of perceptual experiences where the subject already believes what she perceives.

Perhaps, a better strategy is to focus on another way in which beliefs manifest themselves (Craig, 1976). *Judgements*, as occurrent psychological *events*, are often taken to be conscious manifestations of beliefs. As such, they seem to belong to the right ontological category. Furthermore, a subject's judging that *o* is *f* covers at least two sorts of cases: (i) cases where *S* acquires the belief that *o* is *f*, and (ii) cases where *S* already believes that *o* is *f* and consciously entertains or manifests that belief. Thus, (D) might give way to:

(D*) if a subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* being *f*, then *S judges* that *o* is *f* and *S*'s experience is identical with *S*'s judging.

But (D*) has to face another kind of counter-example. Subjects of experience do not always take in (what they experience). This is especially so in cases of perceptual illusions and perceptual hallucinations, where subjects are quite aware of their situation. Mirages, for instance, are common in the desert; and experienced travellers know it. When the experienced desert-traveller has a visual experience of an oasis in front of her in the middle of the desert, she does not judge that there is an oasis in front of her. Rather, her background beliefs about the commonality of mirages in the desert cause her to withhold judgement (for this example, see Pitcher, 1971: 82-3).

Likewise, most of us aren't fooled by the Müller-Lyer figure anymore. While the two lines below appear to have different lengths, we do not judge that they have different lengths.



ThatЁs because we know they donЁt.[28]

What is true about such cases, Doxasticists retort, is that subjects still have an *inclination* to believe what they experience ЁArmstrong, 1968: 221-2; Pitcher, 1971: 91-3Ё Thus, on their view, when faced with the two lines above, we still feel a certain pull towards accepting the proposition that the two lines have different lengths. Such an inclination to believe is inhibited or suppressed, to a greater or lesser extent, by the subjectЁs background beliefs. This leads to yet another modification of the doxastic account:

ЁD**Ё if a subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* being *f*, then *S* has an *inclination* to judge that *o* is *f* Ёand *S*Ёs experience is identical with such inclinationЁ, which would cause *S* to believe that *o* is *f*, unless *inhibited* by some of *S*Ёs background beliefs.

This modified account, however, still encounters a variety of problems Ёsee Crane, 1992: 151; Vision, 1997: 139Ё[29] For one thing, perceptual experiences usually have a certain phenomenology. There is something it is like to see a red kangaroo in front of one, and something else it is like to hear the ЁaughЁof a kookaburra, etc. On the other hand, beliefs, judgements, or inclinations to believe, donЁt seem to have any phenomenology Ёand even if they did, it would surely differ from the phenomenology of perceptual experiencesЁ This is a problem for ЁD**Ё, because this version of Doxasticism doesnЁt just claim that experiences are *accompanied* by inclinations to believe: it says that experiences *are* inclinations to believe. Yet, there is still an important difference between

[28] Crane Ё992: 151Ё; Fodor Ё984Ё; Smith Ёoo1: 287Ё

[29] Here, I assume that the kind of inclination mentioned in ЁD**ЁisnЁt a state, but an event Ёperhaps the manifestation of a stateЁ So there is no ontological problem. But there is still an important difference between perceptual experiences and inclinations to believe. Even if one grants that perceptual experiences are inclinations to believe, non-perceptual inclinations to believe tend to go extinct in light of contrary evidence Ёassuming some level of rationalityЁ Perceptual inclinations to believe, on the other hand, seem more resilient, and can persist in the presence of contrary evidence, as the MЁller-Lyer example suggests ЁCrane, 1992: 151Ё

perceptual experiences and inclinations to believe: the former have, while the latter lack, phenomenology.

The Doxasticists are likely to retort that the relevant inclinations to believe just have the phenomenology associated with perceptual experiences. Recall that Doxasticists do not say that all beliefs Ëor inclinations to believeËare perceptual experiences: only that perceptual experiences are a kind of belief Ëor inclination to believeË There are thus two kinds of inclinations to believe, on this view: the normal ones, which have no phenomenology, and perceptual inclinations to believe *with* perceptual phenomenology.[30]

At this point, if this version of Doxasticism certainly avoids many of the problems encountered with other doxasticist commitments, it becomes unclear how much of Doxasticism it retains. First, inclinations to believe arenË beliefs: hence, one might accept ËD**Ëwithout thinking that experiences are a species of believing or judging ËSmith, 2001: 289Ë Second, it looks as though almost anyone could accept ËD**ËË including Non-cognitivists. After all, anyone can agree that a normal Ëand rationalËsubject who experiences an object *o* as being *f*, would be caused to believe that *o* is *f*, absent contrary evidence that *o* isnË *f*. Of course, this isnË to say that experiences are *identical* with inclinations to believe. On the other hand, we have just seen that, in order to address the latest difficulties raised against ËD**Ë, the sorts of inclinations to believe mentioned in ËD**Ë have to have many of the properties usually attributed to perceptual experiences Ëike having a certain phenomenology, for instanceË If so, it seems rather harmless to grant that experiences *are* inclinations to believe, provided the relevant inclinations have all the properties associated with experiences.

Thus, if they help to answer the difficulties outlined so far, the sorts of inclinations to believe mentioned in ËD**Ëbegin to look more and more like perceptual experiences and less and less like beliefs, judgements, or other inclinations to believe. But the point of Doxasticism was to reduce experiences to beliefs, not to turn some beliefs Ëjudgements, or inclinations to believeËinto a kind of perceptual experience.[31]

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[30] Where the latter may be more resilient in the face of contrary evidence than the former Ësee previous footnoteË

[31] Perhaps, then, the DoxasticistsËaccount of perceptual experience had better be modified in a different wayË one that still identifies experiences with *judgements*, but with a special kind of content to avoid the objection raised against ËD*Ë For instance, a perceptual experiences of *o* as *f* could be identified with a judgements, not that *o* is *f*, but that *o* appears to be Ëor looksË*f*.

For these reasons, it has seemed best to many to champion a weaker cognitivist theory of perception— one which does not simply *identify* perceptual experiences with beliefs.

1.2.3. *What Conceptualism doesn't say*

Conceptualists aren't Doxasticists. Both McDowell and Brewer appear to reject the kind of reduction advertised by Doxasticists. Perceptual experiences "are not as such cases of judging", says McDowell (1998: 439), for "there is a disconnection between perceptual experience and judging" (*ibid.*). As for Brewer, while he insists that the representational content of a perceptual experience "is the content of a *possible* judgement by the subject", he observes that such a content "might equally well be the content of some other attitude whilst not actually endorsed in judgement" (1999: 176). In this sense, Brewer agrees that perceptual experiences are "belief-independent" (*ibid.*) and as he rightly points out, whether experiences are belief-dependent is a different question from questions about the nature of the content of perceptual experiences (*ibid.*).[32]

Thus, Conceptualists reject the initial version of Doxasticism (D) as well as:

(D*) if a subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* being *f*, then *S judges* that *o* is *f* and *S*'s experience is identical with *S*'s act of judging.

In this sense, Conceptualism is a weaker doctrine than Doxasticism. Despite this, Conceptualists might well accept (D**)

(D**) if a subject *S* has a perceptual experience of an object *o* being *f*, then *S* has an *inclination* to judge that *o* is *f* (where *S*'s experience is identical with such inclination), which would cause *S* to believe that *o* is *f*, unless *inhibited* by some of *S*'s background beliefs.

[32] Here, I take it, Brewer means the kind of belief-dependence specified by Doxasticists, where experiences are *identical* with beliefs, judgements, or their acquisition. But there are other senses of "belief-dependence" which Conceptualists might well accept. For instance, one could maintain that it is generally true of creatures that have perceptual experiences that they also have beliefs. A slightly stronger notion of belief-dependence might particularly suit Conceptualists: if, as Conceptualists claim, to have a perceptual experience of an object *o* being *f* requires the possession of concepts for *o* and *f*, the possession of such concepts might itself depend on the capacity to believe certain things about *o* and *f*—call this the *conceptual* sense of belief-dependence. Another notion of belief-dependence is *causal*: for instance, the belief that there is a spider in the room might cause one to look for it, which in turn might cause one to have a visual experience of the spider (if one's visual search is successful).

As we have seen, provided that the relevant inclinations to believe mentioned in ËD**Ëhave enough properties in common with perceptual experiences, the so-called ËreductionËin ËD**Ëis rather harmless, even trivial.[33]

But if Conceptualists can accept ËD**Ë, this is not to say that ËD**Ëcaptures the ConceptualistsËclaim. It doesnËt. To repeat: what Conceptualists *are* claiming about perceptual experiences is that they are like beliefs in a particular respectË their *representational content*. That is, like beliefs Ëand other propositional attitudesË, perceptual experiences represent the environment in a way that essentially requires the possession and application of certain concepts on the perceiverËs part.

What about Propositionalism? Do Conceptualists accept that perceptual experiences have a propositional content? Most do, as they seem to endorse *Assumption è1è* and *Assumption è2è* above. Perceptual experiences, for Conceptualists, have a propositional content which is conceptualË and require possession and application of concepts. However, even if the content of perceptual experiences isnËt propositional, itËs still possible to hold that such content necessarily requires the possession and application of concepts.

*To summarise:* The point of this chapter was twofold. First, to locate the issue at stake between Conceptualists and their foes. Second, to narrow down Ëif only impreciselyËthe kind of claim that Conceptualists make.

So far, we have seen that ËËthe dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is an issue in the philosophy of psychology: it concerns the relationship between perceptual experiences and beliefs, as well as their similarities and differences. More precisely, ËiËConceptualists have it that perceptual experiences are like beliefs insofar as their representational content is concerned. ËiiË Unlike Doxasticists, however, they do not attempt to advance a reductionist account of perceptual experiences, according to which perceptual states Ëor events, ratherËare identical with beliefs Ëor judgementsË The next step in this elucidation is to clarify what, exactly, Conceptualists claim about perceptual representation.

[33] In this respect, what ËD**Ëseems to capture is the idea that perceptual experiences essentially have as part of their functional role the tendency to cause beliefs. Not that experiences always have such causal effects: the claim is only that perceptual experiences *typically* cause beliefs in normal conditions Ëhere, ËtypicallyËmeans at least the following: Ëabsent cases where the subjectËs background beliefs inhibit her tendency to believe what she perceivesËË

CHAPTER 2

# *Conceptual Content?*

According to Conceptualists Ïand their opponentsË, some psychological states have a *conceptual content.* That is, both Conceptualists and their opponents agree that:

ËËË beliefs Ïand other thoughtsËhave conceptual content.

Their disagreement concerns perceptual experiences and whether:

ËiË perceptual experiences have conceptual content.

Conceptualists think they do: they endorse ËËand ËiË Their opponents accept ËËbut reject ËiË They insist that experiences have another kind of content: non-conceptual content.[1]

The obvious question is:

**Q:** what does it mean for a psychological state to have *conceptual content* Ëor its contrast, non-conceptual contentË[2]

Answering Q is the topic of the next three chapters. In this chapter, I will briefly survey some of the issues that an answer to Q needs to address.

But first, a *caveat.* Note that the notion of Ëconceptual contentËat play in ËË and ËiËis somewhat independent from that of Ëpropositional contentË As we just saw in the previous chapter, most Conceptualists are Propositionalists: they understand Ëconceptual contentËto be a kindË and perhaps, the only kindË of propositional content. This is not mandatory, however: itËs possible to think that the contents of perceptual experiences arenË propositionsË at least not entirely: perhaps, some of what is represented in experience cannot be captured by a propositionË and still hold that a subject must possess and

[1] Though this provides a correct picture of the overall dispute, note that, in fact, claims about the conceptual content of ËËbeliefs and ËiËperceptual experiences are orthogonal. For instance, itËs quite possible for one to think that not all beliefs have conceptual content.

[2] I assume that, since the notion of *non-conceptual* content is to be contrasted with that of *conceptual* content Ësee BermËdez, 2003aË, a characterisation of the latter will play a central role in a characterisation of the former Ïalbeit, a negative one, presumablyË See §5.3.

apply concepts for anything thatËs represented in her experience. Conversely, many opponents of Conceptualism who think of the content of experience as non-conceptual still identify such content with propositions.

Hence, in what follows, I shall attempt to answer Q in a way thatËs neutral on whether conceptual content *is* propositional content. One important assumption, however, is that propositional content *can* be conceptual: according to assumption ËËabove, which is usually accepted by Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists alike, beliefs have conceptual content. And, if anything, the contents of beliefs are propositions.

### 2.1. Three Questions about Conceptual Content

At the outset, I offered to capture the conceptualist doctrine in terms of two claims:

CLAIM I: for any perceptual experience *e*, *e* represents Ëparts ofËthe subjectËs immediate environment.

CLAIM 2: for any experience *e*, *e* represents object, property, state-of-affairs, ..., *x* only if the subject applies a *concept* to *x*.

To say of a psychological state that it has a contentË CLAIM 1Ë is to say that such a state represents parts of the subjectËs environment. To say of a psychological state that its content is conceptualË CLAIM 2Ë imposes at least a necessary condition upon the representational content of that state: namely, that what the state represents depends upon the concepts the subject possesses and applies in that state. Thus, a psychological state with conceptual content cannot represent a kangaroo Ëor the colour redËunless the subject in that state possesses and applies a concept for such a creature Ëor propertyË

Is the necessary condition in CLAIM 2 all one needs to characterise Conceptualism? Here, we need to look in a little more detail at how Conceptualists specify the notion of Ëconceptual contentË According to John McDowell, the representational content of perceptual experiences is Ëconceptual through and throughË Ë994: 46Ëin the sense that Ëe]xperiences have their content by virtue of the fact that conceptual capacities are operative in themËË994: 66Ë

For Bill Brewer:

> [...], the key idea is that a conceptual state of this kind is one whose content is the content of a possible *judgement by the subject*. I propose the following definition. A mental state is *conceptual* if and only if it has a representational content that is characterizable

> only in terms of concepts which the subject himself must possess and which is of a form which enables it to serve as a premise or the conclusion of a deductive argument, or of an inference of some other kind (e.g., inductive or abductive) (Brewer, 1999: 149)

Brewer unpacks the notion of 'conceptual content' in terms of three conditions: the representational content of a psychological state is conceptual if (and only if) (i) it can be the content of a (possible judgement), (ii) it is characterisable (only in terms of concepts) the subject possesses, and (iii) it can serve as the premise or conclusion of some argument.

In what follows, I shall focus primarily on McDowell's characterisation of Conceptualism. There are three reasons for this. First, I suspect that Brewer's characterisation in fact presupposes McDowell's[1] and that Brewer would accept McDowell's characterisation. Second, I think that Brewer's characterisation is in part unfortunate, as it focuses on some inessential characteristics of the notion (I'll explain why below: §3.4.3) Finally, I find McDowell's characterisation quite helpful. I shall argue (§5.1) that it avoids a variety of difficulties to be introduced shortly in this chapter.

McDowell's claim that the content of perceptual experiences is conceptual involves four elements. He talks of (i) conceptual capacities, which are (ii) (operative) in experience, and goes on to claim that (iii) perceptual experiences have their (representational content), (iv) (in virtue of) such capacities and the fact that they are operative in experience.

If this goes some way to specify the notion of 'conceptual content', it also raises obvious questions about some of the terms used in such a characterisation. In particular,

**Q1:** What does it mean for a perceptual experience (or another psychological state) to have a representational *content*?

**Q2:** What are concepts and conceptual capacities? What does it mean for such capacities to be *operative in* a psychological state?

**Q3:** How do concepts and content relate to form a special kind of content (conceptual content)? And what is non-conceptual content?

Thus, it seems as though an answer to question Q will have to rely upon answers to questions Q1, Q2, and Q3.

In the following three chapters, I will survey a variety of possible answers to each of these questions, to see how to best elucidate McDowellÏs claim.[3] IÏll start with question Q1 and the notion of Ïcontent Ïin chapter 3, and consider one major conception of the relationship between content and concepts at the end of that chapter Ï§3.3Ï Chapter 4 will then focus on concepts, their possession, and their relation to conceptual capacitiesÏ question Q2. Finally, in chapter 5, IÏll present what I think is the best specification of ConceptualismÏ and the best answer to question Q3 concerning the relationship between concepts and content. Before I begin, though, a word about the difficulties to be encountered in the following three chapters.

## 2.2. Sceptical Worries

How to interpret ConceptualismÏ and the claim that perceptual experiences have a conceptual contentÏ has become a somewhat controversial issue. The controversy owes mainly to the following concern. What it means for the content of a psychological state to be conceptual is likely to depend, at least to some degree, on which theory of contentÏ and which theory of conceptsÏ one presupposes. Given different such presuppositions, we might end up with somewhat different putative notions of Ïconceptual contentÏ Worse, it may be that certain theories of content and concepts cannot even make sense of the notion of Ïconceptual contentÏ[4]

This gives rise to a variety of sceptical worries about the significance of the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents. In particular, there is a suggestion that such a dispute collapsesÏ in the sense that there isnÏt really a substantive disagreement over the nature of perceptual representation between Conceptualists and their critics. It will be helpful to have some of these worries on the table, if only to see how they can be addressed by a specification of the conceptualist thesis. In this respect, sceptical worries of this sort can be seen to impose further desiderata on putative answers to question Q: an

[3] A disclaimer: I do not intend what I say in these chapters to present an accurate interpretation of *all* the various comments McDowell and Brewer have made about their own view. This is not primarily an exercise in careful and detailed exegesis. What IÏm after, rather, is simply the best way to formulate the conceptualist thesis, as *I understand it*. My proposal focuses essentially on what McDowell seems to be saying in the above quote, and exploits one way in which to develop such a claim.

[4] Indeed, a growing industry is now dedicated to the distinction and classification of various possible views Conceptualists might be committed to. See for instance Byrne Ï2005Ï; Crane Ï2001Ï; Gunther Ï2002Ï; Heck Ï2000Ï; Speaks Ï2004Ï; Stalnaker Ï1998a, 1998bÏ

appropriate elucidation of what it means for a psychological state to have a conceptual content should silence such sceptical worries and make it clear how there can be a substantive issue about whether or not perceptual experiences have this sort of content.

There are at least three sceptical worries that the notion of Ëconceptual contentËseems to raise. The first concerns the notion of ËcontentËitself:

> ***Sceptical worry #1.*** Both Conceptualists and their opponents presuppose a particular ËfregeanË theory of content. As a result, the question as to whether perceptual experiences have conceptual content is very narrow and local. In particular, such a question doesnË make sense if one presupposes some other theory of content.

Here, the worry concerns the scope and significance of the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents. The sceptic suggests that, since such a dispute relies on a particular Ëand perhaps, controversialËtheory of content, the dispute only makes sense if one endorses such a theory of contentË not otherwise Ësee, e.g., Crane, 2001: 151-2; Stalnaker, 1998a: 340Ë But the disagreement between Conceptualists and their opponents was supposed to be a substantial issue about the nature of perceptual representation and the difference between sensation and cognitionË as it is sometimes put. Issues of this kind, it seems, should be of concern to anyone, regardless of their theoretical commitments about content. Yet, focus on the notion of Ëconceptual contentËappears to turn that dispute into a very localised oneË as a disagreement amongst fregeans, the sceptic contends.

The second worry is about content too:

> ***Sceptical worry #2.*** It is a mistake to think that the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents has anything to do with the representational content of perceptual experiences. In fact, such a dispute concerns the kind of *state* that perceptual experiences are.

In one respect, this worry relates to the first one. Since, according to the first worry, the notion of Ëconceptual contentËhas no purchase on some theories of mental content, the suggestion here is that the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is better interpreted, not as a dispute about content, but as one about something else. In particular, the suggestion goes, when Conceptualists argue that perception requires the possession and deployment of concepts, such a requirement may have little to do with a special kind of

content Ëconceptual contentË but can be interpreted as a constraint on a certain type of psychological *state*.[5]

The third worry concerns concepts, and which theory of concepts is presupposed in the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents:

> ***Sceptical worry #3.*** The dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is supposed to be about the nature of perceptual experiences and their representational content. So, it had better not turn out that, in fact, the dispute arises simply because different theories of concepts are taken for granted by each side.

This last worry is prompted by the possibility that the very foundations of the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents rest merely on different assumptions about *concepts*. Perhaps, while Conceptualists make very minimal assumptions about the nature of concepts, their opponents endorse a much stronger conception of what concepts are. But if the dispute between Conceptualists and their foes is a substantial disagreement about the nature of the *content* of perceptual experiences, it shouldnËt be the case such a dispute arises solely because of different presuppositions about concepts.

Each of these worries, I think, can be answered. Part of the challenge of explaining what it means to say that a perceptual experience has a conceptual content is precisely to show how. IË begin with a survey of different theories of content Ëchapter 3Ëand concepts Ëchapter 4Ëavailable on the market. The point of this survey is to evaluate which theories of content and concepts Ëif anyËare the best candidates to make sense of Conceptualism. In this respect, I will consider the assumption Ëseemingly behind the first sceptical worryËthat any theory of content is as likely a candidate as any other Ë§3.2Ë

Second, and more importantly, IË try to explain why, insofar as a specification of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËis concerned, one need not make a choice between different theories of content Ë§3.3Ëand of concepts Ëchapter 4Ë In this respect, IË begin to show which issues about content and concepts really need to be settled in order to obtain a precise characterisation of the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics, and which issues we can afford to remain neutral about. I will then present a precise specification of the conceptualist thesis, and explain how it can address the three sceptical worries mentioned above Ë§5.1Ë

[5] Crane Ë2001: 152Ë; Stalnaker Ë1998a: 343, 352Ë; and for discussion, see also Heck Ë2000: 485Ë; Byrne Ë2005: 233Ë; Speaks Ë2004Ë

There are two reasons for this second part of the strategy. What concepts are, what is the true account of mental content in general, what is the relation between content and concepts, etc., constitute some of the most difficult questions in the philosophy of mind and cognition. For most of these questions, no consensus appears remotely in sight. And so, it seems unfair to require that one solves such problems before one can even start to clarify what the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents amounts to. As I will try to show, it is possible to make some sense of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËwithout getting too deeply entangled in these other issues.

Second, there seems to be a more important desideratum upon any attempt to spell out what it means for the representational content of a psychological state to be conceptual. A construal of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËmust primarily serve to make sense of the many arguments and counter-arguments which Conceptualists and their opponents throw at one another. This consideration drives the proposed account of conceptual content advanced in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

# *The Metaphysics of Content*

In this chapter, I will consider some answers to:

**Q1:** What does it mean for a perceptual experience or another psychological state to have a representational *content*?

Talk of the representational content of a psychological state raises many questions.[1] Here, the focus will be primarily on metaphysical issues surrounding the notion of content. I review and compare three different accounts of what kinds of things contents are supposed to be (§3.2). Then, I consider one way in which the notion of conceptual content is usually understood, namely, as content that is *composed* of concepts, and see whether such a conception is available to the three theories under consideration (§3.3). This will provide us with some means to resolve the first sceptical worry:

***Sceptical worry #1.*** Both Conceptualists and their opponents presuppose a particular Fregean theory of content. As a result, the question as to whether perceptual experiences have conceptual content is very narrow and local. In particular, such a question doesn't make sense if one presupposes some other theory of content.

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[1] For instance, one can ask (i) *existential* questions about whether experiences (or desires, beliefs, etc.) really have a content; (ii) *genetic* questions about how instances of a particular type of mental state get their content; or (iii) *functional* questions about the role the representational content of that state plays in a subject's psychological life. One can also ask (iv) *semantic* questions about what object, properties, relations, events, states-of-affairs, etc., a particular content represents. This list is in no way exhaustive. For a useful survey of some of the main answers to some of these questions, see Siegel (2005a), and also Crane (2005).

One important issue, of course, is the *existential* question: whether experiences really have representational content, since the truth of CLAIM 1 above depends on it. For recent attempts to motivate a negative answer, see Travis (2004), Martin (2002, 2004). Though Travis explicitly opposes the idea that perceptual experiences have a content (Travis, 2004: 65), things are less clear-cut with Martin, who sometimes seems to be defending the view that experience is not (entirely representational) (Martin, 2002: 392; 2004: 39; compare Martin, 2002: 378). Unfortunately, I lack the space to discuss these issues here. In what follows, I have to assume that CLAIM 1 is true: that experiences are representational and have a content.

I will question some of the assumptions behind this worry and argue that, even if Conceptualists and their opponents *do* presuppose a fregean theory of content, they may be justified in doing so §3.2. But I will also suggest that, maybe, talk of 'conceptual content' need not commit one to a fregean theory of content §3.3.

Having answered that first worry, I'll conclude this chapter §3.4 with a discussion of the second sceptical worry:

> ***Sceptical worry #2.*** It is a mistake to think that the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents has anything to do with the representational content of perceptual experiences. In fact, such a dispute concerns the kind of *state* that perceptual experiences are.

In particular, I will try to show why the proposed alternative – the idea that the issue is not about two kinds of *content*, but about two kinds of *state* – isn't very promising. But first, a few words about the notion of 'content' itself.

### 3.1. {Content}

What does it mean to say of certain psychological states that they have a content? What theoretical purposes does that serve? The answer is: it has to do with the *intentionality* of certain kinds of psychological states.[2] Beliefs, perceptual experiences, desires, emotions, hopes, wishes, and perhaps other types of states – like sensations such as pains and tickles, etc. – can be *about* certain objects, properties, relations, events, situations, states-of-affairs, etc. For instance, your belief with the content that «this thesis is written in English» is about the fact that this thesis is written in English.[3] Your hope with the content that «this thesis isn't too long» is about the possible state-of-affairs – unfortunately, not a state-of-affairs that obtains, or a fact – that this thesis isn't

[2] Note: intentionality with a *t*. This feature of psychological states is distinct from a logical feature of linguistic expressions used to report such states – as well as other things such as modal facts and properties – intensionality with an *s*. What is distinctive of intensional constructions is that they preclude the truth-preserving substitution of co-referential expressions embedded in them. For discussion of these two notions, their relationships and differences, see Crane 2001: 8-13.

[3] To avoid any confusion between a) contents, b) the state-of-affairs they represent, and c) the sentences used to express such contents, I'll resort to the following notation in this section at least. Sentences are symbolised by quotation marks as in the sentence 'Bob is funny'. States-of-affairs are, as usual, not symbolised in any particular way – as in the fact that Bob is funny. Contents are symbolised thus: the content that «Bob is funny»

too long. Your visual perception of this page is about an object Ëa piece of paper, the page of a PhD thesisËand some of its properties Ësize, shape, the sentences printed on it in black ink, etc.Ë

To borrow the usual metaphors, all these psychological states have at least one thing in common: the property of *aboutness*. They are ËaboutËor ËofËor Ëdirected atË something else ËSearle, 1983: 1-2; Crane, 2001: 6Ë In other words, such states are intentionalË or, better, they are representational: they represent such objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc. Hence, to say of a psychological state that it has a content is to say at least *that*: that it is representational. But not just *that*. The notion of content also serves to isolate *what* a given psychological state representsË and in what *way* it represents it. For instance, the content of your belief is about this thesis and the fact that it has the property of being written in English: it is represented *as* having that property. The content of your visual experience of this page is about this sheet of paper, and the fact that it has the property of being white, rectangular, of containing a variety of scribbles on it, etc. Ëit is represented in such a wayË[4]

Being representational, psychological states with 'content can represent what they represent accurately or not. For instance, your belief that œthis thesis is written in Englishœ correctly represents the fact that it is. But you might have believed that œthis thesis is written in Frenchœ say. In which case, the content of your belief would have mis-representedË and thus, represented inaccuratelyË what language this thesis is written in. Similarly, your visual experience of a kangaroo in front of you might be illusory: it mis-represents what is in fact a koala as a kangaroo.

In this respect, representational psychological states are associated with a set of conditions determining what it would take for a given psychological state to succeed in accurately representing what it purports to represent. Call such conditions the Ëonditions of accuracyË or Ëaccuracy-conditionsË of a psychological state with contentË sometimes, Ëorrectness-conditionsËis used instead. In the above example, the accuracy-conditions of your experience of a kangaroo in front of you are not *satisfied*: there is no kangaroo in front of you, only a koala. Likewise for your belief that œthis thesis is written in Frenchœ it is, in fact, written in English.

[4] Following Siegel Ë2005a: §2Ë we can say that the notion of the ËontentËof a psychological state is analogous to that of the ËontentËof, say, a newspaper article Ëunderstood in terms of the *information* conveyedË and dis-analogous to the ËontentËof a bucket Ëwhat is *in* the bucket: a spatial notionË

Finally, we need to distinguish two slightly distinct conceptions of the notion of ËcontentË For some, the content of a psychological state just *is* whatever object, property, relation, state-of-affairs, etc., is being represented by that state. Hence, on this view, the content of a psychological state is to be individuated solely by reference to the things represented by that state. For others, the content of a psychological state is a *representation*Ë not whatËs being represented by that representation. On such a view, the content of a psychological state is to be individuated not just in terms of whatËs represented, but also by reference to the *way* in which objects, properties, etc., are being represented. As we shall see below, these different conceptions underlie distinct accounts of the metaphysics of content.

So much for this brief elucidation of the notion of ËcontentË A more important question is: why do we need such a notion? The answer: itËs to do with psychological explanation. An example will help to see the point Ëno beer in the fridge this timeË

> KANGAROO IN THE BUSH. Judy, Jacqueline, and Pauline, are taking a walk through the Australian bush. Suddenly, a red kangarooË Skippy againË appears in front of them. Judy and Pauline continue to walk, but Jacqueline stops, turns, and suddenly starts running back where they came from.

What could explain such different behaviours on the part of Judy, Jacqueline and Pauline? Presumably, the difference between Jacqueline on the one hand, and Judy and Pauline on the other, must have something to do with their psychology: the behavioural difference must have been caused, at least in part, by a psychological difference. After all, actions are usually caused by intentions, and the latter are usually formed on the basis of beliefs, desires, and other psychological states.

In this case, what explains the difference is that Jacqueline is afraid of red kangaroos Ëshe doesnËt find them cute at allË Thus, when she sees the kangaroo, Jacqueline hesitates for a short while. And then, believing that œthe kangaroo blocks her wayœ that œthere is no possibility of avoiding itœ and desiring that œshe is as far away as possible from the kangarooœ she starts running. Judy, on the other hand, isnËt scared of Skippy ËsheËs quite used to kangaroosË When she sees the marsupial, she believes œitËs perfectly safe to walk past itœ and she does. As for Pauline, she is in fact quite scared of kangaroos tooË just as Jacqueline is. But, as it happens, she is walking right behind Judy, and is keeping her eyes to the ground to see where sheËs walking. And so, she doesnËt see Skippy.

In some respect, PaulineËs psychological situation is very similar to JacquelineËs. They both fear red kangaroos like Skippy. What explains the difference between them isnËt that Jacqueline has something in common with Judy, who keeps walking. Rather, itËs that, unlike Judy and Jacqueline, Pauline fails to see the kangaroo. In some other relevant respects, Judy and Jacqueline have something in common too: they see Skippy.

Psychological explanations of this sort are familiar. They rely in an important part on the representational contents of psychological states. Differences in the representational content of the subjectsËvisual experiences Ëseeing that œthere is a kangarooœ as opposed to seeing that œthe path is slipperyœË as well as in the contents of the subjectsËbeliefs and desires Ëbelieving that œkangaroos are dangerousœ as opposed to believing œthey are notœ; desiring that œone is as far away as possible from a kangarooœ as opposed to desiring that œone continues walking without losing any timeœË play an essential role in explanations like the above.[5]

We now have some ËsketchyË answers to the basic question: what the notion of ËcontentËamounts to. The content of a psychological state occupies an important role in psychological explanation. It has to do with what I called earlier Ës1.1.3Ëthe Ërepresentational propertiesËof such a stateË it is *what* a psychological state represents and *how* it represents it. In this respect, the content of a psychological state comes with certain accuracy-conditions determining whether or not that state correctly represents what it represents. It is now time to turn to particular *theories* of content.

### 3.2. Three Theories of Content

One usually finds in the literature on mental content discussions of at least three main theories. These theories differ in the following respects at least: first and foremost, Ë1Ëthey put forward different proposals regarding the *metaphysics* of content and the sorts of things contents are supposed to be; as a result of such metaphysical differences, Ë2Ë these theories also advance different descriptions of the *structure* of such contents; and finally, Ë3Ëthey embody different conceptions of the relationships between contents and what those contents are about. In this section, I briefly survey these three theories

[5] For a more elaborate account of the role of content in psychological explanation, see BermËdez Ë1998: 115-6Ë

and their differences. Then, I'll consider whether there are any reasons to prefer one theory to the other.

According to a *fregean* theory of content, the representational content of psychological states like beliefs and desires has the following features at least:

***Fregean Theories of Content***

'*abstractness:* fregean contents 'fregean senses or modes of presentation' are abstract' they lack spatial-temporal location and 'on some views, at least' are causally inert.

'*structure:* fregean contents have parts which combine to form structured wholes, as is reflected in the linguistic structure of the sentences used to express them.[6] Thus, their structure is functional in the sense that certain parts of such contents are functions which take other parts to form whole contents, much in the same way as the predicate 'is funny' can be regarded as a function which takes another expression 'Bob' to form a whole sentence: 'Bob is funny'

'a' *distinctness:* the contents of psychological states are distinct from the objects, properties, relations, state-of-affairs, etc., which they represent or refer to.

'b' *modes of presentation:* mental contents are modes of presentation of the objects, properties, relations, state-of-affairs, etc. they represent' a mode of presentation of a state-of-affairs 'Bob is funny' has, as its parts, modes of presentation of the object, properties, relations, etc, which constitute such a state 'a mode of presentation of Bob, one of the property of being funny'[7]

'c' *fineness of grain:* modes of presentation are fine-grained in the sense that it is possible that there be more than one mode of presentation of the same object, property, state-of-affairs, etc. 'Bob' and 'my father-in-law' express different modes of presentation of the same individual, and the contents that ⌜Bob is funny⌝ and that ⌜my father-in-law is funny⌝, respectively, are different modes of presentation of the same state-of-affairs'

Here, I have simply listed some of the most central features of a fregean theory of content.[8] I'll explain some of these features in a little more detail below as I compare them with features of the other two theories.

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[6] Such reflection, note, is not a one-to-one mapping. On a fregean view, both the sentences 'Bob is funny' and 'Funniness is exemplified by Bob' express the content that ⌜Bob is funny⌝

[7] In this respect, a fregean theory is an instance of the second conception of content where the content of a state is a representation, and not just what is being represented.

[8] Note that this doesn't quite match Gottlob Frege's (1891, 1892a, 1892b, 1918)' own theory. Rather, it contains what is still regarded as crucial to a fregean theory of content, minus some

Initially, fregean theories of content used to be contrasted with *russellian* theories Ëafter one view Bertrand Russell Ë1903Ëheld at the beginning of the twentieth centuryË[9] The latter encompasses the following traits:

***Russellian Theories of Content***

ËËË*sets:* russellian contents are sets of objects, properties, relations, etc. Ëand perhaps other thingsË The content that œBob is funnyœis the set containing the object Bob and the property of being funny. Insofar as sets are abstract, then russellian contents are abstract, but if sets are Ëntologically speakingË nothing but a collection of their members, and their members arenË abstract, then neither are russellian contents.

ËËË*structure:* since russellian contents are sets, and sets are just unstructured collections of objects, properties, relations, etc., then russellian contents are unstructured. However, russellian contents are often identified with ordered tuples Ë.e., collections of objects, properties, etc. with a certain orderË In which case, russellian contents are structured in the sense that their parts ËmembersËfigure in such contents in a certain order.

ËaË*distinctness:* the russellian content that œBob is funnyœis the set consisting of Bob and the property of being funny. In this respect, russellian contents arenË really distinct from what they represent: the content that œBob is funnyœrepresents the state-of-affairs that Bob is funny, but the set œBob, funninessœ contains two constituents of the state-of-affairs it represents.

ËbË*fineness of grain:* russellian contents arenË fine-grained. The sentences ËBob is funnyË and ËRobert Ryan is funnyË express the same russellian proposition, provided that Bob and Robert Ryan are one and the same: the set œBob, funninessœ

The third theory of content is a more recent contender. One of its main proponents is Robert Stalnaker Ë1984Ë[10] On this view, the representational contents of psychological states are sets of possible worlds:

***Contents as Sets of Possible Worlds***

ËË*sets of possible worlds:* contents, on this view, are sets of possible worlds Ëor possible situationsË The content that œBob is funnyœis the set of all possible worlds in which it is true that Bob is funny. Contents, on this view, divide up possibilities:

unsavoury features Frege did endorse Ësee Richard, 1990: 61, n. 5Ë I have also avoided some terminology of FregeË.

[9] See, e.g., Richard Ë1990: 109: n. 1Ë

[10] See also Lewis Ë1972b, 1986Ë; Cresswell Ë1985Ë and some of the essays in Stalnaker Ë1999Ë For additional references, see also Richard Ë1997: 218, n. 15Ë

the content that ‹Bob is funny› separates the worlds in which Bob is funny from those in which he isn't. Or where there is no Bob. Contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds are abstract in the sense that sets and possible worlds are abstract entities.[11]

(2) *Structure:* contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds are unstructured. Sets of possible worlds just are unordered collections of worlds. In this respect, they have no structure. They can have parts however. or components, constituents, etc. That is, sets of possible worlds have possible worlds as their members, and possible worlds themselves can be made up of a variety of things. They are inhabited (in a technical sense) by such things.

(3) *Distinctness:* if the content that ‹Bob is funny› represents the actual state-of-affairs that Bob is funny, then such content is distinct from what it represents. The content that ‹Bob is funny› is the set of all possible worlds in which Bob is funny, and such a set is surely distinct from the actual state-of-affairs in which Bob is funny.

(4) *Fineness of grain:* some contents, on the possible-worlds account, can be fine-grained. In the actual world, both the contents that ‹Bob is funny› and that ‹my father-in-law is funny› represent the same (actual) state-of-affairs. However, these contents are distinct because the set of possible worlds in which Bob is funny does not overlap with the set of possible worlds in which my-father-in-law is funny. That's because Bob might not have been my father-in-law (and so, in some possible worlds, Bob is funny though my father-in-law isn't). In this sense, contents as sets-of-possible-worlds are fine-grained: there can be more than one content representing the same (actual) state-of-affairs.

However, some other contents are not fine-grained at all. The contents that ‹2 + 2 = 4›, that ‹230 + 163 = 393›, that if ‹Bob is funny then Bob is funny›, that ‹Bob is Bob›, etc. are, if true, *necessarily* true. Consequently, they are true in the same worlds: since they are logical (or mathematical) truths, they are true in all logically possible worlds. But then all these putative contents are in fact one and the same: the set of all possible worlds.

There is, obviously, much more to be said about the various features of these three accounts. For our purposes, though, this brief list of their main features should suffice.

A central question at this point is: which theory is most suitable to explain the representational content of psychological states like beliefs, desires, perceptual experiences, hopes, wishes, etc.? How can we decide? And do we

[11] For Stalnaker's conception of possible worlds, see Stalnaker (1984: ch. 3).

have to? After all, it could turn out that each theory of content is useful in its own right, by explaining different kinds of phenomena.

The first sceptical worry presented earlier about the notion of ËcontentË appears to rely on two assumptions. The sceptic complains that, since ËËthe notion of Ëconceptual contentËmust be unpacked in terms of a fregean theory of content, and since ËiËtheories of content as diverse as the three just listed might be equally good candidates to account for the representational content of psychological states, the issue whether Conceptualism is true about the content of perceptual experiences is very narrow. In particular, such an issue may carry little interest for proponents of russellian theories of content and of contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds. Later Ë§3.3Ę I will challenge ËË For now, IË focus on ËiË

This first sceptical worry is supposed to be problematic mainly because of assumption ËiË Suppose it turns out that the fregean account of content fares much better than its rivals in accounting for a variety of phenomena related to the representational content of psychological states: this should provide a very good reason to adopt such a theory. In which case, the claim that the notion of Ëconceptual contentËpresupposes a fregean conception of content should seem unproblematic. Even if proponents of russellian theories of content and of contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds cannot make sense of the claim that there is a kind of content which is conceptual Ëan assumption I will question in §3.3Ę one can afford to ignore such a fact, given that there are good reasons not to endorse such theories of content in the first place.

At this point, then, we need to compare and evaluate these three theories of content to see which offers the best account of the representational content of psychological states. As we have seen, the notion of the Ëepresentational contentËof a psychological state finds its initial *raison dëtre* in the role it plays in psychological explanation. Hence, we can compare ËaËhow, in general, these three different theories of content help to make sense of psychological explanations. But we can also compare ËbËhow well these three theories apply to the representational content of perceptual experiences in particular. IË begin with the more general comparison ËaĘ and conclude with some remarks about ËbË

I will focus on the following aspects of the role of content in psychological explanation: ËiËthe fact that many such explanations attribute *fine-grained* contents to the psychological states of the subjects whose behaviour is being

accounted for; and ËËthe fact that certain psychological explanations seem to require that the content of psychological states is *structured* in a certain way.[12]

3.2.1. *Fineness of Grain.*

The representational content of psychological states can be fine-grained in the following sense: it is possible that there is more than one content representing what seems like the same state-of-affairs. Thus, since Clark Kent *is* Superman, the fact that Clark Kent is in Manhattan is the very same fact as the fact that Superman is in Manhattan. Yet, Lois Lane can have two distinct beliefsË with distinct contentsË about this fact. While she believes that œClark Kent is in Manhattanœ she may believe that œSuperman is not in Manhattanœ This owes to the fact that Lois doesnËt know that œSuperman is Clark Kentœ[13]

This sort of phenomenon, of course, presents no problem for a fregean theory of content. It is built into such a theory that the representational contents of psychological states can be fine-grained in the required sense. In our example, Lois Lane entertains different *modes of presentation* of Clark Kent/Superman, which explain her distinct beliefs. She is related to Clark Kent/Superman under the *Superman mode of presentation*, as well as under the ËdistinctË*Clark Kent mode of presentation*. The first is constitutive of the content of her belief that œSuperman isnËt in Manhattanœ while the second is essentially involved in her belief that œClark Kent is in the office next doorœ Thus, itËs possible for Lois to have two distinct beliefs about what is in fact the same state-of-affairs.

Problems arise for a russellian theory of content. If russellian contents are sets of just objects and properties, then there is only one content available for representing the fact that Clark Kent/Superman is in Manhattan: the set composed of the individual Clark Kent/Superman and of the property of being in Manhattan. At first sight, then, russellian contents provide insufficient resources to deal with Lois LaneËs doxastic situation.

Proponents of russellian contents, however, have various ways to avoid this difficulty. For instance, the sets which make up russellian contents could be

[12] The discussion that follows comes with the usual *caveat*: rather than present an accurate review of the literature on this topic, I have limited myself to a briefer Ëand, at times, rather impressionisticËportrayal of some of the basic moves that can be made in discussions of these three main theories of content.

[13] As well as to the fact she might believe that œSuperman doesnËt usually reside in Manhattanœ while she knows that œClark Kent currently is in the office next to hersœ

allowed to contain not *just* objects and properties, but something else too.[14] Thus, the content of Lois Lane's belief that 'Superman is not in Manhattan' might consist of the set composed of the property of being in Manhattan together with the pair made up of the individual Superman/Clark Kent and the *Superman mode of presentation* of that individual: '<Superman/Clark Kent, *Superman MP*>, being in Manhattan' Likewise for the content of Lois's belief that 'Clark Kent is in Manhattan' '<Superman/Clark Kent, *Clark Kent MP*>, being in Manhattan' Hence, it is possible for proponents of russellian content to have fine-grained contents too—i.e. distinct contents representing the same fact or state-of-affairs.[15]

What about sets of possible worlds? According to Stalnaker (1998a: 394), one way in which to deal with fine-grained contents is to assume that it is a contingent fact that Clark Kent is Superman.[16] As a result, there are possible worlds in which Clark Kent is not Superman. And so, the set of possible worlds in which Clark Kent is in Manhattan is distinct from (though it overlaps with) the set of worlds in which Superman is in Manhattan. No problem here.

More difficult for this kind of account, however, are those cases of necessarily true contents. Take Pauline's belief that '2 + 1 = 3' and her belief that 'Skippy is Skippy' If true, the contents of such beliefs are necessarily true: they are true in all possible worlds. It follows that the contents of these

[14] Another recipe involves positing different relations between the subject and the content of her belief—the set 'Superman/Clark Kent, being in Manhattan' For instance, it might be that Lois Lane's different beliefs are constituted by different relations to the same content: perhaps, she entertains the *negative Superman-guise* relation to the content 'Superman/Clark Kent, being in Manhattan'—constitutive of her belief that 'Superman isn't in Manhattan'—and the *positive Clark Kent-guise* relation to the same content 'Superman/Clark Kent, being in Manhattan'—itself constitutive of her belief that 'Clark Kent is in Manhattan' This proposal has it that what *seems* to be a difference in content between Lois's two beliefs is in fact a difference of another kind.

[15] If such a version of a russellian theory of content is possible at all, this shows that issues about the metaphysics of contents and the metaphysics of their parts are orthogonal to some extent. Though, on this version, russellian contents are still sets, they are sets containing properties, objects, and pairs of objects and modes of presentation. They have at least the latter in common with fregean contents.

[16] However, this may not be his preferred solution. Stalnaker holds that proper names are rigid designators so that, if 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' refer to the same individual in the actual world, they necessarily refer to that individual in all possible worlds—thanks to Frank Jackson here.

two beliefs are the same: since they are true in the same worlds, they are, for Stalnaker, identical.

This results seems rather counter-intuitive, to say the least. For one thing, while the first belief is about numbers, the second is about a kangaroo, Skippy. For another, this feature of Stalnaker's account forces one to attribute to subjects beliefs they don't seem to have. Suppose I believe that 7 + 5 = 12. Being necessarily true, the content of my belief consists in exactly the same set of possible worlds in which it is true that ZF is incomplete. To borrow the usual example: Hence, on this view, it seems to follow that I believe that ZF is incomplete: since it is the same content as 7 + 5 = 12. But suppose I have never even heard to of the Zermelo-Fraenkel system and of its incompleteness. How could I have such a belief?[17]

This problem has proved to be a thorn in the side of proponents of contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds: as Stalnaker concedes: 1998b: 394. I shan't discuss the various attempts Stalnaker has made to deal with the problem.[18] I simply review one of Stalnaker's central attempts to illustrate the further difficulties it raises.

In order to account for the apparent difference between the content of my belief that 2 + 2 = 4 and the content of my belief that 125 - 3 = 122, Stalnaker (1984: 73, 84) goes meta-linguistic. The intuition that the contents of such beliefs are distinct, he suggests, can be explained as follows. The real content

[17] This second aspect of the problem, which Stalnaker (1984: 72) calls 'the problem of equivalence', generalises to propositions that aren't necessarily true (and thus necessarily equivalent). This is what he calls 'the problem of deduction' (Stalnaker, 1984: ch.5). Here is a famous instance: suppose that, in 1700, William III of England believed that 'England could avoid a war with France'. The propositional content of his belief ('that 'England could avoid a war with France' entails the proposition 'that 'England could avoid a *nuclear war* with France', since the set of possible worlds in which 'England could avoid a war with France includes the set of worlds in which 'England could avoid a nuclear war with France. (This is what entailment amounts to on such a view: 'φ' entails 'ψ' just in case the set of worlds in which 'φ' is true includes the set of worlds in which 'ψ' is true.) But the two propositions aren't equivalent, since 'doesn't entail '. Now, if the set of worlds in which ' is true includes the set of worlds in which ' is true, it seems to follow from Stalnaker's theory of content that William III thereby believes that 'England could avoid a nuclear war with France'. Yet, surely, William III couldn't have believed *that* in 1700. I shall not discuss the problem of deduction here. For discussion, see references in footnote 19.

[18] See Stalnaker (1984: ch. 5) as well as Stalnaker (1991, 1999b). And for further discussion, see for instance Richard (1990: 10-6); Thau (2002: 68-74); and Soames (1987).

of such beliefs isn't the set of all possible worlds in which both "2 + 2 = 4" and "25 - 3 = 122" are true. Rather, such distinct beliefs have as their distinct contents the contingent proposition that "the sentence '2 + 2 = 4' expresses a necessary proposition" and the contingent proposition that "the sentence '25 - 3 = 122' expresses a necessary proposition". Since these two propositions are not logically equivalent (one could be true while the other is false), this explains why those two beliefs have distinct contents. Or so the thought goes.

Except, of course, that mathematical beliefs don't seem to be *about* relations between sentences and propositions. Admittedly, Stalnaker is right to point out that:

> If one looks at the kind of actions that might be explained by mathematical beliefs, and at the abilities that constitute mathematical knowledge, one finds that they are actions and abilities that essentially involve operations with some kind of notation. (Stalnaker, 1984: 74)

But is this sufficient to warrant treating mathematical propositions as essentially involv[ing] expressions and semantic structure by having them as [their] subject matter (Stalnaker, 1984: 74-5)?

Intuitively, the proposition "2 + 2 = 4" seems to be about particular numbers and certain relations between such numbers, as is "25 - 3 = 122" about different numbers and different relations between such numbers. It's not about numerals or semantic relations between such expressions and sets of possible worlds, even if one needs to know about numerals and their semantic relations in order to express such beliefs.[19]

But the problem with Stalnaker's meta-linguistic proposal isn't just that it seems to turn mathematical beliefs into beliefs about sentences and their semantic relations. It also undermines the intuitive appeal of abstract entities like propositions to account for the representational content of psychological states. The initial appeal of the notion of 'proposition', or so I thought, had something to do with its ability to account for what is identical in the thoughts

[19] Stalnaker might respond that the meta-linguistic proposal appears inappropriate only because opponents of contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds evaluate the proposal according to *their own* theory of content. But on Stalnaker's theory, to believe that "the sentence '2 + 2 = 4'" expresses a necessary proposition" just is to rule out those worlds in which '2 + 2 = 4' isn't related to the necessarily true mathematical proposition, or worlds where there is no such sentence. On this way of thinking, the content of such a belief isn't really *about* numerals or *about* a sentence and its relation to a set of worlds: like any other belief, it simply delineates a certain set of possible worlds.

of speakers of different languages. A German speaker who utters the sentence ËLudwig ist verrËcktË could be said to express a belief with exactly the same contentË that œLou is crazyœË as a French speaker who said that ËLouis est fouË Now, it seems possible that there be creatures who have the same mathematical beliefs as we do, even though they use different mathematical notions, or no notation at all. The problem is that, given StalnakerËs meta-linguistic proposal, such creatures simply cannot believe the same content we believe when we believe that œ2 + 2 = 4œ This is not only implausible: it undermines part of the appeal of propositions in accounting for how speakers of different languages can think the same thoughts.

Elsewhere, Stalnaker advocates an apparently different approach:

> [...] one might give an account of aboutness by specifying a class of propositional functions Ëfunctions from individuals to propertiesËand say that a proposition *x* is about individual *a* just in case *x* is the value of one of the functions for the argument *a*. ËStalnaker, 1984: 61Ë

Recall the initial problem: though œ2 + 2 = 4œ is precisely the same set of possible worlds as œ125 - 3 = 122œ those contents seem to differ at least in the sense that they are about different things Ën this case different numbers and different types of relations between such entitiesË According to StalnakerËs new proposal, the difference between these two contents is not a difference in content. Rather, it can be accounted in the following terms: while the content œ2 + 2 = 4œis the value of a propositional function *œ* for the argument œ2œ the content œ125 - 3 = 122œis the value of another propositional function *œ* for the argument œ125œ[20] In this respect, these contents are different because they involve different propositional functions about different things.

Whether or not this satisfactorily accounts for the difference between such contents, we shouldnËt rule out the possibility that Stalnaker ultimately finds a way to deal with such a difficulty. The problem lies elsewhere. Stalnaker often advertises his own theory of content in terms of ËËits simplicityË or, at least, in terms of its minimal commitments ËStalnaker 1998a: 343ËË and, more importantly, in terms of ËiËits explanatory power Ë*ibid.*Ë However, when it comes to the fineness of grain of mathematical beliefs and other psychological states whose contents are necessarily true Ëor necessarily equivalentË, StalnakerËs account seems to fail on both counts.

[20] For StalnakerËs own doubts about this approach Ëand some further developmentsË, see his Ë984: 61-2Ë

First, the various patches Stalnaker resorts to in defending his theory bring a lot more complexity to the account. Second, Stalnaker is forced to make use of some additional machinery Ëlike the idea of propositional functions just mentionedËto account for those phenomena. In this respect, itË not true that the view that contents are sets-of-possible-worlds can explain all the relevant phenomena: as we have seen, it performs poorly with the fineness of grain of necessarily true contents.[21] What *is* true is that StalnakerË theory of content, *plus* some additional machinery, might be able to do a better job. Still, any rival theory of content, which can account for precisely those phenomena without requiring any extra help, might seem preferable.

3.2.2. *Structure*

We appeal to the representational content of psychological states not just to account for behavioural differences and similarities between subjects. We also appeal to certain features of the representational content of psychological states to explain certain aspects of those psychological states themselves, and how they interact with one another. Here, I shall focus on three related phenomena.

First, psychological states with representational content seem to display a certain level of *systematicity*. The general idea seems to be that the ability to have psychological states with certain contents makes it possible to have other psychological states with related contents. In other wordsË and to put it even more vaguelyË psychological states with content come as a package. Let me explain.

Suppose *S* believes that œJudy loves Paulineœ Given *S*Ë ability to understand that content, the idea goes, itË no great feat on *S*Ë part to understand a related content: namely, that œPauline loves Judyœ Likewise, if *S* believes that œkangaroos are friendlyœ and that œkoalas are cuddlyœ *S* ought to be able to understand the contents that œkangaroos are cuddlyœ and that œkoalas are friendlyœ ItË not that *S* ought to have such beliefsË after all, they might be false. The idea, rather, is that *ceteris paribus*, if *S* can have the beliefs that œJudy loves Paulineœ or that œkangaroos are friendlyœ and that œkoalas are cuddlyœ *S* has all the resources it takes to be able to form the beliefs that œPauline loves Judyœ or that œkangaroos are cuddlyœ and that œkoalas are friendlyœ In short,

[21] Indeed, itË noteworthy that when Stalnaker advertises the explanatory power of his theory of content Ësee, e.g., 1998a: 343Ë he mentions a rather narrow range of phenomena a theory of mental content ought to explainË and ignores some of the issues considered here.

***Systematicity***

If *S* is able to have mental states *M* and *M** with the content, respectively, that ω*a* is *F*ω and that ω*b* is *G*ω or that *a* bears relation *R* to *b*: ω*R*,*b*, then, *ceteris paribus*, *S* is able to have mental states *M*** and *M**** with the content, respectively, that ω*a* is *G*ω and that ω*b* is *G*ω or that ω*R*,*a*[22]

A second and closely related feature of psychological states with content is their *productivity*. Human thinkers, the observation goes, are able to form and understand an infinite number of contentful psychological states that is, they are able to have an infinite number of psychological states with *distinct* contents. Imagine for instance that *S* was immortal and dedicated all her time and energy to forming new beliefs with new contents contents she had not believed or entertained earlier. The suggestion is that, in principle at least, there is no reason why *S* couldn't go on *ad infinitum*:

***Productivity***

A subject *S* is able, in principle if not in real life, to entertain or form psychological states with an infinite variety of distinct contents.

The third feature of psychological states with content has to do with their role in reasoning and inference. Suppose that *S* believes that [1] kangaroos are friendly ω and [2] koalas are cuddly ω On the basis of [1] two beliefs, it seems, *S* ought to be able to *infer* some new beliefs, such as the belief that [3] some things are cuddly ω or the belief that [4] kangaroos are friendly and koalas are cuddly ω Provided *S* has fairly normal reasoning abilities, it seems as though *S* should be able to extend her stock of beliefs by inference.

Of course, there are plenty of reasons why *S* might not usually draw such inferences. The important point is that, insofar as normal reasoning skills are concerned, if *S* has such skills, then she'll be *able* to infer [3] and [4] from [1] and [2] And those inferences, if *S* were to draw them, would be correct or valid. Thus,

***Valid Inference***

If *S* believes that [1] ω*a* is *F*ω and [2] ω*b* is *F*ω, *S* is able, in principle at least, to draw valid inferences from [1] and [2] to the conclusion, say, that [3] there are some *F*s ω or that [4] ω*a* is *F* & *b* is *F*ω

[22] This, in effect, is Gareth Evans' 1982: 104 famous *Generality Constraint* though Evans builds a certain explanation of this phenomenon into his description of it, while I'm trying to keep the two distinct.

These three phenomenaË systematicity, productivity, and valid inferenceË require some explanation.[23] Why is it that psychological states with content are systematic and can give rise to new contents by inference? And why is it that, in principle, human thinkers seem capable of entertaining an infinite number of possible contents? Here, the explanation must take into account the limitations of the creatures under consideration. For instance, it seems improbable that productivity is best explained by the hypothesis that the human brain contains Ëand has the capacity to storeËan infinite number of representational contents.

These three features point towards a certain type of explanation, which has a particular significance for theories of mental content. First, note that all three phenomena relate to the *representational content* of psychological states. *Systematicity* is a matter of forming psychological states with new Ëand relatedË contents from old ones. In this respect, it is tempting to regard *productivity* as a consequence of systematicity: productivity simply is the ability to form new contents from old ones *ad infinitum.* As for *valid inference*, the logical relations governing valid inferences seem to relate primarily the *contents* of those psychological states involved in such inferences.

Second, and more importantly, these three phenomena suggest that the representational content of psychological states instantiates the following three properties:

1. *parts.* The representational contents of psychological states are wholes that have parts.

2. *combination.* The parts of representational contents combine to form whole contents Ëand whole contents themselves can combine to form other more complex whole contentsË

[23] Note that each phenomenon concerns types of psychological abilities that we are prone to ascribe to competent adult human thinkers. In the relevant contexts and situations, we expect normal subjects to display these sorts of abilities Ëamong othersË Not always, of course. But at least when their cognitive faculties are functioning properly and when exercising such abilities is relevant to the sort of cognitive tasks these subjects engage in. Whether or not we should also ascribe such abilities to non-adult human thinkers and to non-human thinkers is an interesting question IËll leave aside. I assume that the primary interest of developing a theory of mental content is to account for features of the psychological states of adult human subjects in the first place.

3. *structure.* The parts of representational contents, and the ways in which they combine to form whole contents, determine the structure of such contents.

For instance, the content ⌜kangaroos are friendly and koalas are cuddly⌝ has *parts*. It can be decomposed into the contents ⌜kangaroos are friendly⌝ and ⌜koalas are cuddly⌝, each of which further decomposes into parts too: ⌜kangaroos⌝ and ⌜are friendly⌝ for the first; ⌜koalas⌝ and ⌜are cuddly⌝ for the second.

Such parts can *combine* to form at least four distinct new contents: ⌜□ kangaroos are friendly⌝, ⌜□ kangaroos are cuddly⌝, ⌜□ koalas are friendly⌝, ⌜□ koalas are cuddly⌝, which can themselves combine in a variety of ways: for instance, ⌜□ kangaroos are friendly and kangaroos are cuddly⌝, ⌜□ kangaroos are cuddly and koalas are cuddly⌝, etc.

Finally, *structure*: since they are composed of similar parts, the contents ⌜kangaroos are friendly⌝, ⌜koalas are friendly⌝ and ⌜koalas are cuddly⌝ have the same structure, which is distinct from the structure of contents like ⌜kangaroos are friendly and koalas are cuddly⌝ and ⌜koalas are friendly and koalas are cuddly⌝, or from the contents ⌜Judy loves Pauline⌝ and ⌜Pauline loves Judy⌝. The structure of these contents manifests itself in how their parts combine and in the fact that not just any combination of parts makes a whole content. For instance, ⌜kangaroos⌝ and ⌜koalas⌝ cannot be combined to form a representational content just by themselves, nor can ⌜are friendly⌝ and ⌜are cuddly⌝. Nor are all parts equal: parts of contents, it seems, play a different role in determining the structure of a representational content. For instance, though the contents ⌜kangaroos are friendly⌝ and ⌜kangaroos love Pauline⌝ have a part in common ⌜kangaroos⌝, these two contents nevertheless have a different structure. Hence, what must be crucial for their respective structure is not their common part ⌜kangaroos⌝, but rather the difference between ⌜are friendly⌝ and ⌜love Pauline⌝.[24]

It is not too hard to see how these three properties help account for the phenomena we started with. First, *systematicity*: suppose *S* is able to entertain

[24] Because it instantiates these three properties, it is often said that representational content is *compositional*: more precisely, this notion stands for the idea that representational contents have parts, which can be combined with other parts to form new contents. Usually, compositionality is understood not just in this minimal structural way, but also as a more substantial claim about how the semantic properties of whole contents depend upon the semantic properties of their parts.

the contents that ωα is *F*ωand ωβ is *G*ω and thus has all the resources required to understand such contents. Part of her ability, it seems, involves an understanding of how the content ωα is *F*ωis formed of the parts αωand ωis *F*ω and how they combine to form a whole contentË similarly with the content ωβ is *G*ω The parts of ËËωα is *F*ωand ËËωβ is *G*ωcan recombine to form two new contents: ËËωα is *G*ω and ËËωβ is *F*ω If so, it seems as though whatever is involved in *S*Ës ability to entertain ËËand ËËis all it takesË no more no lessË for her to entertain ËËand ËËtoo. ThatËs systematicity.

In this respect, as we have seen, *productivity* is just a generalisation of systematicity. The more contents a subject *S* is able to entertain, the more new contents she is able to form: a sufficient stock of content-parts might allow a subject to keep forming new contents *ad infinitum*.

What about *valid inference*? Here, the thought seems to be that a valid inference from, say, ËËωα is *F*ωor ËËωβ is *F*ωto ËËωsomething is *F*ωexploits the fact that ËËthere is a relevant structural similarity between ËË, ËË, and ËË, and that ËËsuch similarity plays a major role in accounting for the validity of the inference in question Ëee, e.g., Crane, 1992: 147Ë But what role? The validity of the inference from ËËor ËËto ËË, the thought seems to go, is guaranteed in partË though not completelyË by the fact that all ËË, ËË, and ËËhave ωis *F*ωas a part. Only in part, because the introduction-rule for the existential quantifier ËomethingËalso contributes to account for the validity of the inference under consideration. Nevertheless, the fact that ËË, ËËand ËË, have this part in common helps to account for the fact that the inference is truth-preserving in a way that an inference from ËËand ËËto ωα is *G*ωË where *G* ω*F*Ë wouldnËt be.

What I have attempted to describe so far is a rather well-entrenched conception of the representational content of psychological states as structured, and of the various phenomena which relate to this fact. The picture seems intuitive. It is also at the heart of theories of content like FregeËs and RussellËs. Thus, it seems, accounting for these three phenomena poses no problem for the Fregean and the Russellian: both views acknowledge that the representational content of psychological states have parts which can combine and recombine in ways which structure such contents.[25]

[25] Proponents of these accounts, of course, disagree about ËËthe nature of such parts Ëwhat kind of things they areË, and so, about the nature of the whole contents they form; they also disagree about ËiË the ËglueË which allows parts of contents to combine and form whole contents. For a helpful survey of these complex issues, see King Ëoo1Ë

What about the view that contents are sets of possible worlds? As we have seen, one marked feature of mental contents on this view is that they lack structureË though they have parts Ïparticular possible worldsËwhich form whole contents Ïsets of possible worldsË the difference is that such parts do not combine and recombine in the relevant sense. And appeal to the systematicity, productivity, and the role of content in valid inference, usually forms the basis of objections to such a view of content. Does this mean that Stalnaker is unable to account for these three phenomena? Maybe not.

Clearly, Stalnaker should have no problem accounting for *valid inference.* The explanation of the validity of a given inference, on his account, is semantic Ïor model-theoretic, rather than syntactic or proof-theoreticË the inference from ÏiËω*α* is *F*ωand ÏiËω*β* is *F*ωto ÏjËω*α* is *F* & *b* is *F*ωis valid if the set of worlds in which both ÏiËω*α* is *F*ωand ÏiËω*β* is *F*ωare true includes the sets of worlds in which ω*α* is *F* & *b* is *F*ωis true. As Stalnaker Ï984: 60-1Ërightly points out, the fact that contents are connected by logical relations does not imply that such contents are structured Ï*pace* Crane, 1992: 147Ë[26]

What about *systematicity* and *productivity*?[27] Suppose that *S* believes that ÏiË ωkangaroos are friendlyωand that ÏiËωkoalas are cuddlyω Systematicity predicts that if *S* is capable of understanding the contents of her two beliefs, she has all the resources required to entertain the content that ÏjËωkangaroos are cuddlyω But how can this be if contents are sets of possible worlds? The sets of worlds in which kangaroos are friendly and in which koalas are cuddly are likely to overlap. But neither will include the other, nor do they have to include worlds where kangaroos are cuddly. And even if they did include such worlds, itÏs not entirely clear how this could explain systematicity in any enlightening way.

Again, though, Stalnaker might insist that his theory of content can be supplemented with some other machinery which provides an explanation of systematicityË and why, the capacities to entertain contents ÏiËand ÏiËare all thatÏs required to understand contents like ÏjË Perhaps, such an account has something to do with the subjectÏs cognitive architecture and how the representational contents of her psychological states are themselves ÏrepresentedËÏor better, realizedËin the subjectÏs brain: the suggestion here is

[26] He might also insist that the notion of syntactic validity Ïan inference is syntactically valid in virtue of the form or structure of what such an inference operates uponËis essentially linguistic: it only applies to inferences using *sentences* in a logical or formal notation, and not to the contents expressed by such sentences.

[27] IÏll focus on the former, since the latter seems to be a consequence of it, as we have seen.

that there are Ïnternal representation[s]Ë which Ïconstitute a language of thoughtË and represent the content of a psychological state with a certain ÏformË ÏStalnaker, 1984: 22-3Ë This, as Stalnaker points out, need not entail that contents themselves are structured.[28]

Indeed, Stalnaker is free to help himself to whatever additional resources he needs. Again, however, this underlines the limited explanatory power of his account of content. StalnakerÏs theory is less explanatorily powerful than theories of content that can account for systematicity and productivity without resorting to additional resourcesË resources that are separate from the theory of content.[29]

3.2.3. *Perceptual content*

Finally, a brief look at how the three theories of content discussed so far apply to perceptual experiences. According to the Fregean, as we have seen, contents Ïand their partsËare *modes of presentation* of the objects Ïproperties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc.Ërepresented by the states with such contents. If, by the notion of Ïmode of presentationËone means a particular representation or the specific way in which something is represented, then such a notion naturally applies to the representational content of perceptual experiences.

[28] Thanks to Alex Byrne for discussion of this issue. Note that none of the three accounts of content reviewed so far imply anything about cognitive architecture: they are all consistent with the Ïanguage of thoughtÏhypothesis Ïor any other claim about cognitive architectureË, but do not entail Ïor requireËit.

[29] Stalnaker might respond that there is nothing to explain: that phenomena like systematicity, productivity, and valid inference, have nothing to do with content, and that the impression that they do is an illusion generated by uncritical endorsement of what he dubs the Ïinguistic pictureËof mental content Ïsee, e.g., Stalnaker, 1984, 3, and ch. 2Ë Talk of a Ïinguistic pictureË of content, I take it, is meant to stand for a conception of mental content, resulting from the conflation of ÏËcertain aspects of the linguistic expressions used to express contents with ÏiËproperties of the contents themselves. The idea, then, is that itÏs only under the influence of such a Ïinguistic pictureË that one might be tempted to think that contents are systematic and productive Ïor that their logical relations are determined by their formË

The main problem with this is that normal adult thinkers *do* appear to have the sorts of abilities described by systematicity. The alleged illusion doesnÏt disappear once the linguistic picture has been put on the table. At any rate, if he is to address this issue, Stalnaker must do more than suggest that acceptance of systematicity results from being in the grip of the linguistic picture. He must explain, either ÏaËwhy subjects do not in fact have the capacities described by systematicity and productivity, or ÏbËwhy, contrary to appearances, such capacities have little to do with the representational content of psychological states.

For instance, consider your visual experience of Skippy, the kangaroo in the Australian bush. Skippy visually appears to you in a certain *way* (see Peacocke, 2001b: 240). Skippy looks to have a certain silhouette, surrounded by a background, Skippy's fur looks to have a particular colour and texture, etc. But the same animal (with the very same properties) might appear in a different *way* (as when you see Skippy from a slightly different perspective, against a different background: its silhouette might look different (even though Skippy retains the same posture), as might the colour of its fur. Such *ways* in which Skippy visually appears correspond to different *modes of presentation* of Skippy (they constitute different representational contents your visual experiences of Skippy might have.[30]

There is one terminological difficulty Fregeans have to face, however. Fregean theories of content are usually characterised in terms of the claim that contents are fregean *senses*. Indeed, the notion of a (mode of presentation) is often used as a synonym for (fregean sense). The identification of modes of presentation with fregean senses is by no means trivial, however. Frege seems to have been committed to the following two claims about *senses*: (1) the senses of whole sentences, names, and predicates *are* modes of presentation; and (2) fregean senses expressed by whole sentences are identified with propositions (they are the contents of thoughts expressed by such sentences), while those expressed by names and predicates are identified with concepts (the latter being constitutive parts of the former). Regarding (1), note that if it entails that all fregean senses are modes of presentation, it need not entail that all modes of presentation are fregean senses. If so, it becomes a substantial question for Fregeans which notion should be identified with that of (content): (a) modes of presentation, or (b) fregean senses?

Usually, fregean theories of content are characterised in terms of (b). And in principle, such a notion of (content) can apply to perceptual experiences too.

[30] Some Fregeans (or Neo-fregeans) like Peacocke (1986, 1989, 1998a, 2001b) prefer to reserve the notion of (mode of presentation) for the conceptual contents of thoughts, and use (ways of appearing) or (manners of perception) for the contents of experiences, which may or may not be conceptual. This is a minor terminological point. But Peacocke's distinction seems unstable. Peacocke himself allows that the contents of some experiences are conceptual, in the sense that they are made up of fregean senses (concepts), which he identifies with modes of presentation. It should then be possible that the contents of some experiences (manners of perception) are also modes of presentation. Hence, it can't be that the notion of (manners of perception) applies to the contents of experiences simply because such contents cannot be modes of presentation. At the very least, the basis for such a distinction needs to be clarified.

Hence, on this view, the representational content of perceptual experiences is exactly the same as the content of thoughts Ëpropositions, completeË or saturatedË fregean sensesË One difficulty with ËbËË however, is that, as a consequence, Conceptualism is true *by definition*. Since, according to Ë2ËËabove, fregean senses are either concepts or propositions made up of concepts, it follows that, if the contents of experiences are fregean senses, they are fully conceptual. Such a consequence seems highly undesirable regarding the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics: to repeat, this dispute is supposed to be a substantial disagreement over the nature of perceptual content, not to be settled simply by a choice of terminology.[31]

For this reason, it seems preferable to think of fregean contents as modes of presentationË a broader kind of abstract object. This allows that, while many modes of presentationË those that constitute the contents of beliefs and thoughtsË are fregean senses, some arenËË. In this respect, it is important to note that everything I said about the properties of fregean contents Ëand about how these properties account for the fineness of grain of mental content, as well as for systematicity, productivity, and valid inferenceËis consistent with the identification of fregean contents with modes of presentation. On this view, modes of presentation are abstract, potentially fine-grained, representations, which can combine to form more complex modes of presentation: fregean senses Ëconcepts and propositionsËsimply make a sub-class of modes of presentation. Thus, it can be a substantial question whether

[31] This point sheds a different light on the first sceptical worryË namely that Conceptualists are committed to a particular fregean theory of content. If fregean contents are identified with modes of presentation, it can be a substantial question whether all modes of presentation are fregean senses Ëi.e., made up of conceptsË But, the sceptic insists, the disagreement between Conceptualists and their critics turns out to be a very localised dispute between those Fregeans who think that all modes of presentation are fregean senses and those Fregeans who think that some modes of presentation arenËË. This is the first sceptical worry as it was originally stated. On the other hand, if fregean content is identified with fregean senses, the worry should turn out to be that Conceptualism is true by definition Ëand false by definition, if content is identified with sets of objects and properties, or sets of possible worldsË Worse, Fregeans cannot even make sense of the denial of Conceptualism. If so, the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics collapses, because it depends solely on the presupposition of different theories of content. Note that, no matter how this first sceptical worry is construed Ëdepending on these two different construals of fregean contentË one crucial assumption on both interpretations is that the notion of Ëconceptual contentËË*cannot* make any sense on russellian theories of content or theories which identify contents with sets of possible worlds. It is this assumption IËË question in Ës3.3Ë as well as in chapter 5.

perceptual modes of presentation are fregean senses too. Therefore, unless I offer any indication to the contrary, I shall simply take this weaker construal of fregean content for granted in what follows.

A russellian theory of content, too, seems quite congenial to the perceptual case. The representational content of your experience of Skippy in the Australian bush, for instance, is the set consisting of Skippy and a certain background Ëi.e., whatever objects constitute that backgroundË, together with some of SkippyËs properties Ëthe shape of its body, the colour and texture of its furËand some properties of the background Ëthe shapes and colours of the objects constituting the background, their spatial distribution, etc.Ë

Similarly for the view that contents are sets of possible worlds: the representational content of a visual experience of Skippy in the Australian bush rules out worlds where there is no Skippy in the Australian bush, where Skippy looks different than he does, where Skippy appears against a different background, etc.[32]

So, it seems, all three theories of content can apply to perceptual experiences just as well. At least, there doesnËt seem to be any principled reason why they could not.

*Wrapping up.* It is time to close this rather lengthy section on mental content and theories of content. I have tried to survey some of the issuesË some terminological, others more substantiveË surrounding the notion of Ëmental contentË Though I barely scratched the surface of these difficult questions, there seem to be some considerations that militate in favour of

[32] Susanna Siegel Ë2005: §3.2Ëhas argued that one difficulty for perceptual contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds resides in the fact experiences can represent Ëgeometrically Ëimpossible scenes as in some of Kurt EscherË famous drawings. Since ËËthe perceived scenes in question are impossible, she reasons, ËËthere is no possible world in which a content representing such scene could be true. And so, ËËthe content of such experiences must be the empty set, according to StalnakerËs theory of content. But Ë4Ëmany such impossible scenes are distinct, and the contents of experiences representing them seem different. Hence, Ë5Ëa theory of perceptual content-as-sets-of-possible-worlds cannot account for this difference, since it must construe the contents of all such experiences as the same: the empty set.

One possible response might go as follows: there are Ëgeometrically Ë impossible worldsË worlds in which one Ëor moreËcontradiction is Ëor at least taken to beËtrue. Such worlds will be distinct, depending on which contradictions are true in them. And so, the content of an experience representing an impossible scene might be construed as a set of similar impossible worlds. I hesitate to press this response on behalf of Stalnaker, since he doesnËt seem to have much sympathy for the idea of impossible worlds Ësee his 1996Ë

fregean theories of contentË where fregean contents are identified with Ëpotentially fine-grainedËmodes of presentation, which can have other modes of presentation as their parts. The general worry isnË that russellian contents, or contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds, cannot account for all the phenomena reviewed. The worry Ëand this seems clearer in StalnakerËs caseËis that such theories of content must be supplemented by something else to account for the phenomena in questionË whereas a fregean theory doesnË.

Furthermore, insofar as StalnakerËs account is concerned, we have seen that there are potent Ëthough not ultimately conclusiveËreasons to think of the content of psychological states as fine-grained and structured. Even if Stalnaker might find a plausible way around these difficulties, the point still stands that his theory of content fails Ëby itselfËto account for systematicity and productivity. Of course, there are other features of mental representation which StalnakerËs theory might explain quite well Ëthough itË unclear whether there are any phenomena which Stalnaker can explain better than a fregean or russellian theoryË[33]

This allows us to address one of the two assumptions behind the first sceptical worry. Such a worry, as we saw, essentially relies on the assumption that ËËone can only make sense of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËon a fregean theory of content Ëwhere contents are modes of presentation which can be fregean senses, i.e. made up of conceptsË and on the assumption ËiË that all three theories of content are viable candidates to account for the content of experiences and thoughts.

I will address the question whether a fregean theory of content provides the only way to make sense of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËË assumption ËËË in the next section Ë3.3Ë The discussion in this section had another target. I have tried to question the allegedly bad consequences that would ensue if the notion of Ëconceptual contentËdid indeed commit us to a fregean theory of content. Obviously, this would narrow the dispute between Conceptualists and

[33] I should also mention, if only briefly, a separate Ëand more generalËworry facing all three theories of content. The worry rests on the fact that they all treat contents as propositions. Propositions, on such views, are abstract objects, which have the following properties, among others: ËËË being abstract, propositions are causally inert, and ËiËpropositions are true or false and represent states-of-affairs. Against ËËË some argue that the content of psychological states is causally relevantË so that contents cannot be causally inert entities Ësee, e.g., Fodor, 1987, as well as Fodor, 1998: 17-20 for similar worries about concepts *qua* abstract entitiesË Against ËiËË some have argued that the contents of some psychological states donË represent states-of-affairs, but objects or events Ësee, e.g., Crane, 2001: §24, §33; Dretske, 1993/2000: 117-20; Gunther, 2002: 5Ë

their critics, and restrict it to those who share similar fregean assumptions. But would that be so bad?

It would, it seems, only under the assumptionË assumption ËiËË that different theories of content are equally good candidates to account for the representational content of psychological states. Against this, I have tried to suggest that there are some reasons to think that not all theories of content are equally viableË that a fregean theory might have certain advantages over its rivals, and over the view that contents are sets of possible worlds in particular.

### 3.3. Content and Concepts

In the previous section, I have surveyed some general questions about the notion of Ëcontentˌ if only superficially. I now want to focus on what talk of Ëconceptual contentËmight presuppose of a theory of content. The general idea, everyone agrees, is that of a particular *kind* of content which, due to its tight connection with concepts, can be called Ë*conceptual* contentË The notion thus contrasts with other kinds of contents Ëˌnon-conceptual contentˌË which arenË so tightly linked with concepts.

In chapter 5, IˌË explain in more detail how, I think, such a notion is best understood. For now, I want to discuss how the notion is usually understood. In particular, I want to consider the claimË underlying the first sceptical worryË that the only way to make sense of a kind of content that is conceptual is by commitment to a fregean theory of content. IˌË try to show what is wrong with this assumption.

The assumption seems to be a metaphysical oneË namely, that only fregean contents can be ËËcomposed of concepts and ËiËstructured as a result. What does it mean to be Ëcomposed of conceptsËˀ According to Fregeans, concepts are fregean senses which are parts of whole contentsË in this sense, they *mereologically compose* complex fregean senses.[34] This accounts for ËˌË But,

[34] It seems worth insisting that, though many Fregeans take concepts to be parts of whole contents, this is, strictly speaking, an addition to the sort of fregean theory of content I described in the previous section. A central tenet of such a theory is that contents Ëas modes of presentationËare abstract objects which have parts, and where such parts are themselves modes of presentation. As we have seen, one could accept this much, and reject the identification of concepts Ëfregean sensesËwith modes of presentation Ëat least, for some modes of presentationË In other words, itËs not mandatory for the kind of Fregean I have described to accept the idea that all contents are composed of concepts.

according to the Fregean, concepts can also determine the structure of whole contents. The parts of a fregean content are structurally salient: they are the building blocks, or ingredients, of whole contents Ëas it wereË And so, concepts also account for ËiË on this traditional fregean view.

Here, then, we have a clear notion of Ëconceptual contentË The interesting question is whether this notion can be exported and adapted to other theories of content, or whether there are alternative ways to make sense of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËavailable to these other accounts. Consider a russellian theory of content first. Russell himself admits that concepts figure among the constituents of contentsË they can be members of the relevant sets ËRussell, 1903: 44Ë For Russell Ë*ibid.*Ë concepts are to be contrasted with things: unlike things which are referred to by proper names, concepts are referred to by expressions other than proper names Ëpredicates mainlyË So, it seems, a proponent of a russellian theory of content can admit that the representational content of psychological states is conceptual in the sense that it is composed of Ëor constituted byËat least *some* concepts.

Obviously, though, there is one crucial difference between a russellian and a fregean interpretation of the notion of Ëconceptual contentË Consider the difference between:

> ËwË*Wholly Conceptual Content:* the representational content of a psychological state *M* is **entirely** composed concepts.
>
> ËpË*Partially Conceptual Content:* the representational content of a psychological state *M* is only **in part** composed of concepts.

While the Fregean can accept the first claim ËwË it is much more likely that the russellian will only be tempted by the second: ËpË The reason is that, though the sets of ËntitiesËRussell identifies with contents can include concepts, they also contain other things like objects, and properties. And so, they are not entirely conceptual in this sense. Still, a crucial point remains: the notion of Ëconceptual contentËunderstood as a kind of content composed of concepts is available to the russellian.[35]

What about StalnakerËs viewË the view that contents are sets of possible worlds? If contents are sets of possible worlds, how could they be composed of

[35] Note that some Fregeans may also prefer ËpËto ËwËon the ground that some complex modes of presentation Ëwhole contentsËhave modes of presentation as parts, only some of which are fregean senses Ëconcepts

concepts? They could if, for instance, one conceives of possible worlds on some sort of ersatzist model: instead of being maximally consistent sets of *sentences*, a possible world might be a set of *concepts* Ëor combined conceptsË Alternatively, suppose that concepts are identified with their extension: as sets of individuals. Thus, in the same way as the proposition that œSkippy is a kangarooœis identified with the sets of possible worlds in which it is true that Skippy is a kangaroo, the concept *KANGAROO* could be identified with the set of things of which it is true that they are kangaroos. And then, since sets of things Ëpopulate Ësets of possible worlds, there is a sense in which the latter can contain the former. It would then be a trivial point that sets of possible worlds are composed of conceptsË *qua* sets of individuals.

If so, it turns out that the notion of Ëconceptual contentËË understood as content *composed* of conceptsË is, in principle at least, available to the view that contents are sets of possible worlds.[36] Admittedly, this captures a rather weak sense in which contents are *composed* of concepts: while concepts are proper parts Ëor constituentsË of contents on the fregean and russellian views, this isnË really the case on these possible conceptions of contents-as-sets-of-possible worlds. *Possible worlds* are the constituents of contents, on such views, and it would be more accurate to say that sets of possible worlds merely ËcontainË concepts, not that they are composed by them Ën the sense that sets of individuals constitute sets of possible worldsË[37]

In any case, there is a more important difference between this weak understanding of the notion of Ëconceptual contentËand a more robust understanding. For the Fregean, we have seen, contents arenË just composed of concepts: concepts are the structuring parts of contents, so to speak. This second point certainly isnË something a proponent of contents-as-sets-of-possible worlds could accept. So distinguish:

> ËMË*Composed Conceptual Content:* the representational content of a psychological state *M* is **composed** by Ëconstituted, made up, ofËconcepts.

[36] Clearly, this should be anathema to Stalnaker, who takes his view to be that all contents are in fact non-conceptual Ëstalnaker, 1998a: 343, 352Ë

[37] I take it that this is another way to put Tim CraneË point ËCrane, 2001: 152Ëthat contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds are constituted by possible worlds, not concepts.

ËËË*Structured Conceptual Content:* the representational content of a psychological state *M* is **structured** by concepts.[38]

We can now summarise the discussion as follows. While it is true that only the proponents of a fregean theory of content can accept all of ËMË ËWËand ËSË the other two main theories of content are at least compatible with *some* understanding of the notion of Ëconceptual contentË The russellian can accept ËMË ËPË and perhaps even ËSËË depending on how the structure of a russellian content is understood. And proponents of the possible-worlds view may accept ËMË ËPËand even ËWËË if sets of possible worlds are ultimately composed only of individuals and sets thereof. Note, finally, that some Fregeans might also accept ËPË But contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds seem incompatible with ËSË And itË unlikely any russellian would endorse ËWË

*Conclusion:* I have considered the idea that what it means for a content to be conceptual is that it is composed of concepts. We have just seen that, *in principle*, all theories of content are compatible with *some* understanding of such a notion. If this is correct, we have an answer to the first sceptical worry:

> ***Sceptical worry #1.*** Both Conceptualists and their opponents presuppose a particular ËfregeanË theory of content. As a result, the question as to whether perceptual experiences have conceptual content is very narrow and local. In particular, such a question doesnË make sense if one presupposes some other theory of content.

Of course, it might be that most participants in the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics are indeed committed Fregeans, and

[38] Here and elsewhere, I have tried to keep these claims distinct. Strictly speaking, there is a threefold distinction between ËaËthe *metaphysical* claim that contents are made up of certain kinds of things, ËbËthe *mereological* claim that contents have parts, and ËcËthe claim that contents are *structured*. For instance, both Russellians and proponents of contents-as-sets-of-possible-worlds can agree with respect to ËbËthat contents have partsË members of the sets with which the content is identified. However, they disagree on ËaË for Russellians, contents are made up of objects, properties, predicates, concepts, etc., but not of possible worlds. More importantly, they also disagree on ËcË russellian contents Ëconceived of as ordered tuplesËare structured, while sets of possible worlds arenË. On this ground, one should be careful about the relationships between ËaË ËbË and ËcË There mere fact that contents have parts, or that they are made up of certain kinds of things, need not entail that they are structured, and *vice versa*. For instance, strictly speaking, the fact that contents are made up of concepts Ëwhere the latter composes the former, as partsËneed not entail that the resulting contents are structured Ësee Crane, 1992: 140Ë It is a substantial additional claim that the structure of such contents is determined by the concepts which compose them.

understand Ëconceptual contentËin terms of fregean contentË that is, as modes of presentation which are made up of fregean senses ËconceptsË As a matter of fact, however, some such notion *is* available to other theories of content, and not just to Fregeans. Admittedly, it may be that only Fregeans have any reason to think of contents as made up of concepts. The point is not that there are well-motivated conceptions of Ëconceptual contentËdeveloped in terms of each theory of content reviewed in this chapter. The point is only that it is a mistake to think that the notion of Ëconceptual contentË*cannot* make any sense on any theory of content except a fregean one. Finally, note that the idea that conceptual contents are contents *composed* of concepts is only one way in which to understand this notion. IË present another in chapter 5.

Despite this, despair about the notion of Ëconceptual contentËhas driven some to argue that, in fact, the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics has little to do with the nature of content. This is the second sceptical worry, to which I now turn.

### 3.4. States *vs* Contents

A final issue concerns the relevance of ËontentËin Ëonceptual contentË Richard Heck Ë000: 484-6Ëhas distinguished two readings of the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics. According to the first readingË the *state view*Ë the issue is whether there are two kinds of psychological *states*: ËËa kind of psychological state that is *conceptual* in the sense that being in such a state requires conceptual capacities, and ËËa kind of psychological state which is non-conceptual because it doesnË require such capacities. On this interpretation, Conceptualists assertË whilst their critics denyË that perceptual experiences, like beliefs and other thoughts, are conceptual states. According to the second readingË the *content view*, on the other handË there are two *kinds* of mental *content*: conceptual and non-conceptual. And the dispute is whether perceptual experiences have the same kind of content as beliefs and other thoughtsË namely, conceptual content.

Note that there is a sense in which the content view entails the state view Ësee, e.g., Byrne, 2005: 234Ë psychological states with conceptual content can be said to be Ëconceptual statesË That is, if a certain *type* of psychological state *M* has a kind of content which requires the possession of concepts, then being in *M* requires such concepts. Note further that those who understand the notion of Ëconceptual contentËin terms of content that is in some way composed of conceptsË along the line of ËWË, ËPË, ËMËor ËSË seem to have a

good explanation for this. The explanation relies on the following two assumptions:

> *Assumption 1* Ëcontent & understandingË
> If a psychological state *M* has a content that *p* and *p* is a kind of content that is composed of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ..., then a subject *S* can be in *M only if S* understands/grasps/entertains *p*.
>
> *Assumption 2* Ëunderstanding & conceptsË
> A subject *S* can understand/grasp/entertain the content *p* of a psychological state *M* where *p* is composed of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ..., *only if S* possesses the relevant concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ... .

From this, it follows that if the content of *M* is conceptual and requires the possession of certain concepts, being in *M* requires such concepts. Conceptual states, hence, are simply those psychological states the *content* of which requires concepts.[39] And non-conceptual states are those psychological states the *content* of which does not require possession of any concept Ëbecause their content is non-conceptualË

For some, however, it is simply wrongheaded to think of the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents in terms of Ëconceptual contentË They argue that the dispute isnËt really about two kinds of content, and which kind should be thought to be the content of perceptual experiences. Rather, they suggest, itËs an issue about different kinds of *states*Ë and which kind of psychological state perceptual experiences belong to.

According to Tim Crane Ë2001: 152Ë, for instance, the state view is motivated mainly by the fact that the content view doesnËt make much sense on some theories of contentË that is, theories like StalnakerËs. The point, I take it, is that such theories of content cannot make sense of two kinds of content: one kind being essentially linked with concepts, while the other isnËt. But even if it were right that, on some theories of content, the content view cannot even be formulated Ëwe have seen that there are reasons to doubt this

[39] Of course, these two assumptions are not entirely uncontroversial. In particular, many have been tempted to reject *Assumption 1*. It seems possible, they argue, to be in a psychological state the content of which one doesnËt understandË or at least, doesnËt fully understand. Note that, given the way I have specified this first assumption, the opponents of Conceptualism need not reject it. They can accept *Assumption 1* as being true of states with conceptual content, and still hold that, for those contents that are not composed of concepts, being in a state with such a content does not require that one understands, grasps, or even entertains, its content.

§3.3, it is unclear that this is sufficient to show that the state view is to be preferred. For one thing, it is not entirely clear how to make sense of the state view. We have just seen how there is a sense in which the content view entails the state view. The interesting question is whether we can make sense of the state view *without* the content view.

3.4.1. *Conceptual States?*

What does it mean for a psychological *state* to be conceptual or non-conceptual? In particular, there are two questions we might ask to a proponent of the state view regarding conceptual states. Suppose a subject $S$ is in a conceptual state $M$ with the content that $p$:

**Q4:** why is it that, being in $M$, $S$ must possess and deploy the concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, .... and why is it that $S$ must possess those concepts rather than the concepts $C_6$, $C_7$, $C_8$, ...., say?

**Q5:** why is it that certain states like beliefs, say, require the possession of concepts, while other psychological states do not require the possession of concepts at all?

A proponent of the content view, we have seen, has easy answers to these questions. Being in $M$ requires possession of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ... , because $M$ has the content that $p$ and $p$ is composed of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ... . And beliefs require the possession of concepts because their content is composed of concepts In contrast, psychological states the content of which is not so composed do not require the possession of concepts. But this kind of answer is not available to a proponent of the state view.

So what are conceptual states exactly? It is difficult to give a precise specification of the *state view*. Presumably, a proper specification of the *state view* would be one that rules out the *content view* not just one which leaves it open that the *state view* is true because the *content view* is true. Thus, consider for instance:

***State Conceptualism***

The psychological state $M$ of a subject $S$ is *conceptual if* $S$ can be in $M$ only if $S$ possesses the concepts which compose $M$.

It is unclear whether this formulation succeeds: it will depend primarily on what it means for a psychological state to be composed of concepts. And it is not entirely clear what this could mean. More importantly, if the explanation

of this idea relies on the fact the contents of such states have concepts as their parts, then this version of the *state view* just collapses into the *content view*.[40]

A different proposal is hinted at by Stalnaker. First, Stalnaker appears to grant something along the lines of *assumption 2* above: that is, he grants that *understanding* the content of a psychological state is a conceptual matter. For instance, Stalnaker (1998a: 351) admits that we use conceptual capacities to "refer" to contents, but also to distinguish and divide sets of possible worlds (1998a: 352). The idea seems to be that *which* contents one entertains depend on one's ability to represent and divide sets of possible worlds (1984: 4-5). For instance, he grants that, as her understanding "grows", a child can begin to refer to and divide a wider range of possibilities (1984: 65).

So why is it that certain psychological states are conceptual in this sense? that is, why is there a correlation between the subject's conceptual capacities and the sets of possible worlds which make up the content of her psychological states? Again, the explanation could have something to do with the subject's cognitive architecture? and more precisely, with the fact that conceptual states have conceptual *vehicles* for their contents.[41] Perhaps, this is what Stalnaker has in mind when he says that "internal representations" "which

[40] Tim Crane (1992: 147) suggests that conceptual psychological *states* have parts: they are constituted by concepts or conceptual capacities. In the same passage, Crane admits that *contents* (and not just states) can have elements or parts in common, and that these common elements are concepts. Indeed, though he asserts that *states* have concepts as their parts, the explanation for this claim appears to have something to do with the fact that the *contents* of such states have concepts as their parts (*ibid.*). More recently, Crane (2001: 152) has suggested that a *conceptual state* is one which requires possession of concepts that are *canonical* for the content of that state. By "canonical concepts", he means concepts "which *essentially* characterize a given content" he says that, for example, the concept *PIG* is canonical for the content that (pigs fly) (*ibid.*). For some doubts about this notion of essential characterisation, see §3.4.3 below. More importantly, it had better not be the case that a given concept *C* is canonical for a given content *p* because *C* is a constitutive component of *p*.

[41] Some draw a distinction between the *representational content* of a psychological state and the *vehicle* of that content. The notion of "vehicle" is often introduced by analogy, on the model of linguistic entities like sentences. The sentence "Skippy is here" expresses the proposition that (Skippy is here). Whether written on paper or spoken, the sentence, we may assume, is a physical object or event, which serves as a means of conveying that content. In other words, the sentence is a *vehicle* for that proposition. Similarly, with psychological states: vehicles are supposed to be those properties of a psychological state which realize, "express", or "convey", its content.

Ëconstitute a language of thoughtËËcan be used to ËrepresentË or ËreferË to contents Ë984: 22-3Ë

The idea could then be that such internal representations or vehicles are themselves composed of conceptsË or at least, are intimately related with conceptual capacities. For instance, according to a popular view of concepts, concepts are concrete internal representations in a subjectËs brain Ësee §4.1Ë perhaps, concepts *are* vehicles Ëor a certain kind of vehicleË The important point is that, on such a view, it isnË *contents* that are conceptual. Rather, psychological *states* with the content that *p* can *have* such contents *in a way* that requires possession and deployment of concepts Ë*via* conceptual vehiclesË In other words, a conceptual state is a state whose content is conveyedË encoded, represented, referred to, or hadË *in a conceptual way*. This seems sufficiently distinct from the content view: it isnË a distinction between kinds of contents, but between types of psychological states, on the basis on the *way* in which they *have* their content.

This version of the state view might be spelt out along the following lines:

> ***Vehicle Conceptualism***
> The psychological state *M* of a subject *S* is *conceptual* if, *S* can be in *M* with the content that *p only if S* possesses the conceptual capacitiesË or conceptsË constitutive of the internal *vehicles* which realise, or convey, *p*.

Thus, on this view, if concepts themselves are taken to be certain kinds of concrete internal representations Ëor vehiclesË, then the difference between psychological states that have their content conceptually and those that have their content non-conceptually will amount to a difference between ËËstates whose vehicles are made up of such concepts, and ËËpsychological states whose vehicles are made up of different internal representations Ëthat is, distinct from conceptsË Hence, note that, strictly speaking, what is conceptual or non-conceptual, here, arenË states, but representational vehicles.[42]

[42] Given the analogy between vehicles and sentences Ësee the previous footnoteË, such vehicles will at least have certain syntactic Ëor structuralËproperties. In addition, since Stalnaker seems to think of them as Ëinner representationsËwhich ËrepresentËor Ërefer toËsets of possible worlds ËStalnaker, 1984: 22-3Ë, it seems clear that they have semantic properties too. The difference Ëand relationsËbetween psychological states Ëwith contentËand the vehicles of their content is not entirely straightforward. But it might at least come to the following: ËËwhile vehicles can be individuated solely in terms of their syntactic Ëand semanticËproperties, states are individuated at least partially in terms of the type of state that they are; ËiËwhile psychological states can be conscious, vehicles usually arenË; ËiiËwhile the sort of psychological

For this reason, it isn't entirely clear how such a proposal fits with the *state view*. At first sight, the distinction between the *content view* and the *state view* seems to rest on a contrast between those interpretations of Conceptualism according to which Conceptualism makes a claim about the nature of *perceptual representation*, and interpretations where Conceptualism makes a claim about the kind of psychological *state* that experiences are supposed to be. One natural understanding of is that the issue concerns some other, *non-representational*, property or properties of experiences.

On this way of viewing the distinction, *Vehicle Conceptualism* seems to fall on the side of the *content view* at least as much as it falls on the side of the *state view* since it locates the dispute as one about the representational properties of experiences or some of them. Stalnaker himself seems to think of vehicles as internal *representations*. As such, they must contribute in some way to perceptual representation. In this respect, then, it is unclear why Vehicle Conceptualism offers a satisfactory way to develop the state view. At best, Vehicle Conceptualism seems to be an instance of neither the content view, nor the state view.[43]

Hence, it remains somewhat unclear how the state view is to be understood as a way of fleshing out the dispute between Conceptualists and their foes. The two proposals considered so far don't quite succeed in clarifying the notion of a conceptual state that is, in such a way that this notion has nothing to do with the content of such states. So much, then, for the state view: unless its proponents can offer a clear specification of the difference between conceptual and non-conceptual states, which does not depend on two different kinds of content, it is hard to see why the state view ought to be preferred. If,

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states we are concerned with have content, vehicles don't *have* content: they represent or convey it; while any state with content requires some vehicle for that content, the presence of such a vehicle may not be sufficient to determine which psychological state a subject is in. On this ground, we can think of vehicles, either as components of contentful psychological states, or at least as underlying conditions of such states.

[43] There is, of course, a weaker reading of the distinction between the content view and the state view: while the content view is concerned solely with whether or not there are two kinds of content, the state view has to do with any other feature which might differentiate experiences and thoughts. This reading might assume that psychological states have two kinds of semantic or representational properties: those representational properties which constitute the content of a state, and those representational properties which are the vehicle of the content of that state which represent that content. One difficulty I have with is that, if vehicles are themselves representational, why have them represent contents rather than objects, properties, etc? Why do we even need contents on such a view?

admittedly, there are difficulties in clarifying the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents along the lines of the content view, there doesn't seem to be any less difficulty in interpreting such a dispute in terms of the state view.

In chapter 5, I'll specify a notion of 'conceptual content' which makes it clear why the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is about the nature of the content of experience. In the remainder of this chapter, I briefly consider a final point about why talk of the state view has become prominent in the literature' for the wrong reasons, I think.

### 3.4.2. *How not to Characterise Conceptualism*

It's important to keep in mind that most participants in the dispute seem to endorse the content view. However, the literature on Conceptualism is littered with unfortunate formulations of Conceptualism. This has led many commentators to think that some Conceptualists 'or their critics' endorse the state view '.e., without the content view' Take, for instance, Brewer's own formulation of Conceptualism '999: 149'

> A mental state is *conceptual* if and only if it has a representational content that is characterizable only in terms of concepts which the subject himself must possess and which is of a form which enables it to serve as a premise or the conclusion of a deductive argument, or of an inference of some other kind 'e.g., inductive or abductive' 'Brewer, 1999: 149'

For him, the question seems to be whether a 'mental state' is conceptual. And he claims that such a state will be conceptual just in case it is the 'kind' of state whose content satisfies certain conditions. But note that, even though Brewer is explicitly concerned with 'conceptual *states*', it's clear that such states count as 'conceptual' in virtue of certain properties of their content.[44] However, the important question is whether the properties thus identified suffice to support the content view' in the sense that Conceptualists claim that experience has a special *kind of content*, distinct from a non-conceptual kind of content.

[44] In this respect, some commentators might have been a bit quick to jump to interpretations in terms of the *state view* as soon as the notion of a conceptual 'state' was mentioned. To repeat, the question is not whether they are such states. It's whether such 'conceptual' states can be explained without reference to the way in which they represent the environment.

Here, I'll focus exclusively on the condition that the content of a conceptual state is characterisable only in terms of concepts the subject possesses – the reason being that this is the only condition having anything to do explicitly with concepts.[45] Call this condition the 'Condition of Conceptual Characterisability' or 'CCC'[46]

Alex Byrne (2005: 233) points out that such a condition is too weak to entail the content view. Suppose that a subject is in a psychological state the content of which is *not* characterisable *only* in terms of concepts possessed by the subject. It may be that the subject does not possess all the relevant concepts required to characterise that content. Or it may be that, even if she does possess such concepts, there is another perfectly acceptable way to characterise the content of that psychological state in terms of concepts the subject does not possess (see below). If so, 'CCC' entails that such a state is non-conceptual' in the sense specified by 'CCC'. However, it is compatible with such a possibility that the content of that state is entirely composed of concepts: it is conceptual in that 'metaphysical' sense. On this ground, Byrne suggests that condition 'CCC' had better be taken as a specification of the state view rather than the content view: it fails to specify a difference between two *kinds* of content.[47]

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[45] I assume that to *characterise* the content that *p* is to provide a description of that content. Note that, at least, 'CCC' does not require that *S* herself be able to characterise the content of her own mental state. It only says that such content can only be characterised 'by anyone' in terms of *S*'s concepts. It seems plausible to require that, if the *content* of a psychological state is conceptual, the subject must have the necessary concepts to *understand* that content. It is unclear why one must require that, in addition, *S* must be able to provide a description of the content of her own mental state.

[46] Note that Brewer is not alone in specifying Conceptualism in such a way. For a similar emphasis on content that *must* be characterised in terms of concepts the subject possesses, see, e.g., Bermúdez (2003a). I'll discuss some of the difficulties surrounding the other conditions in chapter 6.

[47] Perhaps, this is a bit too quick. It may be that the only good reason why the content *p* of a subject *S*'s psychological state is characterisable only in terms of concepts *S* possesses is that *p* is composed of concepts *S* possesses. Hence, a characterisation of *p* would have to mention the concepts composing *p*. Indeed, Brewer seems to assume that the content of conceptual states is 'constituted' by concepts (Brewer, 2005: 219). But if this is indeed what Brewer has in mind, it is puzzling why he doesn't mention it explicitly, instead of using this problematic condition of Conceptual Characterisability 'which, by itself, fails to entail anything about the nature of such contents'.

Part of the difficulty with such a condition is that it is also too strong. Assume Ëwith the content viewË that there is a kind of content that is conceptual, in the sense that it is entirely composed of concepts. Suppose that *S* is in a state with the content that *p*, where *p* is constituted by concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$ Ëand by these concepts onlyË, and that *S* possesses concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$. Why require that the content of *S*Ës psychological state be characterisable *only* in terms of concepts *S* *possesses*Ë and, in particular, *only* in terms of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$?

Surely, a theorist might accurately characterise the content of *S*Ës psychological state in terms of concepts *S* does not possess. That is, she might use theoretical concepts like *CONTENT* or *CONCEPT*Ë or even more precise concepts like *FREGEAN CONTENT*, *SETS OF POSSIBLE WORLDS* and *ABSTRACT CONCEPT*. She might also use theoretical concepts standing for *S*Ës own conceptsË like the concept: *S*Ës *CONCEPT* $C_2$. Alternatively, such a theorist might use a combination of *S*Ës own concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$, together with a variety of theoretical concepts. Her characterisation of the content of *S*Ës mental state may be the most detailed and accurate on offer, in that it perfectly describes the content of *S*Ës mental state, as well as the concepts that compose that content.

Though these possibilities violate ËCCCË, they are perfectly compatible with the idea that the content so characterised is conceptual Ënamely, composed of concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$, which the subject possessesË Perhaps, condition ËCCCË should only say that a conceptual content must be characterisable in terms, which *at least* involve *S*Ës conceptsË but other concepts can be used too. However, even *that* is too strong. As we have seen, our theorist might use only her theoretical concepts of *S*Ës concepts to describe the content of *S*Ës mental state, without actually using *S*Ës own concepts $C_1$, $C_2$ and $C_3$.

In this respect, one could deny that such a condition of Conceptual Characterisability ËCCCËapplies to the *content* of *S*Ës psychological state and still accept that such a content conceptual Ën the sense of the content viewË This suggests that BrewerËs characterisation of Ëconceptual contentËis far from satisfactory.[48]

[48] There is, however, a weaker reading of ËCCCËwhich is compatible with the scenario described in the text: to be characterisable only *in terms* of concepts the subject possesses might mean that a description of the content of the subjectËs mental state must at least *refer to* the subjectË concepts Ëwithout necessarily using themË In which case, this version of ËCCCËavoids the difficulty raised above.

*Wrapping up:* In this chapter, I have reviewed some answers to questions about the nature of mental contentË question **Q1**. And I have attempted to assuage two kinds of worries about the notion of Ëconceptual contentËand the role it plays in the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents:

> ***Sceptical worry #1.*** Both Conceptualists and their opponents presuppose a particular Ëfregean Ë theory of content. As a result, the question as to whether perceptual experiences have conceptual content is very narrow and local. In particular, such a question doesnË make sense if one presupposes some other theory of content.

> ***Sceptical worry #2.*** It is a mistake to think that the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents has anything to do with the representational content of perceptual experiences. In fact, such a dispute concerns the kind of *state* that perceptual experiences are.

Against the first worry, I have suggested that, if Ëconceptual contentËmeans Ëcontent composed of conceptsË, such a notion is in fact available, in principle at least, to other theories of contentË not just to a fregean theory. I have also given some reasons to think that, even if the notion of Ëconceptual contentËdid require a fregean theory of content, it wouldnË be such a terrible thing after allË given that a fregean theory seems to provide the best account of mental content.

In turn, if the first worry can be addressed, there is no reason to take the second worry seriouslyË since the motivation for the state view was the alleged difficulty in making sense of the idea that there could be two distinct *kinds* of content, one conceptual, the other non-conceptual. In addition, I have argued that the notion of a Ëconceptual stateËmakes little sense when it does not stand for psychological states, the *content* of which is conceptual.

CHAPTER 4

# *Concepts and Conceptual Capacities*

Conceptualists, we have seen, impose certain restrictions on the representational content of perceptual experiences. These restrictions have something to do with the possession and application Ëor deploymentË of concepts. This chapter attempts to explain how such restrictions are to be properly understood. In this respect, IË consider some answers to:

**Q2:** What are concepts and conceptual capacities? What does it mean for such capacities to be operative in a psychological state?

I begin with a few words about the metaphysics of concepts ËS4.1Ë then introduce the notion of Ëconceptual capacityËand show how it is central to an elucidation of Ëconceptual contentËËS4.2Ë IË consider some of the conceptual capacities that might be deemed relevant to the conceptualist thesis ËS4.3Ë In due course ËS4.3.2Ë IË explain how this can serve to address the third sceptical worry alluded to earlier:

> ***Sceptical worry #3.*** The dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents is supposed to be about the nature of perceptual experiences and their representational content. So, it had better not turn out to be that, in fact, such a dispute arises simply because different theories of concepts are taken for granted by each side.

And I respond to a related objection in ËS4.4Ë

## 4.1. Metaphysical Considerations

What kinds of entities are concepts? There are three basic types of answers to this question. According to the traditional view, concepts are abstract objects like propositions and numbers. And like propositions and numbers, concepts are ËËcausally inert and ËiËneither spatially nor temporally located Ëon a traditional understanding of abstractnessË[1]

[1] Thus, this kind of view usually needs to be supplemented with an account of how subjects Ëand some of their psychological statesËare related to such abstract entitiesË how it is that subjects grasp, understand, or possess concepts.

According to the second approach, concepts are concrete: they are spatio-temporally located and, possibly, even causally efficacious. On one version of this view (the most popular one), concepts are concrete psychological entities. But, of course, to say that concepts are concrete is not to say that they are psychological: in principle, they could be something else.

There are at least two different ways to understand the idea that concepts are psychological. First, concepts might be taken to be representations in a subject's head (or brain). Again, there are many different versions of this view.[2] Concrete psychological representations could be (1) token symbols in a language of thought, (2) neurons or groups thereof in a connectionist network, (3) mental images or proxotypes, (4) prototypes or exemplars, (5) theories (constituted, presumably, by sets of beliefs), and lots of other possible candidates.[3] Hence, to say that concepts are concrete psychological representations is not to say very much, as yet, about the kinds of things that concepts are.

But concepts *qua* concrete psychological entities might not be representations: rather, they could be identified with or reduced to sets of psychological capacities. This is the third approach to the metaphysics of concepts.[4] Again, though, to say that concepts are psychological capacities is not to say much about the kinds of capacities concepts are identified with.

The question as to what concepts are, metaphysically speaking, remains largely open. In particular, the dispute between different psychological theories of concepts (prototypes, proxotypes, tokens in a language of thought, etc.) rages on, and at this point, little consensus seems in sight. This, however, is no cause for concern. In an attempt to specify the conceptualist thesis, we can afford to remain neutral on the question of the metaphysical status of concepts. Here is why.

Conceptualists like McDowell and Brewer make a claim about a given type of psychological state (perceptual experiences) and about the nature of one of

[2] So when I write "concrete psychological representation", don't just think "Aha! Tokens in a language of thought."

[3] For concepts as tokens in a language of thought, see Fodor (1998). For concepts as proxotypes, see Prinz (2002). And for a good survey of the other options, see Laurence and Margolis (1999), as well as the various essays reproduced in their collection.

[4] Perhaps, this is the kind of view Alex Byrne has in mind when he talks about the "pleonastic" conception of concepts (Byrne, 2005: 232). On this view, according to Byrne, to have the concept of KANGAROO is simply to be able to think of kangaroos. This is also sometimes called the "Wittgensteinian" conception of concepts.

its properties Ëepresentational contentË Conceptualists seem to impose certain conditions on the content of that experience. For instance, in order to have a visual experience representing a kangaroo, Conceptualists insist, a perceiver must *possess some* concept that applies to kangaroosË such as the concept *KANGAROO*.

Focus on the *possession* of concepts allows Conceptualists to be neutral about the metaphysics of concepts. Whether concepts are abstract entities, concrete psychological representations, or sets of psychological capacities Ëor something elseË, such entities ought to be the sorts of things that can be *possessed* by subjects. If so, the conceptualist thesis can be considered more or less independently from questions about the metaphysics of concepts.

Furthermore, if what matters for Conceptualists and their opponents is the *possession* of concepts and how the possession of such concepts influences what experiences represent, itË unlikely that the dispute results *merely* from different metaphysical assumptions about the nature of concepts. This helps to neutralise the third sceptical worry mentioned above: given that the metaphysics of concepts isnË directly relevant to the ConceptualistsËconcerns, there is little chance that the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics owes simply to a metaphysical divergence about the nature of concepts.

However, a related worry looms. Perhaps, the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents isnË solely due to different assumptions about the metaphysics of concepts, but rather owes to the fact that each side presupposes a different theory of *concept-possession* Ëinformed, perhaps, by different theories of conceptsË Yet, the dispute was supposed to be a substantive disagreement over the nature of perceptual representation. In the next section, I suggest that this version of *sceptical worry #3* can be set aside too.

### 4.2. Conceptual Capacities and Concept}Possession

What does it take to *possess* a concept? To answer this, ask first what role Ëif anyËconcepts tend to play in a subjectË psychological life. Concepts, it seems, play an essential role in thinking and reasoning. To make this point slightly more precise, compare two subjects: Bob and Pauline. Suppose that, while Pauline possesses the concept *KANGAROO*, Bob doesnË Ëhe has no idea what kangaroos are, has never seen or heard of any such creaturesË The question is: what would the possession of this concept usually allow Pauline to do, which Bob cannot do?

First, Pauline can *understand* and entertain the contents of thoughts about kangaroos and sentences expressing such thoughts while Bob can. Pauline, unlike Bob, can also *apply* the concept KANGAROO to certain objects and thus form new thoughts with new contents about kangaroos. This means, for instance, that Pauline can *identify* a kangaroo when she sees one: her possession of such a concept requires that she knows what kangaroos look like. This also means that Pauline can separate kangaroos from non-kangaroos she can *discriminate* them. And Pauline can draw inferences about kangaroos: she can, for instance, infer from her belief that Skippy is a kangaroo the belief that Skippy is an animal.

There may be many other things that possession of such a concept allows Pauline to do. But I'll stick to this limited list for now. These are things Bob cannot do, precisely because he lacks such a concept.[5] Such a list helps to specify the *functional role* of the concept KANGAROO: the role the concept plays in Pauline's cognitive life. The list mentions certain psychological capacities Pauline is likely to have and display in relation with such a concept. It also specifies the kinds of thoughts and cognitive processes in which the concept KANGAROO is likely to manifest itself.[6]

This connection between the *possession* of concepts and certain *psychological capacities* can be used to specify a relatively neutral account of concept-possession. To possess a concept, on this proposal, is to have certain relevant psychological capacities.[7] This is not to say that having such capacities is all

[5] Capacities like the above often serve as the basis for *ascriptions* of concept-possession. For instance, if Pauline manifestly displays some of the capacities in the list, her behaviour provides a strong though perhaps defeasible reason to think that she possesses the concept *KANGAROO*. Conversely, Bob's obvious inability to perform any of these tasks is a strong indication that he lacks such a concept.

[6] It may be that different kinds of concepts have slightly different functional roles and so, come with different lists of associated capacities. For instance, subjects may possess some concepts deferentially, by relying on the expert's usage: thus, Judy might possess the concept *QUARK*, though she is not able identify or discriminate quarks from other things. Some concepts and not just their possession are also different: Jacqueline, like most of us, possesses the concept of conjunction *AND*. But it's unlikely she applies that concept to *objects*, or that there is much identifying and discriminating involving precisely that concept.

[7] What about language? One often hears the complaint that both Conceptualists and their opponents presuppose that concept-possession is determined in some important way by the capacity to express such concepts in words. See, e.g., Crane 2001: 153 and Luntley 1999: 304. The complaint is ill-founded. Note that Christopher Peacocke 2001b: 243 is explicit that '[the] connections between concepts, and, for instance, language have to be earned by further

there is to possessing a conceptË but itË at least that much. It imposes a necessary condition upon the possession of a given concept *C*. Call the relevant psychological capacities *conceptual capacities*Ë these intuitively differ from other psychological capacities like the capacity to feel pain, or the capacity for chronic depression, which have presumably little to do with concepts.

The proposal is relatively neutral because it can be common ground between different theories of concepts that possession of a concept *C* necessarily comes with certain psychological capacities. Such a connection holds whether ËaËthe possession of a concept *C* is *constituted* by such capacities, whether ËbËthe possession of a concept *C* requires such capacities in order to grasp that concept,[8] or whether ËcËhaving conceptsË *qua* tokens in a language of thoughtË makes it possible to perform various operations with these tokens.[9]

Now that we have some idea of what the possession of a concept amounts to, can we assuage the sceptical worry alluded to earlier? Not quite. Though Conceptualists and their opponents might agree that possessing a concept is a matter of having certain conceptual capacities, they could still disagree as to *which capacities* are required for the possession of concepts. And so, the sceptic might insist that the dispute could still collapse: that the nature of the disagreement between Conceptualists and their foes is not really about the perceptual content of experience, but about which capacities are necessary the possession of concepts.

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argumentË ËSee also Peacocke, 1992: 3Ë As for McDowell, although he rejects a one-to-one mapping between concepts and linguistic expressions, he seems prepared to embrace the idea that belonging to a linguistic community is essential for the acquisition of a wide range of concepts ËMcDowell, 1994: 124-6Ë This is not to say, however, that the capacity to express a concept in language is necessary for possession of that concept. On this set of issues, see BermËdez Ë2003bË

[8] For instance, a fregean might think that grasping *C* is itself dependent on the acquisition of such capacitiesË or alternatively, that having grasped *C* bestows certain conceptual capacities on a subject.

[9] And since a subjectËs ability to perform such operations is a conceptual capacity ËsayË, it will also be the case that, on such a conception of concepts, the possession of a concept necessarily comes with the having of certain capacities. For the importance of a theory of the *possession* of concepts for a general theory of concepts, see Peacocke Ë1992Ë For the view that concepts are mental particulars, the possession of which is not determined by psychological capacities, but rather makes such capacities possible: see Fodor Ë1998: ch.1; 2003: ch.1; 2004Ë, and PeacockeËs response Ë2004bË

As we saw in chapter 2, McDowell also requires of conceptual capacities that they must be Ëoperative Ë in perceptual experiences ËMcDowell, 1994: 66Ë[10] What does that mean? And why does he say that? I will suggest that an answer to these questions helps to answer the sceptic.

## 4.3. Conceptual Deployment

Thus, insofar as Conceptualists are concerned, the central question isnËt just about what concepts a subject of experience possesses. Rather, the question is: what concepts must such a subject *deploy* in having a given experience? Before I explain how this can serve to silence the sceptic ËS4.3.2Ë, a word about what it means to *deploy* a concept, and why this is relevant to the conceptualist thesis.

### 4.3.1. *How to Exercise Conceptual Capacities*

First, an ontological point. Like most psychological capacities, those associated with concepts can be regarded as dispositional properties of a subject. Hence, a subject *S* might have a capacity associated with a certain concept *C*, and not manifest Ëor exercise Ë that capacity at all times. However, when she does manifest or exercise it, we can say that *S* is *deploying* the concept *C*Ë and so, to follow McDowell, that her conceptual capacity is Ëoperative Ë*in* a certain psychological state. Thus, on this view, the deployment of a concept is nothing more than the exercise of a certain psychological capacity associated with that concept.

Why add the requirement that conceptual capacities must be Ëoperative Ëin a given psychological state? The main reason is that, if the content of an experience is conceptual, appealing to what concepts the subject of that experience possesses isnËt quite enough to specify the content of that experience. Indeed, this holds for any psychological state with conceptual content. To see this, suppose that, at time *t*, a subject *S* gets to form a conscious judgement about Skippy the kangaroo. Suppose also that *S* possesses many distinct concepts applicable to Skippy: for instance, the concepts *SKIPPY*, *KANGAROO*, *MARSUPIAL*, *FUNNY-LOOKING ANIMAL*, *AUSTRALIAN ICON*, *HERO OF THE èSKIPPYè TELEVISION SERIES*, *ANNOYING PEST IN AUNTY PAULINEÈS BACKYARD*, etc. Such a judgement involves concepts: it involves a way of thinking ofË of representingË Skippy, as well as a way of thinking of the properties or features such a judgement ascribes to Skippy. But which waysË that is, which concept or concepts? An

[10] Or that perceptual experiences are Ëconceptual episodesË Ë1998: 438Ë; Ëactualisations of conceptual capacitiesËËibid.Ë

answer to this question cannot just depend on the concepts *S* possessesË she possesses many. Rather, it will depend on which concept *S* actually *deploys in* her judgement about Skippy. But deployment of a concept, we have seen, is simply the manifestation Ëor exerciseË of certain psychological capacities associated with that concept. Hence, which concept *S* deploys will depend on which psychological capacities *S* exercises while forming her judgement.[11]

Of course, itËs not sufficient that the subject merely deploys a concept *C* *simultaneously* with forming a certain judgement that *p*. After all, *C* might have nothing to do with *p*. Instead, *C* might be related to the content *q* of some other psychological state, which *S* is in *at the same time* as she forms the judgement that *p*. Thus, the subjectËs judgement that *p* must be the *locus*Ë as it wereË of her deployment of concept *C*. What matters here is that *which* conceptËsËa subject deploys *in* a certain psychological state *determines* the content of that state. In other words, the conceptual capacities *S* exercises *in* forming a judgement about Skippy contribute to determining *how* she thinks of Skippy. Such determination can be captured modally: if the subject had deployed a different conceptË by exercising conceptual capacities associated with that conceptË the content of her judgement would have been different.

This explains why McDowell focuses on conceptual capacities that are operative *in* experience. Suppose that *S* sees Skippy. If Conceptualism is true, the following two constraints must at least apply to the content of SËs experience. First, if SËs experience represents Skippy, *S* must deploy *some* concept and apply it to Skippy. Which concept? Whatever concept *S* applies to Skippy.[12] Thus,

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[11] Another reason for talk of Ëoperative Ëconceptual capacities is ontological. Psychological capacities are *states*, whereas perceptual experiences are *events*. But the *exercises* of conceptual capacities are events too. Hence, the claim that, to perceive some *x*, one must *deploy* some concept *C* is in good standing, ontologically speaking. Note, however, that the need to specify which concepts a subject deploys in a given psychological state arises even for dispositional states like beliefs: the mere fact that a subject possesses certain concepts isnË sufficient to determine the content of such a dispositional belief.

[12] The assumption here is that there need be no Ëcorrect Ëconcept a thinker must deploy for a given object. Conceptualists, as we shall see in later chapters, do indeed seem to allow that more than one concept is in fact applicable to a given object. In this sense, there are no Ëanonical Ëconcepts for particular objects, properties, or kinds of things. One reason for this is that if Conceptualists required that a particular conceptË say KANGAROOË had to be deployed in an experience of Skippy, then any experience of Skippy where the subject failed to deploy such a concept for Skippy but instead applied some other conceptË say, ANIMALË would provide an easy counterexample to Conceptualism.

***Deployment Constraint***
For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, $S$'s perceptual experience $e$ at $t$ represents $x$ *only if* $S$ *deploys some* concept $C$ for $x$ in $e$ at $t$.

In order words, $S$ must exercise in experience some conceptual capacities associated with $C$. But in order for $S$ to deploy a concept like $C$ and exercise the relevant capacities, it must be the case that $C$ is a concept $S$ possesses. Hence,

***Possession Constraint***
For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, $S$'s perceptual experience $e$ at $t$ represents $x$ *only if* $S$ *possesses some* concept $C$ for $x$ at $t$.

In other words, $S$ must have some conceptual capacities associated with some concept $C$. These two constraints provide a way to specify what McDowell means by 'conceptual capacities' that are 'operative' in experience.

But now, the question is: if Conceptualism is true, *which* psychological capacities are the sorts of capacities that a subject can be plausibly expected to *exercise* in experience?

4.3.2. *Which Capacities?*

First, let's consider the case of judgements. When $S$ forms a new judgement about Skippy, there are many conceptual capacities $S$ might be exercising. For instance, $S$ might just be thinking of Skippy *as* a kangaroo. $S$ thus deploys the concept KANGAROO: she exercises her ability to think of Skippy *as* a kangaroo. But perhaps, $S$ formed her judgement by inference. She may have inferred that 'Skippy is a marsupial' from her beliefs that 'Skippy is a kangaroo' and that 'kangaroos are marsupials'. Here, she exercises the capacity to draw inferences involving the concept MARSUPIAL.

What about perceptual experiences? *Which* conceptual capacities can reasonably be taken to be exercised 'for' 'operative' in experience? An answer to this question will finally answer the sceptic' or so I suggest. The sceptic, recall, raises the following worry: is it really the case that Conceptualists and their opponents disagree over the nature of the representational content of perceptual experience, or is it rather that they simply presuppose different conceptions of what it takes to possess or deploy a concept?

We have seen that there can be agreement on the following: to possess a concept is 'at least' a matter of having certain conceptual capacities. But the sceptic might insist that Conceptualists and their opponents may still disagree

about which capacities are needed for possession of which conceptË a disagreement, the sceptic presses on, that may turn out to be the real source of the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics.

We now have a way to make that question more tractable. If Conceptualists and their foes can agree on *which* psychological capacities could plausibly be *exercised* in experience, they can agree on what it would take for a subject to deploy concepts *in* experience. So the question is: can there be common ground between Conceptualists and their critics about the exercise of *which* conceptual capacities count as the deployment of a concept *in* experience? I think there can be.

Suppose that *S* sees Skippy the kangaroo at time *t*, and that *S* deploys the concept KANGAROO *in* her experience of SkippyË she applies that concept to Skippy. Which conceptual capacities is *S* likely to exercise at *t* in relation to that concept? She might be thinking of Skippy *as* a kangaroo.[13] But this doesnË really help: thinking of *o as C* appears to involve conceptualisationË the deployment of a concept *C*. The question was: what sorts of capacities *constitute* the deployment of such a concept *in* experience?

Presumably, *S* is able to *identify* Skippy *as* a kangaroo while seeing Skippy. So *S* can exercise such recognitional capacity in her experience *of* Skippy.[14] She might also be able to *discriminate* SkippyË *qua* kangarooË from other objects in her visual field that arenË kangaroos. And presumably, she can exercise that capacity too when she perceptually identifies Skippy *as* a kangaroo.

It is less likely, on the other hand, that *S* exercises her capacity to draw inferences involving the concept KANGAROO. Of course, drawing such inferences may be at play in forming new beliefs and judgements on the basis of

[13] A word about this locution. To say that *S* thinks of *x as* ...Ë or that she identifies ËecognisesË*x as* ..., or sees *x as* ..., etc.Ë is usually taken to be completed by a concept which specifies the way in which *S* thinks of ËeesË*x as*. Thus, it is often assumed that the location Ëee asËinvolves conceptualisation on the part of the subject. I shall go along with this assumption in what follows Ëinless I specify otherwiseË Note however that Ëee asËcan also be used to specify the *way* in which *x* appears to *S*. And this reading need not entail that the *way* in which *x* appears to *S* involves conceptualisation of *x* on *S*Ë part. To repeat, whether or not experience requires conceptualisation is at the heart of the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics. And so, one cannot just settle that dispute by a mere stroke of the pen.

[14] Here, I assume that the ability to *identify x* as an *F* is the same thing as the ability to *recognise x* as an *F*. Recognition in this sense does not require that *S* has previously seen *x* and recognises it as the very same *x*. In chapter 9, IË have more to say about various notions of recognition and re-identification. But for now, this imprecise talk of Ëecognitional capacityËor Ëapacity to identifyËwill suffice for my purposes.

experiences. But it doesn't seem like such a capacity is in any way required in *having* a perceptual experience that represents Skippy (see, e.g., McDowell, 1994: 48-9, n.6).

Thus, Conceptualists and their critics can at least agree that, *if* a concept *C* is deployed in experience, its deployment manifests itself mainly in the exercise of capacities like (i) *identifying x as C*, and (ii) *discriminating x* from other objects *y*, *w*, *z*, ..., to which *C* doesn't apply. Perhaps, other capacities may be exercised in experience. But this list is controversial enough. It is sufficient to ensure enough common ground between Conceptualists and their opponents about what it *would* mean to deploy a concept *in* experience.[15] At least, it's enough to neutralise the third sceptical worry (or so I suggest).

[15] There is a question about *how* conceptual capacities are exercised *in* experience. McDowell (1994: 10-11; see also Brewer, 1999: 185-6) insists that, on his view, the deployment of concepts in experience is, as he puts it, 'passive'. What this means, I take it, is that the perceiver need not control *how* she conceptualises what she experiences, or voluntarily deploy this rather than that concept for the object of her experience. Perhaps, he also means to suggest that deployment of concepts in experience is unreflective. This notion of 'passive' conceptual deployment is mainly supposed to mark a contrast with thoughts and judgements ('active') where concepts are deployed in an 'active' manner, it seems. However, I find it difficult to grasp what such contrast amounts to. In particular, it's unclear whether thoughts are really any less passive than experiences, and in what sense they could be so.

*Passivity* might mean that a subject is in a passive psychological state ω just in case it is possible for her to be in ω without having decided (reflectively and voluntarily) to be in ω. Experiences are clearly passive in this sense. But of course, many thoughts are passive in that sense too. Beliefs, in particular, are often formed and endorsed not as the result of a voluntary and conscious decision, but as the (causal?) outcome of perceptual states, intuitions, inferences, or someone else's testimony. Thoughts had in periods of reverie are passive too. Perhaps, then, passivity means something stronger: a psychological state ω is passive just in case it is impossible to decide to be (or not to be) in ω. Again, though, many beliefs are passive in that sense, as are obsessive thoughts, for instance. Worse, some experiences are not passive in that stronger sense. Given that there is a red kangaroo in your immediate environment and that you know it (and it's daylight, and you're not blind, etc.), you can decide to have an experience of that kangaroo by directing your gaze towards it and focus your attention upon the kangaroo (see McDowell, 1994: 10, n.8). Perhaps, the difference is supposed to concern the deployment of concepts specifically, in the sense that one can decide to *think* of a kangaroo in terms of the species concept MACROPUS RUFUS. Then again, isn't it possible to decide (or at least try) to *see* Jastrow's duck/rabbit figure as a rabbit, or to see the black spot on the sofa as a curled black cat rather than a cushion?

Perhaps, the alleged difference between experiences and thoughts is one of scope. That is, which experiences one can decide to have is constrained by the range of objects (and properties) in one's environment. Thoughts, on the other hand, are not so constrained: one can decide to think about any object. Even so, such a difference has little to do with the passivity/activity of

Conceptualists will insist that, necessarily, if a subject *S* has an experience representing *x*, she will thereby identify *x as C* Ëfor some concept *C S* possessesË and discriminate it from other non-*C* things in her perceptual field. Opponents of Conceptualism, on the other hand, will retort that this is not necessary: that it is possible for a subject *S* to have an experience of *x* without identifying or discriminating *x as C*, or *as* any other concept *C**. In other words, it is possible to experience something without identifying or discriminating it *in any way*Ë that is, without deploying *any* concept for *x*.[16]

This difference between Conceptualists and their opponents finally answers the third sceptical worry: Conceptualists and their critics can agree about ËaË what concept-possession is, and about ËbËthe exercise of which conceptual capacities count Ëor would countË as the deployment of a concept in experience, and still disagree about ËcËwhether the exercise of such capacities is necessary for a subject *S* to have a perceptual experience representing *x*. Therefore, itËs not true that the dispute between Conceptualists and their foes collapses because it rests on different assumptions about ËaËand ËbË

### 4.4. Objections and Replies

To recapitulate: I have just argued that ËËwe can spell out the ConceptualistsË talk of concepts and conceptual capacities as follows: if the representational content of an occurrent psychological state is conceptual, on such a view, the subject of such a state must at least *possess* and *deploy* certain concepts. I have also argued that ËiËwe need not rely on a theory of concepts to specify this claim. Rather, we need to appeal to the fact that the subject has certain conceptual *capacities* associated with a concept *C*, the exercise of which counts as deployment of that concept. And I have claimed that ËiiËthe sorts of conceptual capacities to be plausibly deployed in experience are capacities to

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thoughts and experiencesË as the *mode* in which these states arise. It doesnË show that experiences Ëas opposed to thoughtsËcannot be had as the result of voluntary and reflective processes, nor does it show that thoughts Ëas opposed to experiencesËcannot be had as the result of involuntary and unreflective processes. Perhaps, the notion of Ëpassivity Ëhas nothing to do with voluntary and reflective control over oneË mental states Ëhough, see McDowell, 1998: 440Ë if so, itË be nice to know what it really amounts to.

[16] To insist, the point is not that itË possible, for *some* concept *C*, that *S* experiences *x* without identifying or discriminating *x as C*. This is trivial and even Conceptualists can accept such a claim. The point opponents of Conceptualism make is that itË possible, for *all* concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ...., $C_n$ Ëpossessed by SËthat *S* experiences *x* without identifying *x as* $C_1$ or $C_2$ or $C_3$ or .... or $C_n$.

*identify*, *recognise*, and *discriminate*, the objects and properties represented in experience.[17]

Finally, I have suggested that ËvËfocus on these sorts of capacities helps to solve the third sceptical worry alluded to at the start of this chapter. Conceptualists and their opponents can agree that, *if* concepts were deployed in experience, the manifestation of the relevant conceptual capacities would consist mainly in the identification Ëor recognitionËand discrimination of what is experienced. This, I have suggested, provides a helpful way to specify the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics, so that such a dispute doesnË turn out to be a disagreement merely about what it means to exercise conceptual capacities in experience, but about whether or not the exercise of such capacities in experience really imposes a necessary condition upon the representational content of experience.

Not everyone agrees with this way of silencing the sceptic. A.D. Smith writes:

> The suggestion that conceptualization is no more than a discriminatory capacity constitutes an empty trivialization of the notion of a concept. If *this* were all that is meant by saying that perception involves concepts, no one would ever have contested the viewË since, obviously, you have to be able to discriminate some things if you are to perceive at all. ËSmith, 2002: 111Ë

Smith admits that focus on the capacity to identify Ëor recogniseËthe objects and properties one perceives provides a more substantive characterisation of Conceptualism:

> If the conceptualist approach to perception is to be sufficiently interesting to warrant our attention, it must hold that the exercise of a concept is at least the exercise of a *recognitional* capacityË that to possess a concept is to be in a position to *classify* objects. ËSmith, 2002: 111Ë

But, he goes on to argue:

> [...], an immediate problem with the suggestion that perception essentially involves the exercise of recognitional capacities is that, taken at face value, it is simply false. We can perceive something and wholly fail to classify it, fail to perceive that it is any particular *kind* of thing at all. Striking instances of this are provided by patients suffering from certain forms of agnosia. ËSmith, 2002: 112Ë

[17] There is nothing remotely original in these three claims. They seem to capture the point of McDowellËs claim that conceptual capacities must be operative in experience. Various commentators have also noted that Conceptualists impose requirements like the above Ësee, e.g., Martin, 1992a: 758; Vision, 1998: 425; Smith, 2002: 111Ë

Here, Smith appears to raise something like the following challenge. First horn: Conceptualists insist that, for a subjectÏs experience to represent an object *x*, the subject must discriminate that object from other objects. In this case, Conceptualism is trivially true: isnÏt it obvious that we discriminate when we see? Second horn: Conceptualists insist that, for an experience to represent *x*, the subject of that experience must identify and recognise *x*. But then, Conceptualism is obviously false: cases of associative visual agnosia establish that recognition isnÏt necessary for perception. And so, Conceptualism is doomed to oscillate between ÏaÏtrivial truth and ÏbÏobvious falsehood.[18]

Smith has a point. ItÏs not quite enough to say that, according to Conceptualists, a perceptual experience of *x* necessarily requires identification and discrimination of *x* as falling under some concept *C*. We must also ensure that the notions of ÏidentificationÏand ÏdiscriminationÏat play are substantial enoughÏ on pain, again, of trivialising the conceptualist thesis. On the other hand, as I shall argue, Smith is wrong to think that specifications of such notions make the resulting characterisation of Conceptualism obviously false.

IÏl answer SmithÏs challenge in two steps: first, I consider the first horn and the alleged problem with discriminatory capacities Ï§4.4.1Ï; and then, IÏl show why Smith is wrong about the second horn Ï§4.4.2Ï

4.4.1. *Two Notions of Discrimination*

In response to the first horn, we need to distinguish two notions of perceptual discrimination. Following Dretske Ï1969Ï; IÏl call the first notion ÏdifferentiationÏÏthough the characterisation of that notion of discrimination is my own, and differs partly from DretskeÏÏ

***Differentiation***

*S* perceptually differentiates *x* from *y if* ÏÏÏSÏs experience *e* represents *x* and *y*, ÏiÏ*e* represents *x* and *y* differently, and ÏiiÏthe representational difference

[18] This challenge differs from the third sceptical worry considered earlier. That worry was concerned with the possibility that the disagreement between Conceptualists and their foes is merely terminologicalÏ that it arises, not out of a substantial divergence about the nature of perceptual content, but from different assumptions about concepts, concept-possession, or the deployment of concepts. SmithÏs worry, on the other hand, concerns the possibility that there is no viable and substantial way of specifying Conceptualism. Of course, the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics would collapse too, as a result: given one specification of Conceptualism, such a view is trivial; given another, it is obviously false.

> between the perceptual representation of *x* and that of *y* is such that it can cause *S* to react differently to *x* and *y*.

Two distinct objects are perceptually discriminated in this sense, just in case they are represented differently in the subjectÏs experience, where such representational difference may cause behavioural differences in the perceiver. For instance, suppose *x* is represented as bright yellow and *y* as greyÏ or suppose that *x* is represented in motion while *y* appears to stand still: the different way in which these objects are visually represented may cause the subject to focus her attention on *x* rather than *y*, for instance.

Presumably, itÏs in this sense of discriminationÏ as differentiationÏ that Smith thinks of perception as obviously involving discrimination. Such a notion, however, must be distinguished from a stronger notion of conceptual discrimination, or Ïc-discriminationÏÏ the notion of ÏdiscriminationÏwhich, I assume, Conceptualists take on board:[19]

> ***c)discrimination***
> *S perceptually* c-discriminates *x* from *y if* ÏÏÏ*S* identifies *x* as an *F*, ÏiiÏ*S* identifies *y* as a *G*, and ÏiiiÏ*S* recognises the difference between *x* being *F* and *y* being *G*.

According to this notion of ÏdiscriminationÏ perceptual discrimination presupposes *identification* in clauses ÏÏÏand ÏiiÏ and *recognition* in ÏiiiÏ And, according to Conceptualists, identification and recognition are *conceptual capacities*. They are the sort of capacities the exercise of which counts as the application of concepts *F* and *G* to *x* and *y*, respectively.[20] Furthermore, the notion of recognition in clause ÏiiiÏ is different from mere perceptual recognition: itÏ not just the identification of something on the basis of experience. Rather, recognition of the difference between something being *F* and something being *G* amounts at least to the understanding that *F* and *G* are

[19] For various attempts to draw distinctions along similarÏ though not quite identicalÏ lines, see, e.g., Dretske Ï969: 23-9Ï Millar Ï000: 85-6Ï Peacocke, Ï983: 58Ï

[20] One might, of course, try to *rephrase* c-discrimination in terms of *perceiving x as F* and *perceiving y as G*, where this simply means that *x* is perceptually represented as being *F* and *y* as *G*. The resulting notion of Ïc-discriminationÏwould then be available to Non-conceptualists, insofar as perceiving *x as F* does not involve conceptual identification of *x* as *F*. But itÏ unclear whether this would give rise to a third alternative notion of ÏdiscriminationÏ or whether it simply collapses into the notion of ÏdifferentiationÏspecified above. More importantly, this is *not* the notion of Ïc-discriminationÏspecified in the text, where ÏidentificationÏand ÏecognitionÏare taken to be *conceptual capacities*Ï namely, the sort of capacities exercise of which counts as the deployment of the conceptÏsÏassociated with such capacities.

distinct concepts, which serve to represent different properties. Thus, on this understanding, *c-discrimination* requires Ëaëthe application of distinct concepts to the objects discriminated, as well as ËbËsome conceptual recognition of the difference between such conceptsË at least, of the fact that they are different, if not of the dimension along which they differ.

Presumably, given what he says about conceptual identification Ëor recognitionËin experience, Smith is not tempted to regard the claim that perception involves c-discrimination as trivial. But the notion of c-discrimination precisely captures what Conceptualists seem to mean by Ëperceptual discriminationË So itËs not true that Conceptualism is trivially true, if the view is defined in terms of the constraint that perceptual content require the exercise of c-discriminatory capacities. Indeed, Conceptualism construed in such a way is far from trivialË quite the opposite.

Here, we reach the source of a genuine disagreement between Conceptualists and their opponents. Conceptualists argue that perceptual differentiation is to be explained in terms of c-discrimination. That is, if two objects *x* and *y* are represented differently in experience, thatËs because, according to Conceptualists, *x* and *y* are *identified* as falling under distinct concepts. According to their critics, on the other hand, perceptual differentiation can occur in the absence of c-discrimination.[21]

### 4.4.2. *Conceptual Identification and Associative Visual Agnosia*

What about the second horn of SmithËs challenge? Here, Smith essentially rests his point on a puzzling case: patients suffering from so-called Ëassociative visual agnosiaË Though the symptoms classified under that heading differ slightly from subject to subject, associative visual agnosics are often taken to provide a classic example of visual perception without recognition Ëor identificationË Such subjects are usually characterised as follows:

> There are three criteria for membership in this category. The first is difficulty recognizing a variety of visually presented objects, as demonstrated by naming as well as such nonverbal tests of recognition such as grouping objects together according to their semantic category or gesturing to indicate their normal functions. The second criterion is normal recognition of objects through modalities other than visionË for example, by touching the object, hearing its characteristic sound, or being given a verbal definition of it. The third criterion is intact visual perception, or at least visual perception that seems

[21] Furthermore, on this view, perceptual differentiation is taken to be a necessary prerequisite for c-discrimination: that is, if conceptual discrimination is based on experience, it is based on perceptual differentiation, and not to be identified with it.

> adequate to the task of recognizing the object. This last criterion is usually tested by having patients copy objects or drawings that they cannot recognize. ËFarah, 2004: 69Ë

So, the argument goes, there can be perception without recognition Ëor identificationË as is shown by the case of associative visual agnosics. First, agnosics can see just as well as you and I, as is revealed by their capacity to draw Ëand copy drawings ofËwhat they see. Second, such subjects are unable to recognise or identify what they see. This is not merely a verbal deficitË an inability to name what they see, for instanceË but a truly cognitive one: agnosics are unable to group perceived objects according to their kind, or to imitate and gesture at the function of such objects. Finally, itË not that such subjects are in fact ignorant of the kinds of objects they see, since they are able to recognise such objects *via* other sensory modalities. Hence, the argument concludes, what we have here is a genuine case of perfectly normal perceptual experience which is unaccompanied by conceptual identification and recognition.[22]

It would be nice, indeed, if Conceptualism could be refuted so easily. Unfortunately, Martha Farah Ë2000, 213*ff*; 2004, ch. 6Ë has made a very compelling case that things arenË so simple. In particular, she argues that visual associative agnosics do not in fact perceive things like you and meË and so, that they suffer not from a cognitive deficit to identify things, but primarily from a genuine perceptual deficit. This is shown, according to Farah, by the fact that, though associative agnosics produce perfect drawings and copies of what they see, the way in which they produce such drawings is often described as ËËvery slow and ËiËpiecemeal ËFarah, 2004: 74Ë There is also some evidence that agnosics fail a variety of perceptual tasks involving meaningless shapesË since the shapes are meaningless and do not have to be recognised or identified, such failures cannot be explained in terms of a failure to recognise what the subject sees Ë*ibid.*Ë

Finally, Farah argues:

> [...] the vast majority of their recognition errors are visual in nature, that is, they correspond to an object of similar shape rather than a semantically related object or an

[22] To avoid any possible misunderstanding, note that, in the passage quoted above, Smith Ë2002: 112Ëtalks mainly of *perception* without recognition, in connection with associated visual agnosia. Obviously, if he takes such cases to be at all relevant to the specification of ConceptualismË a thesis about the nature of perceptual *content*Ë Smith Ëlike all participants in this disputeËmust be assuming the following: if *S* perceives *x*, *S* has an experience *e* the content of which represents *x*.

> object with a similar-sounding name. For example, on four different occasions when I asked an associative agnosic to name a picture of a baseball bat, he made four different errors, each reflecting shape similarity: paddle, knife, baster, thermometer. [...] If the underlying impairment were in the visual processing of the stimulus, it seems intuitively plausible that the resulting errors would be Ënear missesËin visual similarity space. [...] Therefore, for those cases in which visual shape errors are found in the absence of semantic errors, it is likely that visual shape perception is at fault. ËFarah, 2004: 74-5Ë

FarahËs suggestion is that visual associative agnosia might in fact be explained by a loss of global spatial perceptionË or ËgestaltËperception:

> Their behavior invites interpretation in terms of hierarchical system of shape representation, whose lower-level part representations are relatively intact but whose higher-level integration of the parts is damaged or unavailable. ËFarah, 2004: 78Ë

This is supported by evidence that agnosics seem unable to distinguish between possible and impossible geometrical figures Ësee FIGURE A belowËË though they are able to copy both kinds of figures by copying their parts ËFarah, 2004: 77Ë Agnosics are also unable to perceive fragmented shapes and figures Ësee FIGURE B belowËË i.e., objects, some arbitrary parts of which have been deleted or occluded in a picture ËFarah, 2004: 78Ë

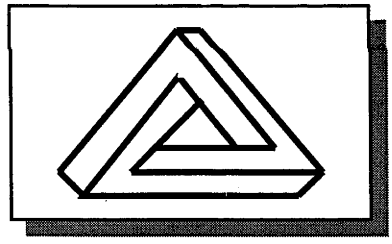


FIGURE A

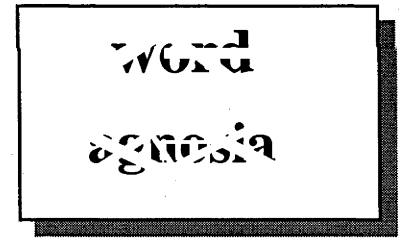



FIGURE B[23]

The significance of all this for SmithËs point is that itËs a mistake to infer that agnosics have intact visual experiences but fail to identify what they see, simply on the ground that they are able to produce good enough drawings of what they experience. The overall evidence seems to suggest, rather, that such subjects donËt see all that wellË in particular, they suffer from a deficit at the level of *global* spatial perception, in the way local spatial information is integrated. Such a deficit provides an alternative explanation of why agnosics fail to recognise what they experience. ItËs because the whole shape of the objects in front of them arenËt represented Ëor, at least, arenËt entirely, or

[23] See Farah Ë2004: 77, 79Ë

accurately representedËthat agnosics fail to identify these objects. However, the fact that their local spatial perception remains intact suffices to account for the fact that agnosics are able to produce good copies of such objects. If Farah is right, then, associative visual agnosia isnË an instance of normal perception without recognition. Rather, failures to recognise and identify are themselves explained by a perceptual deficit.

In any event, the case of visual associated agnosia fails to support SmithË contention that Conceptualism is obviously falseË if, as I have suggested, Conceptualism requires that a subjectË experience represents an object $x$ only if the subject identifies $x$. Recall that Conceptualists do not require that a subject *correctly* identifies any object $x$ represented in her experienceË they only require that a perceiver deploys *some* concept for $x$, if $x$ is represented in her experience. Thus, even if agnosics fail to correctly identity the *kind* of object they are presented with, they may still identify such objects in some way or other. They might identify what they experience *as objects*, or perhaps *as objects with a certain vague shape*. Or they might consistently misidentify one kind of objects Ëbaseball batsËfor other kinds of objects with roughly similar shapes Ëknifes, thermometersËË and of course, misidentification, even if incorrect, involves some kind of identification. Thus, the evidence from agnosics is entirely compatible with Conceptualism.[24] As I have characterised it, Conceptualism in no way entails that a subject must correctly identify what she experiences.

Fred Dretske Ë993/2000Ë has objected to such a characterisation of Conceptualism precisely on this ground. He writes:

[24] If Farah is right, the evidence from agnosics suggests that ËaËobject-identificationË that is, identification of the *kind* of object one is presented withË depends for an essential part on an accurate enough representation of the overall shape of such objects, and that ËbË in the case of agnosics, global spatial representation of the relevant sort is deficient, which explains their inability to identify the kinds of things they see. Note, however, that the evidence does not suggest that ËcË agnosicsËexperiences do not represent objects as such, or ËdËthat their experiences do not represent *in any way* the overall shape of objects. Some of the cases considered by Farah clearly indicate that agnosics can perceive the overall shape of objects *to some extent*: agnosicsËinability to identify the kind of object they see manifests itself partly in terms of the misidentification of a certain kind of object with a certain shape for other objects with a similar shape Ëe.g., a baseball bat misidentified as a knife, paddle or thermometerË See Farah Ë004: 74-5Ë This suggests that agnosics can perceive the overall shape of objects, but only in a very vague wayË i.e., not in a way thatË fine-grained enough for them to accurately identify the kind of object in front of them.

> One can, to be sure, see armadillos without seeing that they are armadillos, but perhaps, one must, in order to seem them, see that they are Ïsay Ëanimals of some sort. To see *x* Ïwhich is an animal Ëis to see that it is an animal. If this sounds implausible Ïone can surely mistake an animal for a rock or a bush Ëmaybe one must, in seeing an object, at least see that it is an object of some sort. [...] *Something or other*. Whether or not this is true depends, of course, on what is involved in being aware that a thing is a thing. Since we can certainly see a physical object without being aware that it is a physical object Ïwe can think we are hallucinating Ë, the required *concept F* Ïrequired to be aware that *x* is *F* Ë cannot be much of a concept. [...] If the concept one must have to be aware of something is a concept that applies to *everything* one can be aware of, what is the point of insisting that one must have it to be aware? ÏDretske, 1993/2000: 120Ë

Dretske is here concerned with the following case: a subject *S* sees an armadillo, but has no knowledge of what armadillos are Ïor look like Ë, and so she doesn Ë recognise it or identify it *as* an armadillo. In Dretske Ës terms, she doesn Ë see *that* it is an armadillo Ïor see it *as* an armadillo Ë Could it be that *S* at least identifies the armadillo *as* an animal, or *as a* thing? Dretske raises three objections against this proposal, none of which should bother Conceptualists too much, I Ïm afraid.

First, Dretske argues, it cannot be that one must conceptually identify a perceived animal *as an animal*: that Ës because an animal might be mistaken for a rock. But it Ës unclear what the problem is supposed to be. Conceptualists can agree that, *if* the subject Ës experience represents an armadillo *as* an animal, then it must be the case that she identifies it *as* such. On the other hand, if her experience *misrepresents* the armadillo *as* a rock, the subject must identify it *as a rock*.[25] To repeat, Conceptualism nowhere requires that a certain kind of object be identified in a certain way no matter what.

Second, Dretske argues, it cannot be that a subject must identify the armadillo *as* a physical object, since she might falsely believe that she is hallucinating Ë in which case, she will not identify what she sees as a physical object. Again, though, Conceptualists can say that, in this case, the subject might identify the armadillo *as a hallucinated object*.

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[25] Perhaps, the thought is that it seems plausible to distinguish ÏaËcases of illusory experience from ÏbËcases of mis-identification. It is possible that one veridically perceives a kangaroo but mis-identify it as a koala. And it seems possible that one has an illusory experience of a koala represented as a kangaroo, but that one correctly identifies it as a kangaroo. This gives rise to a third possibility of double mistake: ÏcËone might have an illusion where what is in fact a koala is represented as a kangaroo, and then mis-identified as a koala. It seems that Conceptualists cannot recognise the differences between these three possibilities. For them, misperception and mis-identification come to the same thing: cases of illusory experience.

The third objection is more interesting. Dretske considers the possibility that the requirement Conceptualists impose on experience comes down to the claim that the subject must at least identify what she experiences *as a thing*. This response, he argues, is pointless. If a subject identifies everything she sees *as a thing* Ëand only as a thingË, then her experience must represent everything she sees in the same wayË namely, *as* a thing. And so, this subject cannot really discriminate anything she sees.

Note that, since DretskeËs first two arguments fail to raise any problem for Conceptualism, Conceptualists are in no way forced towards the claim that perceivers must at least deploy the concept THING for everything they experience. But the general problem with DretskeËs objections is that they all seem to rely on the assumption that Conceptualists have to legislate a particular set of concepts that perceivers *must* deploy for particular objects in any circumstance, no matter how their experiences represent such objects. In return, Conceptualists can insist that how a perceiver conceptually identifies what she experiences is up to her: it depends on which conceptual capacities she mobilises in a given experience. It is certainly not entailed by a formulation of Conceptualism.

Here, then, we seem to find another point of substantial disagreement between Conceptualists and their criticsË one that cannot, as far as IËm aware, be settled easily. While Non-conceptualists insist that ËaËperception and ËbË identification Ëand c-discriminationËcan come apart, Conceptualists claim that, necessarily, in order to have a perceptual experience of $x$, a perceiver must identify $x$ as falling under some concept or other. What is needed now are solid arguments to the effect, say, that one view explains perception and perceptual representation better than the other. Or perhaps, empirical discoveries showing that the mechanisms underlying perception and conceptual identification are in fact relatively independent from one another. But itËs far from obvious that such results have as yet been uncovered.[26]

[26] Note that no one here disputes the point that mechanisms involved in early vision are relatively independent from more ËognitiveËmechanisms at play in high-level vision Ïpace Fodor, 2003: ch. 2Ë The question is whether high-level vision is itself *constituted* by processes of conceptual identification. Many psychologists treat conceptual Ëor ËsemanticËËidentification as the end-product of high-level vision. The mere fact that they do is evidence that it is far from obvious that perception is independent from conceptual identification. On the other hand, the mere existence of causal interactions between mechanisms underlying perception and those underlying conceptual identification may not suffice to establish that what is construed as high-level perceptual processes are necessarily dependent on conceptual identification. The fact that

*To conclude:* I have argued that the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics is unlikely to collapse due to different presuppositions about concepts, concept-possession, or about which capacities must be deployed in experience. Though both sides need not agree on everything, it is sufficient that they agree on at least that much: *if* Conceptualism were true, then, necessarily, perceivers would identify and c-discriminate everything they experience. This provides enough common ground to ensure that the dispute is not in fact a dispute about the nature of concepts, or about the conditions for their possession or deployment. As I have suggested, Conceptualists and their opponents need not worry about the nature of concepts.

This also gives us a precise account of the sorts of requirements Conceptualists impose on the representational content of perceptual experience. It is time to see how such requirements can serve to spell out a notion of Ëconceptual contentË

many psychologists are reluctant to draw a line between perception and cognition need not entail that there isnË in fact such a line. Such reluctance appears to be a theoretical assumption, not itself an established empirical result.

CHAPTER 5

# *Conceptualist Supervenience*

I now want to properly address the last question on the list:

**Q3:** How do concepts and content relate to constitute a special kind of content? conceptual content? And what is non-conceptual content?

It is time to see how the notions of contentand conceptsand of the possessionand deploymentof concepts discussed in the previous two chapters can be connected to characterise a satisfactory notion of conceptual content one which can help to make sense of the disagreement between Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists as a substantive dispute.

In chapter 3, we saw that a formulation of Conceptualism encounters two problems. First, to understand talk of conceptual contentas content that is *composed* of concepts as an answer to Q3 is likely to give rise to different notions of conceptual content depending on which account of the metaphysics of content one takes as one starting point. Second, we saw how, for this reason, some are tempted to redescribe the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics in terms of the *state view* that experiences and thoughts are different kinds of *states* but have the same kind of content.

The question, then, is whether we can steer a course between athe *content view* understood in terms of contents-composed-of-concepts, and bthe *state view*. If we can, we have a notion of conceptual content which legitimises the *content view*, but also blocks some of the motivations for favouring the *state view*. I believe we can.

Here is how. Chapter 4 focused on what is minimally required to understand the notion of the conceptualin conceptual contentit has to do with the deployment in experience of certain conceptual capacities. We also saw *which* conceptual capacities could reasonably be taken to be exercised in experience. This helps to specify the sorts of constraints Conceptualists impose on the content of experience constraints which their critics reject. I will now suggest that such constraints are all one really needs to answer Q3. This is the topic of section 5.1 In section 5.2 I outline some advantages of

the account offered here. And in §3 I use this account to describe the opposition the view that experience has non-conceptual content.

### 5.1. The Supervenience of the Representational on the Conceptual

Let's return to the last crucial term in McDowell's characterisation of Conceptualism (1994: 66) the claim that experiences have the representational content that they do *in virtue of* the fact that certain conceptual capacities are operative in them.

It is notably difficult to interpret such a locution (in virtue of) as there are many different possible readings of (x is *F* in virtue of *y* being *G*). Nevertheless, McDowell's claim sounds very much like some sort of determination thesis: namely, that *what* a given experience represents and *how* it represents it is determined by *which* conceptual capacities the perceiver exercises in having such an experience. At the very least, whatever else McDowell's claim might be taken to mean, it seems plausible that it minimally implies such a determination thesis.[1]

One way in which to formulate determination theses is in terms of *supervenience* (strictly speaking, a relation of necessary asymmetric co-variance). If *A* determines *B*, it must at least be the case that *B* supervenes upon *A*, in the sense that any variation in *B* necessarily comes with a variation in *A* (but not *vice versa*). Supervenience is often phrased in terms of the slogan: no difference in *B* (the supervenient properties) without a difference in *A* (the subvenient properties).

McDowell's claim can then be paraphrased thus: no difference in perceptual content without a difference in the conceptual capacities exercised in experience.[2] More succinctly: no representational difference without a

[1] In fact, McDowell's claim seems even stronger: that it's *because* conceptual capacities are exercised in experience that perceptual experiences have a content at all. In other words, one way in which to read McDowell here is as providing an answer to the *genetic* question: how do experiences get their content? An even stronger reading of the (in virtue of) would be that conceptual capacities operative in experience *constitute* the representational content of experience (though it's not entirely clear, ontologically speaking, how capacities could constitute content. I will ignore these possible stronger readings of McDowell in what follows, and focus on the claim that concepts *determine* content (in the minimal sense captured by the relevant supervenience thesis).

[2] And in the *way* in which such capacities are exercised. Presumably, the same conceptual capacities can be deployed in the judgement that (the koala is to the left of the kangaroo and the judgement that (the kangaroo is to the left of the koala. But there is an obvious

conceptual difference. In this sense, the concepts a perceiver deploys in a given experience determine the representational content of that experience. A supervenience thesis provides, I think, a precise formulation of the conceptualist thesisË call it thesis ËCË As a first pass, one might try to express the conceptualist determination thesis as follows:

}C} Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in experience $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in experience $e_2$ *only if* the perceiverËsË ËaË*possessèesè* and ËbË*deployèsè* in experienceËsË$e_1$ and $e_2$ distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

Some clarifications. By representational difference, I mean the following: if different representational properties serve to represent $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ and $x_2$ are represented differently. And, I assume, if $x_1$ and $x_2$ are represented differently, there is a difference in contentË a difference in *what* is represented and/or in *how* it is represented. Note, however, that $x_1$ and $x_2$ might be represented differently without being represented as *being different.* ThatË because, though $x_1$ and $x_2$ are represented in different *ways*, the ways in which $x_1$ and $x_2$ are represented need not represent $x_1$ and $x_2$ *as* being different. Two examples to illustrate.

First, to borrow a famous example from Peacocke, the very same shape Ëa squareËmight look square in one instance and diamond-shaped in another, depending on which of two possible pairs of axes of symmetry associated with the figure are salient Ëthe ones bisecting the edges of the figure in the case of the square appearance, and the ones bisecting the angles of the figures in the case of the diamond appearanceË In such case, the same shape with the same properties is represented differently in experience: *as* square or *as* diamond-shaped.[3] But itË the very same shape thatË being represented.

Second, two identical shades of red, $r_1$ and $r_2$, can be represented differently in experience if one ËrÌËis shaded while the other ËrÍËappears in full sun-light, say. Though $r_1$ and $r_2$ look different so that their colour must be represented differently in experience, such shades arenË necessarily represented *as being*

representational difference between ËËand ËiË Hence, *how* such conceptual capacities are deployed must matter to the Conceptualists too, and not just *which* conceptual capacities are deployed in experience.

[3] See Peacocke Ë992: ch. 3Ë Similarly, two identical shapes $s_1$ and $s_2$ with the same properties are represented differently in thought, say, if $s_1$ is represented *as triangular* and $s_2$ *as* trilateral. The fact that different properties are used to represent $s_1$ and $s_2$ need not entail that $s_1$ and $s_2$ have different properties: those properties could be necessarily co-extensive.

different: despite the relevant representational differences, $r_1$ and $r_2$ may still be represented as having the same colour. It's true that some difference is represented – a difference in illumination – but this merely reflects the fact that $r_1$ and $r_2$ are perceived in different perceptual conditions – it is not, at least, an intrinsic difference between the two shades. So much, then, for representational differences.

By conceptual difference, I have in mind the deployment *in* experience of *distinct* concepts for the objects, properties, relations, etc. represented in experience. Two concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ will be distinct just in case, either – they have a different extension, and/or – although they happen to apply to exactly the same things, $C_1$ and $C_2$ constitute different ways of thinking of the very same thing – for instance, distinct concepts of the same thing might pick it out *via* different features – properties, relations, etc. – of such a thing.[4] And, as we have seen, a subject $S$ will deploy distinct concepts just in case she exercise conceptual capacities associated with these distinct concepts. For instance, if $S$ conceptually identifies – discriminates – $x_1$ *as* $C_1$ and conceptually identifies – discriminates – $x_2$ *as* $C_2$, she thereby deploys distinct concepts for $x_1$ and $x_2$.

Finally, note that the antecedent of thesis – C – quantifies over two experiences: $e_1$ and $e_2$, where $e_1$ represents $x_1$ and $e_2$ represents $x_2$. Of course, – C – also applies to representational differences *within* a given experience $e$: in this case, $e_1$ and $e_2$ are in fact one and the same experience – namely $e$. Note also that – C – leaves it open whether or not – $e_1$ and $e_2$ are experiences of the same perceiver, and whether or not – $e_1$ and $e_2$ are simultaneous.[5]

Admittedly, thesis – C – is quite permissive in at least one important respect. It only requires that the subject deploy distinct concepts *for* the objects – properties, relations, etc. – represented differently in her experience. But it doesn't require that the objects thus represented actually fall under such concepts. In other words, – C – doesn't require that the subject possesses and

[4] Regarding –, I assume – pretty much uncontroversially – that, if two concepts apply to different ranges of things, they are distinct. As for –, if what is being picked out by such distinct concepts is an object, it seems possible that two distinct concepts pick out the same object *via* different properties of that object – e.g., the morning star and the evening star – i.e., the properties of appearing at a certain location in the morning and of appearing at a certain location in the evening – If what is being picked out by such concepts is a property, I assume that properties have properties. Thus, in the case of two distinct concepts of the same property, such concepts might pick out the same property $f$ *via* different properties of $f$.

[5] In section – 5.2 –, I – briefly consider whether or not thesis – C – must be restricted in any particular way.

deploys *correct* concepts. This is because thesis ÏCË must allow for the possibility of illusory experiences, whereË on the conceptualist viewË the subject deploys a concept *C* for an object *x* when, in fact, *C* doesnÏ apply to *x*. Otherwise, ÏCËwould have the counter-intuitive result of making perceptual illusions impossibleË a consequence Conceptualists will surely not embrace.[6] Thesis ÏCËmust also allow for the possibility of perceptual mis-identification, and for perceivers who possess weird and unusual concepts and who, as a result, may not deploy the same concepts *we* usually deploy.

Thesis ÏCË, I want to suggest, provides the best characterisation of the conceptualist thesis. First, ÏCËentails that the representational content of experience is Ïconceptual through and throughË, or Ïwholly conceptualË, at least in the sense that nothing represented in experience is left unconceptualised Ïas it wereË More precisely, ÏCËentails that *everything* represented in experience requires the deployment Ïand so, possessionËof a conceptË the exercise of a conceptual capacity. In other words, ÏCËentails the two necessary conditions, which, as we saw earlier, Conceptualists impose on any content that counts as conceptual:

***Possession Constraint***
For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*Ï perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x only if S possesses some* concept *C* for *x* at *t*.

***Deployment Constraint***
For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*Ï perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x only if S deploys some* concept *C* for *x* in *e* at *t*.

To see this, suppose that either constraint is false, such that some object Ïproperty, relation, event, state-of-affairs, etc.Ë *x* is represented in an experience *e*, but that the subject of that experience doesnÏ deploy Ïor possessË any concept at all for *x*. In this case, there should be some representational difference in *e* Ïa difference involving the representation of *x* and the representation of some other object *y*Ë, which remains unmatched by any conceptual differenceË and in particular, by any conceptual difference involving the representation of *x*, since no concept is deployed Ïor possessedË

[6] On the other hand, one might wish thesis ÏCËto entail the requirement that the concept *C* the subject deploys for an object *x* at least matches the way in which *x appears* to herË the way it is represented in her experience. In the next section, I consider how this kind of requirement may be captured by ÏCËË*albeit* indirectly.

for $x$.[7] But then, ËCËis false too. So if ËCËis true, it requires that both the possession and deployment constraints are true too.

Note, however, that thesis ËCËis stronger than the combination of these two constraints.[8] For instance, itË possible to reject ËCËand still hold on to both the possession and deployment constraints. On such a view, though one must possess and deploy concepts for *everything* one perceives, itË possible that one deploys the same concepts for things that are represented differently in experience. In which case, some representational differences will remain without any accompanying conceptual difference. Hence, on this view, the deployment of concepts does not *determine* the representational content of experience, even though conceptualisation is a necessary requirement on perceptual experience. Strictly speaking, then, this isnË really a conceptualist thesis. In what follows, IË assume that Conceptualists are committed at least to ËËthe *possession constraint*, ËËthe *deployment constraint*, and ËËthesis ËCË These are three necessary conditions on the representational content of perceptual experience, according to Conceptualists.[9]

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[7] The point can be made in more detail with the help of an abstract example. First, compare two experiences: while the first experience ËËrepresents only two objects, $x$ and $y$, the second experience ËËrepresents an additional object $z$, as well as $x$ and $y$. We can say that the representational content of ËËcontains fewer representational differences than the content of ËË while the representation of $x$ and $y$ in ËËinvolves a representational difference between the representation of $x$ and the representation of $y$, the representation of $x$, $y$, and $z$, in ËËinvolves a representational difference between ËË the representation of $x$ and that of $y$, ËiËanother representational difference between the representation of $x$ and that of $z$, and ËiiËa third representational difference between the representation of $y$ and that of $z$.

Now, suppose that a subject who has experience ËËdeploys only two concepts, for $x$ and $y$ *only*. It should follow, not just that one objectË namely, $z$Ë represented in her experience is left unconceptualised, but that ËCËis false. The fact that the perceiver deploys distinct concepts for $x$ and $y$ will make it possible that the representational difference between the representation of $x$ and that of $y$ is matched by a conceptual difference. But there are further representational differencesË ËiËand ËiiËaboveË in the content of her experience, which remain unmatched by any conceptual difference, since no concept is deployed for $z$.

[8] Indeed, the Possession and Deployment constraints arenË meant to provide a complete characterisation of Conceptualism. Rather the point of having such constraints was to make more precise the role Conceptualists ascribe to concepts and conceptual capacities. In this respect, the two constraints above express only necessary conditions on the representational content of experience.

[9] Another possible form of quasi-conceptualism endorses ËCË that is, a slightly more restricted version concerned only with concept-possessionË and the *possession constraint*, but

Second, thesis ïCËis clearly about the representational *content* of perceptual experience: it is *what* an experience representsË and *how* it represents itË that supervenes on *which* conceptual capacities the perceiver exercises *in* experience Ëand how they are exercisedË The exercise of such capacities determines the representational *content* of the experienceË not the experience itself, *qua* psychological *state*. In this respect, thesis ïCËis a version of the content view, not of the state view.

Thesis ïCËcan thus be used to specify a notion of Ëconceptual contentË Note that I have phrased ïCËspecifically as a thesis about the content of *perceptual experience*. But, of course, it can easily be generalised to any psychological state. In this respect, *conceptual content* is simply a kind of content about which thesis ïCËis true. More precisely, it is a kind of content that supervenes uponË is determined byË the conceptual capacities the subject exercises in a given psychological state. By contrast, *non-conceptual content* is simply a kind of content, which doesnïË so superveneË about which thesis ïCË is false.

Third, this specification of Ëconceptual contentËavoids some of the difficulties encountered in chapter 3. In particular, it helps to deal with the first sceptical worry, according to which the notion of Ëconceptual contentË only makes sense on a fregean theory of content. For one thing, though thesis ïCËhelps to specify a way in which the content of an experience is *determined* by concepts, it does not require that such content be *composed* of Ëor structured byËconcepts. For composition of $A$ by $B$ is only one way in which $A$ can determine $B$. Of course, ïCËis compatible with a fregean theory of content, according to which conceptual content Ëfregean senseËis composed and structured by concepts Ëfregean sensesË But the truth of ïCËdoesnïË entail such a theory of content. In this respect, ïCËis compatible with other theories of content. For instance, it is compatible with a russellian theory of content, according to which conceptual contents are sets of ordered pairs of objects and concepts and pairs of properties and concepts.[10] ïCËis even compatible with a

rejects the *deployment constraint* Ësince deployment seems to presuppose possession, the reverse combination doesnïË seem possibleË

[10] That is, we might think of russellian contents as ordered tuples involving objects and properties, where each object and property in the set is associated with a distinct concept for that object or property. Thus, suppose we have a content ËaËrepresenting the fact that an object $o$ is $f$ and another content ËbËrepresenting another object $o^*$ being $g$. We can construct such russellian contents as follows: ËaË}ïË, $C_1$Ë ËfË, $C_2$Ë and ËbË}ïË*, $C_3$Ë ËgË, $C_4$Ë. It seems as though

conception of content where contents are sets of possible worlds, the vehicles of which are conceptual inner representations Ësee note 12 belowË Therefore, itË not true that the notion of Ëconceptual contentË as it is spelt out in ËCË presupposes commitment to a particular theory of contentË such as, for instance, a fregean theory of content as fregean sense.

The significance of this point is not just that some Conceptualists might endorse different theories of content, but that we can leave it open Ëat least to some extentËwhich theory of content Conceptualists adopt. As with other supervenience theses Ësuch as the supervenience of the psychological upon the physicalË we need to distinguish between ËaË the supervenience Ëor determinationËthesis itself, and ËbËdifferent possible explanations as to why such a thesis holdsË or different putative facts in which such a thesis can be ËgroundedËËsee, e.g., Kim, 1998: 13Ë Hence, for instance, the supervenience of the mental upon the physical provides a minimal characterisation of Physicalism, though different physicalist theories will account differently for the truth of such a thesis Ë*ibid.*Ë These different physical theories may well presuppose different accounts of psychological and physical properties Ëor events, substances, etc.Ë The physicalist supervenience thesis at least captures ËËwhat different physicalist theories have crucially in common and ËiËwhat opposes Physicalists to Anti-physicalists.

Likewise, thesis ËCËprovides a minimal characterisation of Conceptualism. That is, there might be different ways in which ËCËcould be made trueË or ËgroundedËË involving, among other things, different theories of mental content, and different theories of concepts. Admittedly, a fregean theory of content provides a straightforward explanation for the truth of ËCË if it is true. That is, *if* the representational contents of experiences are fregean senses, the claim that such contents are composed of Ëand structured byËconceptsË which are fregean senses themselvesË can easily explain why a difference in content comes with a conceptual difference.[11]

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thesis ËCËcan be true about such contents: any representational difference comes with a conceptual difference.

[11] Given that a fregean believes in contents composed of concepts, she will accept that any difference in content involves a difference in the concepts constituting that contentË thesis ËCË However, she might also be committed to the converse claim that any difference in the concepts making up a content thereby entails a difference in content. Thus, on her view, ËCËonly provide a necessary condition on the content of experience: the conceptualist supervenience thesis ought to be phrased in terms of a bi-conditionalË such that representational differences must come with conceptual differences *and vice versa*.

But this is not the only possible explanation. An explanation in terms of russellian content as sets of objects, properties, and concepts, may be available too (see note 10). As for Conceptualists who think that contents are sets of possible worlds, they might say, in accordance with (C), that perceptual experiences with different sets of worlds as their content involve conceptual differences (i.e., different conceptual capacities exercised for the different objects, properties, etc., contained in those worlds, presence or absence of which make up the difference) between such sets of worlds.[12] Perhaps, on this view, what explains the fact that different conceptual capacities are exercised in experience has to do with the fact that different sets of worlds are conveyed, or represented, by different conceptual vehicles. This would amount to an explanation of thesis (C) in terms of *Vehicle Conceptualism* sketched in (§3.4.2). Of course, there might be other explanations.

More importantly, (C) also serves to capture precisely what the critics of Conceptualism deny. In particular, they claim that it is possible to have representational differences without conceptual differences, usually (but not uniquely) because the perceiver lacks (or is unable to deploy) a concept for some of the objects represented in her experience.

Hence, thesis (C) provides a *minimal* characterisation of Conceptualism, sufficient to capture the disagreement between Conceptualists and their opponents. It is minimal in the sense that it is not a complete conceptualist theory, but suffices to specify what different putative conceptualist theories have in common. In this respect, thesis (C) specifies a family of views which all impose similar constraints on the representational content of perceptual

[12] More precisely, if different sets of worlds are associated with two experiences $e_1$ and $e_2$, the difference) between such sets must involve worlds with different objects, different properties, or with different combinations of properties and objects. The subject will then either deploy concepts for different objects (or properties, etc.) contained in these different set of worlds; or she will deploy distinct concepts for the same objects, distinct, given the different extension these concepts have in those sets of worlds. Or she will deploy the same concepts but in different ways. Either way, there will be some conceptual difference in her experiences. Thus, suppose $e_1$ and $e_2$ represent what is in fact the same shape as a square (e.g., $e_1$) and as a regular diamond (e.g., $e_2$). Each experience is associated with a different set of worlds in which a different pair of axes of symmetry is salient. But the perceiver's concepts will also be distinct since their respective extensions in those two different sets of worlds differ: in each set, the extension of such concepts contains squares and either of two different pairs of axes of symmetry associated with the figure. Hence, it seems, this kind of case raises no problem for a conceptualist proponent of contents-as-sets-of-possible worlds.

experiences. Those requirements are specified by thesis ËCËË together with the *possession* and *deployment* constraints above.

Finally, a slightly more precise version of ËCËcan serve to silence sceptical worries about concepts and about which capacities determine the possession Ëand deploymentËof such concepts. As we saw in Ës4.4.2Ë, the deployment constraint can itself be specified in terms of two additional requirements:

***Identification Constraint***

For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*Ës perceptual experience *e* represents *x only if S* deploys *some* concept *C* in *e* in such a way that *S identifies x as C*.

***Discrimination Constraint***

For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*Ës perceptual experience *e* represents *x only if S* deploys *some* concept *C* in *e* in such a way that *S c-discriminates x as C*.[13]

With the proper substitutions in ËCË, we obtain:

}C+} Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in $e_2$ *only if* the perceiver ËËidentifies $x_1$ *as* $C_1$ in $e_1$ and $x_2$ *as* $C_2$ in $e_2$Ë where $C_1$ and $C_2$ are distinct conceptsË and the perceiver ËiËrecognises the difference between $x_1$ *as* $C_1$ and $x_2$ *as* $C_2$.[14]

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[13] Where the notion of *c-discrimination*, recall, can be characterised as follows: *S c-discriminates x as C* in her experience *e if*, ËËS identifies *x as C* in *e*, and ËiËfor any other object Ëproperty, relation, etc.Ëy, *w*, *z*, ... , represented in *e*, *S* identifies *y as C**, *w as* CË, *z as* Cè, ... , and ËiiËS recognises the difference between *x as C* and *y as C**, *w as* CË, *z as* Cè, ... .

[14] Recall that the notion of Ëecognitionën clause ËiËisnË perceptual as such: it simply means that the subject is aware of the relevant difference between the identification of $x_1$ as $C_1$ and the identification of $x_2$ as $C_2$, being aware that $C_1$ and $C_2$ are distinct concepts. Such recognition could take place even when the subject is not identifying $x_1$ and $x_2$ on the basis of an experience Ëbut, say, on the basis of testimonyË However, in the case under consideration, note that such recognition may be based either on the identification of $x_1$ and $x_2$ in the same experience, or on the identification of $x_2$ as $C_2$ in one experience and on the memory of having identified $x_1$ as $C_1$ in another experience.

One difficulty we encounter with ËC+Ë but not with ËCË concerns the case where ËC+Ë might range over two experiences of the same object by different perceivers. One perceiver $S_1$ might identify *x* as $C_1$ and another $S_2$ might identify *x* as $C_2$Ë so that there is a representational difference between the content of their respective experiences, which is determined by the relevant conceptual difference. But $S_1$ Ëor $S_2$Ëmay not recognise the difference between *x* as $C_1$ and *x* as $C_2$, because she lacks the concept $C_2$. In such a case, we would have to say that $S_1$ identifies *x* as $C_1$, and that, *if* she did possess the concept $C_2$, she would recognise the difference between $C_1$ and $C_2$. Notice, however, that clause ËiËwas introduced to capture the notion of *c-*

Thus, any view in the philosophy of perception committed to theses ÏCËand ÏC+Ëwill count as conceptualist, on this characterisation of Conceptualism. They will count as conceptualist, no matter what their theoretical commitments about content and concepts are.

*To conclude:* it seems possible to give a characterisation of Conceptualism which is substantive enoughË if, admittedly, incomplete. Theses ÏCËand ÏC+Ë are substantiveË quite controversial in fact. ItËs also possible to characterise Conceptualism in a way that is neutral between different theories of content, of conceptsË insofar as the relationship between content and concepts, whatever they are, is one of determination Ëin the sense captured by ÏCÏË What is crucial, according to Conceptualists, is the fact that *which* conceptual capacities a subject exercises in a given experience determine the content of that experience.

Thus, many of these sceptical worries mentioned in chapter 2 are, I think, misguided. They are misguided because they all presuppose that what a proper characterisation of Conceptualism primarily needs is an answer to metaphysical questions about content and concepts. No doubt, a complete conceptualist theory will have to include an account of what contents and concepts are. And, as I have suggested, itËs quite possible that Conceptualists may come up with different answers to these metaphysical questions. What is needed in a characterisation of Conceptualism is, in the first place, an account of the sorts of constraints Conceptualists impose on the representational content of experience. Such constraints, I have suggested, can serve to specify, with the help of supervenience, a generic notion of Ëconceptual contentÏË one which is in principle available to different theories of content and concepts.

In the following chapters, I will focus on various arguments advanced for and against Conceptualism. We will see that another advantage of thesis ÏCËis that one can easily make sense of the structure of such arguments in terms of ÏCÏË as attempts to falsify or support ÏCË Before this, however, there are two remaining issues to consider. First, I need to clarify the scope of ÏCË, and point out some advantages of that thesis Ï§5.2Ë Second, I need to clarify the opposition Ï§5.3Ë I shall distinguish two ways in which critics of Conceptualism have rejected ÏCË

discrimination Ëas a way to account for perceptual discriminationË In such an inter-subjective version of ÏC+Ë, however, neither perceiver needs to discriminate what she perceives from what the other perceiver experiences.

### 5.2. The Scope of }C}

Note that I have formulated ËCËabove in such a way that it applies, not just to the content of single experiences, but also to both ËË *intra-subjective* comparisons of the contents of perceptual experiences a given subject might have at different times, as well as to ËË*inter-subjective* comparisons between the experiences of different subjects Ëwhether or not at the same timeË

}C} Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in experience $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in experience $e_2$ *only if* the perceiverËË ËaË*possessèesè* and ËbË*deployèsè* in experienceËË$e_1$ and $e_2$ distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

Though we have seen that there are many advantages to characterising Conceptualism in terms of ËCË, a question arises as to whether ËCËought to be restricted in some way or other. Pressure to do so has been taken to arise from cases like the following:

> Suppose, as far as this is possible, that two people have totally disjoint sets of general geometrical concepts applicable to shapes: one has only abstract theoretical-geometrical concepts; the other has only aesthetic concepts of some kind, embroiled in a strange system of mystical significance say. If they really have no generic concept of shape in common *at all*, as the Ëneutral Ëway in which something fills or articulates space, then it seems to me to be quite reasonable to conclude that the only thing which their shape perception has in common is that it is sometimes the very same shape in the world which they perceive, in their otherwise entirely different ways. ËBrewer, 1999: 174Ë

Notice that the conclusion Brewer reaches is rather drastic. BrewerËs example invites us to imagine a case where two subjects see exactly the same shape in exactly the same conditions Ëfrom the same perspectiveË It seems that, intuitively, these subjects should have similar experiences, with fairly similar Ëor identicalËcontents. But not, Brewer concludes, if Conceptualism is true and these subjects possess radically distinct concepts. The fact that such subjects deploy distinct conceptual capacities for the shape in question entails that their respective experiences represent it differently.

Conceptualists may well embrace BrewerËs conclusionË and reject the suggestion that it is counter-intuitive. What is important to see here, however, is that it isnË mandatory for an advocate of Conceptualism to go with that conclusion. For one thing, a Conceptualist might restrict thesis ËCËin such a way that it applies to the experiences of single perceivers *only*. This modified

version of ËCËwould then be silent onË and hence, not falsifiable byË inter-subjective cases like the one considered above.

More importantly, though, ËCËitself needs no such restriction. For it can take care of cases like thisË even when it is restricted neither to single experiences, nor to single perceivers. This owes to the fact that supervenience, as it is usually understood, is a claim of *asymmetric* co-variation. If the subvenient facts Ëor propertiesË*determine* the supervenient facts Ëor propertiesË, the converse doesnË hold. The asymmetry is such that, though differences in the subvenient facts must accompany *all* differences in the supervenient facts, itË entirely possible that *some* differences in the subvenient facts give rise to no difference in the supervenient facts.[15]

To see this, consider again the case of the supervenience of the mental on the physical: any psychological difference must come with a physical differenceË thatË what supervenience demands. But itË quite plausible that not all physical differences Ën particular, not all changes in a subjectË brainË give rise to psychological differences. In this respect, supervenient facts Ëor propertiesËcan be *multiply realized*. The same supervenient facts can supervene on different subvenient facts. For instance, the same types of psychological states might supervene on the physical properties of different kinds of brain Ëhuman and non-human, sayË, or be realized by different types of brain states at different times within the same individual.

Thus, insofar as the conceptualist supervenience thesis is concerned, this feature of supervenience allows that certain representational similarities come with conceptual differences. What thesis ËCË says is that, *if* there are representational differences in the content of experienceËsË, the perceiverËsË must deploy distinct concepts. It does not say that, just because the perceiverËsË deployËsË different concepts, the experiences in which such concepts are deployed must have different contents. Hence, two perceivers could have exactly the same experience of $x$ Ëi.e., experiences representing exactly the same thing in the same wayË, and yet deploy distinct concepts for $x$. Such a case is entirely compatible with ËCË[16]

[15] If $A$ supervenes on $B$, two kinds of claim follow: ËËany change in $A$ must come with a change in $B$; and, conversely, ËËinsofar as $B$ remains the same, $A$ cannot change either. However, supervenience does *not* entail that ËËany change in $B$ has to be accompanied by a change in $A$, nor does it entail that ËËif $A$ remains the same, $B$ has to do so too.

[16] The same is true of *intra-subjective* diachronic cases, where a subject $S$ might perceive the very same object $x$ in exactly the same way at different times $t_1$ and $t_2$, and yet deploy distinct

The only thing that ÏCËrules out are cases where subjects have different experiences Ïepresenting things differentlyËbut deploy precisely the same concepts. For instance, what would falsify ÏCËis the following:

> SCARLET. Jacqueline experiences two distinct shades of scarlet over the course of ten years. Were she to perceive both shades at the same time, Jacqueline would realise how different they look. But since ten years separate her experiences of each shade, it doesnÏ seem to be a difference Jacqueline can appreciate. In such a case, however, it seems possible that Jacqueline deploys exactly the same colour concept for both shades.

Here, representational differences between two experiences of a *single* perceiver at different times come unaccompanied by conceptual differences. A similar inter-subjective example is:

> BRUCE & DON. Bruce and Don share the same concept of *KOALA*. One day, they each get to see a koala, but they see different koalas against different backgrounds, and in slightly different perceptual conditions. The representational differences between their respective experiences may be minute, but not so minute that, if either of them *were* to have the experience the other is having in addition to their own, they would fail to notice the difference. Thus, there are notice*able* representational differences between Bruce and DonÏs respective experiences. But it seems possible that, given the limited range of such differences, Bruce and Don nevertheless happen to conceptually identify what they see in terms of the exact same conceptsË not just for the koala, but also for whatever figures in the background.

If Conceptualists endorse ÏCË they must reject such cases as impossible. But are they really?

In the case of Jacqueline, at least, it seems quite possible that she happens to deploy the very same concept in different experiences of slightly distinct shades of scarlet. The temporal gap between her two experiencesË and the fact that she might not remember her earlier experienceË precludes her from recognising the difference between such shades Ïand between her experiences of such shadesË Similarly, it would seem *ad hoc* for Conceptualists to reject the possibility of a case like Bruce and DonÏs, simply on the ground that it threatens to falsify ÏCË

Perhaps, then, ÏCËought to be restricted to representational and conceptual differences *within* single experiences:

**}C*}** Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ and $x_2$ are represented differently in experience *e only if* the

---

concepts for $x$ at $t_1$ and $t_2$. If $x$ is represented in the same way at $t_1$ and $t_2$, it doesnÏ really matter which concepts the subject deploys, according to ÏCË

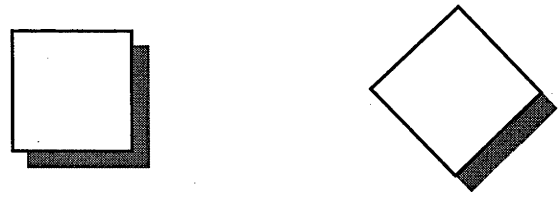
> perceiver ËaË*possesses* and ËbË*deploys* in *e* distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

Such a version of the conceptualist supervenience thesis isnËt falsified by cases like JacquelineËs, or Bruce and DonËs, since it is silent on whether representational differences *across different experiences* must be accompanied by conceptual differences.

But the solution offered by ËC*Ëis still unsatisfactory. For ËC*Ëwould allow that, if Jacqueline had an experience of a shade of green one minute, and then another experience of a shade of orange the next minute, she could nevertheless deploy in her two experiences the very same colour concept for both shades. This scenario doesnËt falsify ËC*Ë And yet, Conceptualists will certainly reject such a possibility.

This emphasises another advantage of our initial formulation of the conceptual supervenience thesisË and, in particular, of the fact that ËCËisnËt restricted to *single experiences*. It allows the supervenience thesis to capture the idea that there must be some *match* between the way in which things are represented in experience and the various concepts the subject deploys for such things in experience.

Suppose a perceiver *S* sees the very same square on two different occasions. On one occasion ËtËŸ *S* sees the square as a square; on another ËtËŸ *S* sees the same square as a regular diamond. In other words, the same square appears differently to *S* on different occasions as follows:



*t*1 *t*2

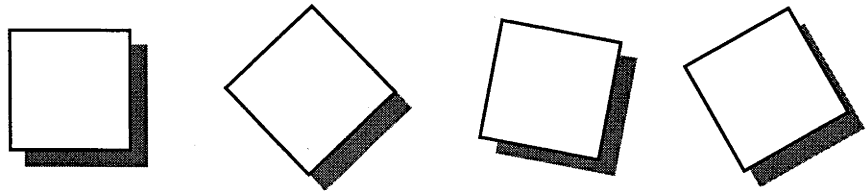
Thesis ËCËrequires that *S* deploy different concepts for the perceived square at *t*1 and *t*2. This seems to allow that any concept will do. *S* could of course deploy the concepts *SQUARE* and *REGULAR DIAMOND* for the square at *t*1 and *t*2 respectively. Then again, she could deploy the concepts *SQUARE* and *SQUARE STANDING ON ONE ITS CORNERS*, or the concepts *FIRST SQUARE* and *SECOND SQUARE*.

At this point, one worry is that ËCËallows that there could be hardly any match between the way in which the square is visually represented at *t*1 and the concept *S* deploys at *t*1Ë and similarly for *t*2. Insofar as the subject deploys

distinct concepts at *t*1 and *t*2, ËCËwill be true. But this seems insufficient to properly characterise Conceptualism. Presumably, the thought goes, if concepts deployed in experience determine the representational content of experience, then the way in which an object is represented in a given experience should *match* the way in which it is conceptualised in that experience.

This desideratum appears nowhere in the formulation of Conceptualism advanced so farË at least, not explicitly. But not to worry: if thesis ËCË quantifies over *all* representational and conceptual differences between *all* of a subjectËs experiences Ëat least for a certain period of timeË, then ËCËwill entail that such a match is indeed likely. That is, if ËCËis true, it had better be the case that the subject deploys concepts which match the way in which things are represented in her experiences pretty closely Ëif not perfectlyË Otherwise, itËs hard to see how *S* could deploy distinct concept whenever there is a representational difference between *any* of her experiences.

Thus, suppose that *S* deploys the concepts *SQUARE* and *REGULAR DIAMOND*, respectively, in her two experiences of the square at t*1* and *t*2. Presumably, such concepts are too coarse-grained to match the way in which the square is represented in *S*Ës experiences at *t*1 and *t*2. This is because *S* might have two additional experiences of the same square at *t*3 and *t*4:




And if the concepts *SQUARE* and *REGULAR DIAMOND* can capture the differences between *S*Ës experiences at *t*1 and *t*3 and her experiences at *t*2 and *t*4, the concept *SQUARE* doesnË capture the differences between her experiences of the square at *t*1 and *t*3Ë nor does the concept *REGULAR DIAMOND* capture the difference between her experiences of the square at *t*2 and *t*4. For this reason, one can expect that, in order for thesis ËCËto be true, it must be the case that subjects deploy concepts that match the way in which things are represented in their experiences quite closely Ëif not perfectlyË Without such a Ëat least approximateËmatch, thesis ËCËcould be refuted easily: it should be possible to find two experiences Ësuch as *S*Ës experiences at t*1* and t*3*Ë which are representationally different but where the subject deploys the same concepts.

So thesis ËCËhas two further advantages. First, the fact that it is formulated in terms of supervenience means that it can remain neutral on cases where subjects possess and deploy different concepts, even though it is plausible that what they perceive in those situations is represented in the same way. These sorts of cases Ëlike the one discussed by Brewer aboveËarenË a problem for Conceptualism, as I have formulated it. Second, thesis ËCËpresupposesË but does not explicitly containË the requirement that *which* concepts a subject deploys in experience must match *how* objects and properties are represented in experience Ëand not just *what* objects and properties are represented: they must not just be concepts that apply to such objects and propertiesË Provided a subject has sufficiently many experiences with sufficiently many representational differences between them, this conceptualist requirement will follow from the truth of thesis ËCËËassuming that it is true, of course.[17]

On the other hand, we saw precisely what kind of example is likely to raise a real difficulty for Conceptualists. If Conceptualism is true, Jacqueline must deploy distinct colour concepts for the distinct shades of purple she experiences at different times. This must be so, even if Jacqueline fails to realise that these are different shades of purple Ëbecause there is a rather long temporal interval separating her two experiences of these shadesË

### 5.3. Non}conceptualism

So far, attention has been almost entirely focused upon Conceptualism. Except for some comments about how opponents of Conceptualism think of perceptual discrimination Ëor differentiationËin Ë§4.5.1Ë, I have said hardly anything about the non-conceptualist side of things.

[17] There are two reasons why this matching requirementË the requirement that a concept deployed in experience for a certain property Ësay Ëmatches the way in which that property is represented in experienceË does not appear *explicitly* in my formulation of Conceptualism. The first one, if what I just said is correct, is that such a requirement is redundant insofar as it can be capturedË at least to some extentË by the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCË The second and more important reason is that it would be difficult to capture such a matching requirement explicitly in any precise way. Suppose that *S*Ë experience *e* represents *x* in a way *w* and that *S* deploys a concept *C* for *x* in *e*. How is *C* supposed to match *w*? Does it have to capture *w*? If so, how? Does it have to represent *w* itself? But surely, most concepts do not represent all the particular ways in which the objects Ëproperties, which fall in their extension, can appear to a perceiver. Does *C* have to represent *x* in a way that is closely similar to *w*? If so, how are we to determine the relevant similarity? Given such difficulties, it seems preferable, at least for now, that such a matching requirement Ëwhatever it really amounts toËbe entailed by ËCË, rather than explicitly stated.

Presumably, there are many ways in which to be a Non-conceptualist that is, many ways to oppose Conceptualism and the various considerations associated with it. In this regard, Non-conceptualism can be characterised in an essentially negative fashion.[18] And the incomplete specification of Conceptualism advanced in this chapter offers two ways to be a Non-conceptualist or two versions of Non-conceptualism.

To begin with there is one thing Non-conceptualists have in common: they all reject C In this respect, Non-conceptualists are happy to allow for representational differences in experience which come unaccompanied by conceptual differences. But this is not all they deny. As we have seen, Conceptualism is a commitment to C together with the *possession constraint* and the *deployment constraint* which are entailed by C I have claimed For the sake of simplicity, we can here summarise the three conceptualist commitments as follows:

***Conceptualism***

1 *Possession Constraint.* For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, if $S$ perceptual experience $e$ at $t$ represents $x$, *S possesses some* concept $C$ for $x$ at $t$.

2 *Deployment Constraint.* For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, if $S$ perceptual experience $e$ at $t$ represents $x$, *S deploys some* concept $C$ for $x$ in $e$ at $t$.

3 *Supervenience Thesis.* Necessarily, any representational difference between the contents of experiences $e_1$ and $e_2$ comes with a conceptual difference between $e_1$ and $e_2$.

Thus, all Non-conceptualists deny thesis C[19] What is interesting is that there are two ways to reject and giving rise to two different versions of Non-conceptualism.

According to the strongest form of Non-conceptualism, the negation of and takes narrow scope:

[18] And I will stick to such negative characterisations. A positive characterisation of a non-conceptualist view might take many forms. And as I said in the preface, the development of such a view is substantial project in its own rights, which would require space I don have here.

[19] As I mentioned earlier, it possible strictly speaking to deny only but not or It unclear how to classify such a position, since it neither conceptualist given that it rejects nor non-conceptualist since it accepts and which are important commitments of Conceptualism The important point is that interesting and plausible versions of Non-conceptualism deny and as well as

***Strong Non)conceptualism***

For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, if *S*Ë perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents $x$, it is **not** the case that *S* ËË*possesses* and ËË*deploys* in *e some* concept *C* for $x$.

On this view, the representational content of perceptual experiences is *entirely* non-conceptual. It is not determined by the deployment of any concept, since perceivers do not deploy concepts *in* experience. And so, possession of *no* concept whatsoever is required in order to have *any* experience.[20]

Of course, normal subjects possess concepts; and the various thoughts and beliefs that might accompany their experiences can have conceptual contentË they require the possession and deployment of concepts, as their content is determined by it. The representational content of experiences, on the other hand, is not so determined: experiences are such that *no* concept is deployed in them. Hence, if creatures that possess concepts donË need to deploy such concepts in experience, it is possible that one such creature could have experiences without *possessing* any concept. At least, such a possibility is compatible with Strong Non-conceptualism.

Many, I take it, will find Strong Non-conceptualism to be almost as extreme as the Conceptualist view. But there is a middle ground. The weaker version of Non-conceptualism, championed by the likes of Block Ë2002Ë Fales Ë996ËMartin Ë992aË and most importantly, Peacocke Ë992, 2001bË allows for some conceptualisation to take place in experience. On this version, the negation of ËËand ËËtakes wide scope:

***Weak Non)conceptualism***

It is **not** the case that, for any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, if *S*Ë perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents, *S* ËË*possesses* and ËË*deploys* in *e some* concept *C* for $x$.

According to this form of Non-conceptualism, it is not required that a subject deploys concepts for *everything* thatË represented in her experience. But it *may*

[20] Proponents of Strong Non-conceptualism might include ËtË not entirely clearËBermËdez Ë998Ë Dretske Ë981, 1993, 1995Ë Evans Ë982Ë and Tye Ë995Ë As I said in the preface, I favour that view tooË but I will not defend it here. A note about Evans Ë982Ë though he might accept such a formulation of Strong Non-conceptualism, he requires that, in order to have an experience with non-conceptual content, a subject must possess *some* concepts Ëeven if they arenË concepts for the things represented in that subjectË experienceË On his view, then, itË not true that experience requires possession of no concept *whatsoever*. Hence, strictly speaking, this latter claim is not entailed by the formulation of Strong Non-conceptualism above.

be required that she deploys concepts for at least *some* of the things represented in her experience. Furthermore, unlike Strong Non-conceptualism, Weak Non-conceptualism allows that, as a matter of fact, a subject may deploy concepts for everything thatÍs represented in her experience.[21] Thus, Non-conceptualists of this kind agree that possession and deployment of concepts determine the representational content of experience *to some extent*. They only deny the claim that this holds across the boardË namely, that *everything* which is represented in experience *requires* possession and deployment of concepts.

*Wrapping up.* This ends my discussion of how Conceptualism should be understood. What we now have, it seems, is a clear formulation of the various claims which define Conceptualism. Commitment to such claims is sufficient Ëand necessaryË to make one a ConceptualistË no matter what else a Conceptualist might want to add to this core.

The crucial thesis in the conceptualist doctrine is ËCË Insofar as we understandË and to the extent that we doË supervenience theses in general, ËCËprovides a clear way to state Conceptualism. Not only does it state what is common between different Conceptualists, but it also captures what separates Conceptualists from their opponents.

More importantly, ËCËhelps to separate two kinds of issues. On the one hand, there is a question about ËËwhat Conceptualists are committed to, and what constraints they impose upon the representational content of perceptual experiences. On the other, there are ËiË issues about the metaphysics of content and concepts, and which metaphysical presuppositions Conceptualists might be committed to. Admittedly, a complete conceptualist theory would have to address both ËËand ËiË One virtue of thesis ËCË however, is that it shows how we can have a clear answer to ËËwithout having to solve the extremely difficult questions involved in ËiËbeforehand.

[21] There may be different versions of this weak form of Non-conceptualism, depending on whether or not it is *necessary* for at least *some* objects, properties, and relations that their representation in experience requires possession of at least some concepts. Further, a Weak Non-conceptualist might grant that the content of *some* experiences is *entirely* conceptual. Thus, a Weak Non-conceptualist could even grant that, as a matter of fact, all experiences have a fully conceptual content: itÍs just that this is not necessarily trueË i.e., itÍs no necessary condition on the content of experience. But a Weak Non-conceptualist might also grant that some experiences have an entirely non-conceptual content.

CHAPTER 6

# *Perceptual Reasons*

Why be a Conceptualist? That is, why think that perceptual representation necessarily requires conceptualisation? And in particular, why think that thesis ËCËis true?

**(C)** Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in experience $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in experience $e_2$ *only if* the perceiverËËËË*possessèesè* and ËËË*deployèsè* in experienceËËË$e_1$ and $e_2$ distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

In this chapter, I look at some of the reasons Conceptualists have offered for their view. There arenËË too many. The main argument advanced by Conceptualists like McDowell and Brewer is epistemic: it appeals to the epistemological role of perceptual experiences. Experiences, the argument goes, provide reasons for beliefs about the external world. Given certain assumptions about reasons, the argument concludes that itËË only by having conceptual content that perceptual experiences can provide such reasons. I focus principally on that argument in what followsË other considerations sometimes cited in support of Conceptualism are briefly reviewed in the next chapter.

Here, I focus on Bill BrewerËË Ë1999: ch. 5; 2005Ë version of the argumentË not McDowellËËË and this for three reasons. The first has to do with clarity. BrewerËË presentation of the argument identifies the premises upon which the argument reliesË whereas McDowell doesnËË. This has the advantage of helping keep track of which commitmentsË in particular, which commitments about reasonsË Conceptualists take on board when arguing for their position.

The second reason is relevance. McDowellËË defence of Conceptualism is historical in the following respect. Instead of directly arguing for Conceptualism, McDowell borrows various ideas from such figures as Kant and Sellars to sketch a particular conception of perceptual experience. Such a view, he seems to claim, constitutes a better alternative between twoË by his lights unsatisfactoryË accounts of the justification of beliefs by perceptual

experiences: Coherentism and Foundationalism. In this respect, McDowell's strategy is rather weak: even if he were right to claim that neither Coherentism nor Foundationalism can successfully account for how experiences justify beliefs – I don't think he is; this isn't quite the same as showing that Conceptualism is the only alternative left standing.[1]

Furthermore, McDowell's defence of Conceptualism paints the epistemological landscape in much too broad strokes. As a result, he fails to do justice to both Coherentism and Foundationalism by ignoring a variety of finer-grained alternatives relevant to his discussion. Tempting though it is to review the many weaknesses of McDowell's strategy, most of them have already been well documented by a variety of commentators.[2] I don't need to repeat them here.

Third, focus on Brewer's version of the argument allows us to broaden the scope of the discussion in the following way. When it's possible to extract clear principles at play in McDowell's version of the argument, they seem quite similar to principles exploited explicitly by Brewer – I'll remark on these similarities at various points. Indeed, Brewer often presents his argument – or parts thereof – as a reconstruction of McDowell's ideas. So, if it can be shown that there are serious problems with Brewer's argument, it seems safe to assume that McDowell's version of the argument inherits these problems.

This is why I'll have very little to say about McDowell's argument. In §6.1, I introduce Brewer's version of the argument, while §6.2 contains a detailed discussion of the argument's central premises and how Brewer attempts to

[1] In fact, it's far from clear that Conceptualism even *is* an alternative to coherentist or foundationalist treatments of how perceptual experiences justify beliefs: while Conceptualism makes a claim about the content of experience, Coherentists and Foundationalists oppose one another about the structure of justification in ways which, at first sight at least, seem compatible with different theories of perception and perceptual content.

[2] See for instance Brandom (2002); Byrne (1996, 2005); Heck (2000); Pryor (2005); Sosa (1997); Stroud (2002); Vision (1997, 1998); and Wright (1998, 2002). One substantive problem with McDowell's strategy is that he simply assumes without much argument that a satisfactory account of how perceptual experiences justify beliefs has to posit that (a) perceptual experiences put epistemic subjects in direct contact with facts in the external world, and (b) epistemic subjects have access to – in the sense that they can conceptually think of – such facts and to their own access to such facts. While he argues that Coherentists must violate (a), he claims that Foundationalists have to reject (b). Neither claim seems correct. More importantly, (a) and (b) fail to entail Conceptualism, since Non-conceptualists can easily grant these two points as can Coherentists and Foundationalists. Indeed, neither (a) nor (b) seem to have anything special to do with Conceptualism.

motivate such premises. The upshot, I should warn, is negative: given that some of these premises are far from uncontroversial, the considerations Brewer advances in their support fail to that effect. Next, §6.3 underlines another serious defect in Brewer's argument: I suggest that it is invalid since one might accept all the premises and still reject the conclusion. In §6.4, I consider Brewer's response to similar objections and find it wanting. Finally, §6.5 raises yet another worry for the argument: even if its conclusion were entailed by its premises, that conclusion itself is compatible with the rejection of Conceptualism.

### 6.1. Brewer's Argument

Brewer's argument for Conceptualism hereafter 'BAC' is epistemic in that it derives a conclusion about the content of experiences from a set of premises about their epistemic role. A succinct statement of the argument can be found in one of his most recent defence of Conceptualism:

> My central argument for 'CC' has the following overall form.
>
> '1' Sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs.
> '2' Sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs only if they have conceptual content.
> ω 'CC' Sense experiential states have conceptual content.
>
> I assume '1' without argument here. My argument for '2' proceeds in two stages, which mirror the two components of the notion of conceptual content identified above. The first stage makes explicit the connection between reasons and inference, and hence between identifying contents of a form which enables them to serve as the premises and conclusions of inferences. The second establishes a constraint upon genuine reasons reasons *for the subject* imposed by the way in which his own conceptual resources are available for the configuration of his mental states. Recalling the definition of conceptual mental states given above, as those with a representational content which is characterisable only in terms of concepts which the subject himself possesses and which is of a form which enables it to serve as a premise or the conclusion of a deductive argument or of an inference of some other kind, this yields the required conclusion, that having reasons in general consists in being in a conceptual mental state, and hence, in particular, that sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs only if they have conceptual content. 'Brewer, 2005: 218'

The first step of the argument cashes out the particular epistemic role perceptual experiences play: they *provide reasons* for beliefs. Brewer argues for this claim in the first part of his book *Perception and Reason* '1999' The second step contains various general assumptions about reasons. Together with Brewer's own account of the notion of 'conceptual content' discussed in §3.4.3

aboveË, there are two main assumptions at play here. The first one concerns the relation between reasons and inference:

> ***The Inferential Constraint on Reasons***
> To give a reason *R* for a belief that *p* is to identify a content *q* which can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument or inference of some kind.

Or in BrewerËs own words:

> The first makes explicit the connection between reasons and inference, and hence between giving a reason and identifying contents of a form which enables them to serve as the premises and conclusions of inferences. ËBrewer, 1999: 150Ë

The second voices the requirement that a reason is a reason *for* a subject, from her Ëown point of viewË Ësee also Brewer, 1999: 150-2ËË call this the ËPerspectival ConstraintË

> ***The Perspectival Constraint on Reasons***
> *R* is a reason for the belief that *p only if R* is a reason *for the subject S* to believe that *p*.

There is much to be said about these two constraints. In the next section Ë§6.2Ë, weËl see how Brewer unpacks them and attempts to motivate such constraints. For now, suffice it to note that they are both supposed to capture necessary conditions on what Brewer calls ËreasonsË

The third assumption is BrewerËs account of conceptual content:

> ***Brewer)s Notion of)Conceptual Content)***
> A mental state *M* of a subject *S* with the content that *p* is conceptual *if and only if* ËiËËp is the content of a possible judgement by *S*, ËiiËp is characterisable only in terms of concepts which *S* possesses, ËiiiËp is of a form which can serve as premise or conclusion in an argument.

Here, as Brewer makes clear, clauses ËiiËand ËiiiËare particularly significant, since ËiiiËrelates to the *Inferential Constraint on Reasons*, and ËiiËis supposed to connect with the *Perspectival Constraint* ËweËl see how in the next sectionË Though I have already discussed some problems encountered by clause ËiiË, IËl ignore such difficulties here.

These two assumptions about reasons are taken to entail the general claim that reasons require conceptual content. When combined with the first premise that perceptual experiences provide reasons, this is supposed to entail Conceptualism. Thus, a more detailed reconstruction of BrewerËs argument

Ëwith some renumbering of some of his premisesËmight go as followsË at least as a first shot:

ËËË perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs about the external world.

ËËË *R* is a reason for *p only if* a content *q* is identified, which can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument or inference.

ËËË *R* is a reason for *p only if R* is a reason *for the subject S* to believe that *p*.

ËËË a mental state *M* with the content that *p* is conceptual *if only if* ËË*p* can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument of inference, and ËË*p* is characterisable only with concepts *S* possesses.

ËËË Reasons require conceptual content.

**Therefore,**

ËËË Perceptual experiences have conceptual content.

The evaluation of this argument is the principal topic of this chapter. Obviously, there is much to discuss. Is the argument valid? Are the premises true and well-motivated? Is the overall argument cogent? I argue that ËBACË fails in quite a few respects: ËËthe premises arenË very well motivated, ËËthey do not entail the conclusion, and ËËthe conclusion itself doesnË really support Conceptualism *per se*.

How the premises of BrewerË argument are motivated is considered in §6.2. The validity of the argument is the topic of §6.3, while the significance of the conclusion ËËfor Conceptualism is considered in §6.5.

## 6.2. Reasons, Inference, and Recognition

The premises of ËBACËencompass a mixed bag of ingredients, and reveal BrewerË commitment to various doctrines in epistemology and the philosophy of mindË some more controversial than others, as we shall see. The point of this section is to look at how Brewer defends such premises. Where relevant, IË try to situate some of the doctrines encapsulated in the premises to see whether Brewer successfully motivates them or whether he simply helps himself to the doctrines in question.

I wonË discuss all the premises. IË grant the notion of Ëconceptual contentË spelt out in premise ËËThe main issue will concern BrewerË conception of

reasons as it is expressed in premises ËÏand ÏÊË Before I get to that, a word about premise ËÏand reasons in general.

### 6.2.1. *Reasons?*

Depending on how it is construed, premise ËÏseems the least controversial of all of BrewerÏ premises. Surely, perceptual experiences play *some* role in our knowledge of the external world. That is, no matter where your theoretical preferences lie in epistemology, there must be some sense in which perceptual experiences can justify, ground, warrant, motivate, provide a reason for, beliefs about the environment. After all, epistemic agents appear to rely heavily on their perceptual experiences in their epistemic endeavours. And it seems to be an important desideratum on any epistemological theory that it respectsË even accounts forË that fact.[3]

According to Brewer, perceptual experiences *provide reasons* for beliefs about the environment. But ÏaËwhat are *reasons*, and ÏbËwhat does it mean to *provide* a reason for a belief? Brewer has surprisingly little to say about reasons, except for the few constraints he exploits in premises ËÏand ÏÊË[4] There are, however, many different ways in which to understand talk of Ïreasons for beliefsË

For instance, one might draw a general distinction between ËÏ*normative* reasons and ÏiË*motivating* reasons: in the case of belief, the former consist in propositions or factsË psychological or otherwiseË which *justify* the subjectÏ belief, while the latter consist in those propositions or facts, *consideration* of which *causes* Ïperhaps, in a certain rationally acceptable wayËa subject to form a new belief.[5] Usually, motivating and normative reasons are supposed to be

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[3] Thus, for example, even advocates of what Jim Pryor Ï2004Ëcalls ÏPure CoherentismÏË a well-known representative is Davidson Ï1981ÏË could accept premise ËÏË Pure Coherentists claim that ÏaËwhether a belief is justified is a matter of the coherence of the content of that belief with the subjectÏ overall set of beliefs, and ÏbËthat only beliefs *are* reasons for other beliefs. On the other hand, Pure Coherentists also insist that perceptual experiences *cause* beliefs about the environment. Nevertheless, they can accept that perceptual experiences Ïprovide reasonsËfor beliefs at least in the sense that experiences cause beliefs which might *be* reasons for other beliefs about the environment. Even on such a view, experiences play some epistemological roleË if not a primary one.

[4] The same is true of what Brewer might mean by experiences ÏprovidingËreasons. Perhaps, the thought is that, insofar as they respect constraints like the Inferential Constraint and the Perspectival Constraint on Reasons, Brewer intends his argument to be neutral between different conceptions of reasons.

[5] Another way to make what is apparently the same distinction is between ËÏthe reasonÏËa subject has *for* believing a certain propositionË i.e., reasonÏËin the justifying sense, regardless of

relatively independent from one another.[6] At least, it is possible to have a justification for a certain proposition *p* without thereby being led to believe that *p*, just as it is possible to believe *p* for a motivating reason that fails to justify one's belief.

There is, however, another way to understand the relationship between these two notions. On this alternative account, we can distinguish between two epistemic properties a belief might have: justification and well-groundedness. Belief in a proposition *p* is *justified* if there are considerations propositions or facts counting in favour of the truth of *p*. The belief that *p* is *well-grounded* if there are considerations in its favour *and* the subject believes *p* on the basis of these considerations (Pryor, 2001: 104; 2005: 182; Conee and Feldman, 2004: 105*ff*). Well-groundedness thus requires a motivating reason. But only a subset of motivating reasons are relevant: namely, those which are based on justifying or normative reasons.

Brewer seems to be essentially interested in motivating reasons (see in particular Brewer, 1999: 151-2). Indeed, it is this conception of reasons which is at work in his defence of premise (3) (see §6.2.3). But I suspect that Brewer also takes reasons to be justifying considerations (though he has little to say about the justificatory aspect of reasons, except for some considerations about rationality in premise (2)). On this ground, it seems best to interpret Brewer's talk of 'reasons' as whatever fulfils the following epistemic function:

> ***A Functional Characterisation of Epistemic Reasons***
> *R* is an epistemic reason for a subject *S* to believe that *p only if* (i) *S* has *prima facie* justifying considerations $J_1$, $J_2$, $J_3$, ... , for the truth of *p*, and (ii) *R is* whichever of $J_1$, $J_2$, $J_3$, ... rationally motivates *S* to believe that *p*.

I'll use this as a working hypothesis about what Brewer might mean by 'reason'. Though my evaluation of Brewer's argument won't rest in any crucial

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whether the subject actually believes that proposition (as opposed to (ii) the reasons) *for which* that subject actually believes such a proposition (i.e., in the motivating sense (Audi, 1993; Pryor, 2001, 2005). For the distinction between normative and motivating reasons in the practical case, see Smith (1994).

[6] Even if a certain genetic dependency holds: often, motivating reasons motivate precisely because they consist in justifying considerations.

[7] Note that such a notion of 'reason' comes very close to that of 'well-groundedness'. Except that clause (ii) falls short of entailing that the subject actually believes *p*: it is possible that, for some reason or other, the subject is *motivated* to believe *p* but doesn't come to believe it. Compare Byrne's (2005: 238) similar, but slightly distinct taxonomy of reasons.

way on this characterisation, it seems best to have some idea of what ËreasonsË are supposed to be at the outset. And the above characterisation offers, I think, a charitable interpretation in the way in which Brewer understands such a notion.

This characterisation is functional: it identifies the function reasons play in a subjectËs cognitive life. Another question about reasons is ontological: are reasons propositions, beliefs, psychological states of some other kind, facts, states-of-affairs, etc.? We will see that BrewerËs defence of premise ËBËclearly assumes reasons to be propositions.

Finally, a more important question for our purposes is what it means for an experience to ËprovideËa reason for a belief. Does it mean that the experience itself *is* a reasonË or, perhaps, that some of its properties are, such as its content Ëor representational propertiesË, for instance? Or is it rather that, although an experience is distinct from a reason, it makes such a reason available to a subject? This, as we shall see, will turn out to be a major source of difficulty for evaluating ËBACË

Still, premise ËAËis more or less uncontroversial. At least, opponents of Conceptualism tend to agree that perceptual experiences provide reasons for beliefs Ësee, e.g., Peacocke, 1992: 80; 2001: 253-9; Heck, 2000: 501Ë The crucial question, of course, is whether they conceive of perceptual reasons in exactly the same way as Brewer. In this respect, premise ËAËcan be granted in part because it is silent Ëor neutralËabout what it means for experiences to Ëprovide reasonsË The next two premises, in contrast, each encapsulate a particular constraint Brewer imposes on the notion of ËreasonË

*6.2.2. Reasons and Inference*

Why think that:

ËBË *R* is a reason for *p only if* a content *q* is identified, which can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument or inference.

is true? In other words, why believe that the reasons subjects have for their beliefs have anything to do with inference? And what exactly is the nature of such a connection? Here is what Brewer has to say:

> A reason is necessarily a reason *for* something; and in the sense in which we are concerned with such things, it will be a reason for making a particular judgement or for holding a certain belief [...]. To give a reason [...] is to identify some feature of the subjectËs situation which makes the relevant judgement or belief Ëor perhaps actionË appropriate, or intelligible, from the point of view of rationality. It is, [...] to mention

> considerations which reveal the judgement or belief [...] as at least approximating to what rationally ought to happen in those circumstances. Now, making something intelligible from the point of view of rationality in this way necessarily involves identifying a valid deductive argument, or inference of some other kind, which articulates the source of the rational obligation Ëor permissionË in question. This constitutes an explicit reconstruction of the reasoning in virtue of whose correctness this obligation Ëor permissionËis sustained. For *rational* intelligibility, or appropriateness of the kind revealed by giving reasons, just is that mode of approbation which is made explicit by the reconstruction of a *valid reasoning* of some such kind to a conclusion that is suitably related to the judgement or belief [...] for which the reasons are being given. Hence, in making essential reference to the relevant valid inference, giving a reason involves making essential reference to its premises and conclusion, and so, trivially, to the kind of things which can serve as the premises or conclusion of some kind of inference. In keeping with the orthodoxy, as I perceive it, I call such contents *propositions*. ËBrewer, 1999: 150-1Ë

The first point Brewer seems to be making here is that reasons have something to do with *rationality*. Such a connection, he appears to suggest, is brought to light by the fact that subjects are usually able to give, cite, or express, their reasons, and often do so in order to explain why it is rational for them to hold a particular belief.[8]

BrewerËs second point concerns the link between rationality and inference Ëor argumentË Here, he exploits the suggestion that, when giving or expressing their reasons, subjects often resort to arguments Ëand so, inferences: I take it that arguments involve one or more patterns of inference, and that reasoning through an argument involves such inferencesË This is because, in his own words, arguments serve the purpose of *articulating* the Ësource of the rational obligationËthat lies behind a subjectËs reason for her belief.[9]

[8] Note that even this is controversial, when considered in light of premise ËIË Tyler Burge, for instance, denies that perceptual experiences are reasons in this sense. He observes that adult subjects never cite their perceptual experiences as reasons. Rather, they cite beliefs *about* their experiences, Burge points out Ë2003: 529Ë More importantly, many epistemologists like Alvin Goldman Ë1979/2000: 341Ëthink that a subject need not be able to state her justification in order to be justified.

[9] Two exegetical difficulties. First, I take it, talk of Ërational obligation Ëor permissionËis meant to suggest the normative nature of reasons. In another passage, Brewer explicitly mentions the role of norms in Ëreason-giving explanationsËË1999: 165Ë Second, it is unclear what Brewer means exactly by Ëthe sourceËof a Ërational obligationË Does such a source consist in ËaË a general norm of rationalityË say, that one must have reasons for oneËs beliefs? Or in ËbËthe source of the reason itselfË for instance, the fact that PaulineËs reason for her belief about a kangaroo originates from her perceptual experience of a kangaroo? Or both?

This second point, presumably, is where at least some opponents of Conceptualism will part company with Brewer's notion of a 'reason'. For instance, Non-conceptualists like Peacocke (1992: 80; 2001: 254-5) accept that, if perceptual experiences provide reasons for beliefs, there are *rational* or *epistemic* relations between such reasons and the beliefs for which they are reasons. Rational or epistemic relations, however, need not be reduced to *inferential* relations, they insist.[10] To this extent, the Inferential Constraint on reasons in premise (2') is far from uncontroversial. The main question, then, is whether Brewer's remarks above suffice to support it.

I doubt it. Of course, subjects sometimes appeal to arguments when explaining their reasons for a particular belief. But is this a general feature of *all* reasons (and of all explanations of reasons)? Further, Brewer's point seems to be that, if they are to make a certain belief rationally intelligible, reasons are to be expressed or *articulated* in a particular way: a way that essentially involves reference to arguments. But this is a requirement about *giving* reasons in explaining one's beliefs to someone else: that is, about how subjects *express* or articulate their reasons. It's not necessarily about reasons themselves.[11] At least, it's unclear how a constraint on reasons derives from a constraint on how reasons are usually expressed in conversation.[12]

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[10] Other epistemologists have maintained that 'recognition of reasons that are neither inductive nor logical entailments' represent 'one of the most important advances of contemporary epistemology' (Pollock and Cruz, 1999: 36). As James Pryor (2005: 189) observes, it seems that my feeling of pain might provide me with a reason to believe that I am in pain. Such a feeling, however, doesn't seem to be the sort of thing, namely, a proposition, that can be inferentially related to other propositions. See also Goldman (1979/2000: 341), and Sosa (1980/2000: 137).

[11] Thus, notice the discrepancy between premise (2'), which is about reasons, and what I called earlier the 'Inferential Constraint on Reasons', which is about expressing reasons.

[12] Perhaps, the link has to do with a requirement of the *articulability* of reasons, which is often attributed to McDowell (1994: 165); see Byrne (2005: 240), Heck (2000: 520), Peacocke (2001: 257), Pryor (2005: 194). The idea seems to be that something is a reason *only if* the subject can articulate ('express?') it as a reason. But it's unclear why such requirement is true. After all, one might have a reason to ω which, as yet, one is unable to articulate, due to one's limited verbal skills. Alternatively, one might even have a reason one is unable as yet to comprehend, and so to articulate: see, for instance, Arpaly (2000) for discussion of such cases. And even if this articulability requirement were true, it's unclear how the fact that reasons are usually expressed in terms of arguments, combined with the claim that reasons must be expressible, entails that reasons are necessarily inferential.

In the passage above, Brewer also makes what sounds like a stronger claim. He writes as if arguments mentioned in giving reasons explicitly reconstruct Ëthe reasoning in virtue of whose correctness this obligation [...] is sustainedË In other words, arguments donË just serve an *expressive function*. What is thus expressed is a *reasoning*, the validity of which is alleged to be *constitutive* of the reason itself Ëor of the Ënormative forceË of that reasonË Presumably, the thought here is that such reasoning *determines* whether believing that *p* for reason *R is rational*.

> ***The Constitutive Role of Arguments for Reasons***
> *R* is a reason for *p only if* there is a reasoning ω Ëexpressed by an argument *A* which relates ËRËand ËpËËin virtue of which it is rational to believe *p* for *R*.

Thus, Brewer here moves from a claim about ËaËthe role of arguments in the *expression* of reasons to a stronger claim about ËbËthe *constitutive* role of arguments in determining the rationality of reasons.

The intended outcome of these remarks is easier to reconstruct Ësee Brewer, 1999: 154; and also McDowell, 1994: 166Ë It apparently amounts to what James Pryor Ë2005: 189Ëcalls the ËPremise PrincipleË

> ***The Premise Principle***
> The only things that can justify a belief that *p* are other states that assertively represent propositions, and those propositions have to be ones that *could be used as premises* in an argument for *p*. They have to stand in some kind of inferential relation to *p*: they have to imply it or inductively support it or something like that.

The idea is that ËËif a reason *R* can serve as a premise in an argument for the conclusion that *p*, then *R* and *p* can be inferentially related. But ËiËR and *p* can be inferentially related *only if* they are the same kind of thing: in particular, they must be the same kind of contentË since *p* is the content of a beliefË or *proposition* Ëas Brewer, 1999: 151; 2005: 218 puts it; and also McDowell, 1994: 48-9 on the *same content* hypothesisË

If accurate, such a reconstruction of BrewerËs motivation for premise Ë2Ë raises more questions than it answers. First, to repeat, even if it were true of all reasons that they are expressed in terms of arguments, this would only support a claim about the activity of *giving* and *reconstructing* reasonsË by itself, it

doesn't support the claim that arguments play a *constitutive role* in reasons, nor does it support the Premise Principle.[13]

Further, even if the arguments that subjects use in making their reasons explicit were *constitutive* of the rationality of such reasons 'and of the rationality of the beliefs for which they are reasons', it's unclear why this should hold for *all* reasons. Surely, believers don't always resort to arguments in giving their reasons. In perceptual cases, in particular, it seems as though they typically mention what they perceive, or the fact that they perceive it' and that's it! So it's unclear why the alleged constitutive role of arguments applies to all reasons' and to perceptual reasons in particular.

Another difficulty concerns what Brewer means by 'inference', 'argument', and 'reasoning'. When Pauline forms the belief that there is a kangaroo in front of her for the reason that she experiences such a kangaroo, it seems highly unlikely that the psychological transition from her experience to her belief rests on a conscious reflective process of going through the steps of an argument. Most of the time, at least, transitions of this kind seem inference-free. Subjects automatically come to believe what they perceive, without conscious reflection 'see, e.g., Burge, 2003: 528; but also McDowell, 1994: 48-9, n. 6'. Hence, it seems, Brewer owes us an account of what he means exactly by these terms.

Here, we can distinguish between 'a''reasoning' and 'inference' on the one hand, and 'b''argument' and 'inferential relation' on the other. While the former usually refer to some psychological process, the latter concern a certain kind of abstract relation or structure, which underpins such processes. Hence, to say that a reason $R$ is inferentially related to the content of a belief that $p$ is to make a *structural* point about the logical relation between $R$ and $p$. It need not say anything about the psychology of the believer. In particular, it is not to say that such a believer draws the corresponding inference when she forms a belief that $p$ for reason $R$ 'Audi, 1993: 238'.

Nevertheless, Brewer does suggest that arguments serve to reconstruct some *reasoning* in virtue of which the subject's reason makes her belief rational.

[13] For a similar point, see Pryor's '2005: 194' discussion of the relationship between the 'dialectical' and the justificatory notion of a reason' or between 'reason-showers' and 'reason-makers'', where the former are expressions or descriptions of reasons and the latter are facts which determine reasons themselves. Perhaps, Brewer's idea is that ''the fact that arguments determine the rationality of reasons *best explains* why 'i' it is that subjects cite arguments when expressing their reasons. But this is not what Brewer tells us.

Whose reasoning? Perhaps, all Brewer really demands is that the subject *be able* to engage in such reasoning, but doesn't have to actually draw the corresponding inference when forming her belief. Alternatively, Brewer might have a rather minimal conception of reasoning in mind. The subject's psychological transition from her experience to a reason *R* to a belief that *p* might be caused in such a way that it is *guided* in some sense by the existence of an inferential relation between *R* and *p*.[14] Perhaps, this is all it takes for the transition in question to amount to some inference or reasoning of some kind. In this respect, Brewer's talk of 'inferential relations' may not be as problematic as it first seems. Still, it'd be nice to know what he means exactly by 'inference' and 'reasoning' in this context.

So much, then, for Brewer's defence of premise 2. If it isn't too clear what considerations Brewer is appealing to, it's even less clear that such considerations actually succeed in motivating such a premise. Brewer, it seems, simply states a conception of reasons which revolves around the Inferential Constraint and the Premise Principle. Such a conception is controversial, and it seems as though Brewer hasn't much to say in its defence.

### 6.2.3. *Recognition of Reasons*

What about the third premise, the Perspectival Constraint on reasons?

> 3. *R* is a reason for *p only if R* is a reason *for the subject S* to believe that *p*.

According to Brewer, that premise gains support from the following line of thought:

> [...], we are interested here, not just in any old reasons which there may be for making judgements or holding beliefs [...] but only in reasons *for the subject* to do these things, to take things actually to be the way he believes them to be. These must be the subject's *own* reasons, which figures as such *from his own point of view*. It follows from this, first, that the subject's having such a reason consists in his being in some mental state or other, [...]. For any actually motivating reason *for the subject* must at the very least register at the personal level in this way. Second, it also follows that it cannot be the case that the proposition, reference to which is required by the first premise above [premise 2], in characterising the reason in question, can merely be related to this mental state of the subject's *indirectly*, by the theorist in some way. Rather, it must actually *be* the content of his mental state [...]. (Brewer, 1999: 151-2)

[14] Compare Brewer (1999: 165; and 1995: 241-2) for his discussion of norm-guided psychological transitions. However, there are instances where Brewer does seem to require that the subject *reflects* (a psychological activity?) about her own reason (1999: 160, 166).

Brewer's discussion of the Perspectival Constraint on reasons, it seems, comes in two parts: a part where he discusses that constraint proper, and another where such a constraint is linked with the Inferential Constraint in premise (2) (I). Let us take each in turn.

Brewer's first point is that, if a reason is a reason *for* a subject's her *own* reason, a reason *from her point of view*, the reason itself consists in a psychological state of the subject. The second point is that reasons are *motivating* reasons: reasons, consideration of which causes (rationally?) the subject to form a belief. From these two points, it is supposed to follow that the mental state a reason consists in must be available at the personal level and be part of the subject's conscious psychological processes, if it is to motivate that subject.

Here, Brewer not only takes reasons to be *motivating* reasons, but he also seems to commit himself to a particular *internalist* conception of reasons.[15] On such a conception, what motivates (and justifies) a subject *S*'s belief that *p* must be *accessible* in one way or another to *S*. There are many different ways to spell out such an Internalist commitment, depending mainly, but not only, on what sort of accessibility is at play (see, e.g., Alston, 1989; Conee and Feldman, 2001, Pryor, 2001; Sosa, 2003). Nevertheless, Internalists usually agree that justification consists in (or supervenes upon) mental states of the subject's mental states which are available at the personal level, so that they make good candidates to satisfy the accessibility constraint. As applied to reasons (in the sense specified above), this kind of Internalism requires that (a) reasons are mental states which (b) are accessible to the subject.

Brewer, however, appears to favour a rather strong reading of condition (b) (see also Brewer 1995: 238). While insisting that the motivational role of reasons is to be understood in causal terms, he also emphasises what it takes, on his view, for a subject to have access to her own reason:

[15] Surprisingly, Brewer explicitly takes his lead from Internalist accounts of *practical reasons* rather than from Internalist accounts of epistemic justification. Traditionally, according to the former, a subject's practical reason for an action *necessarily motivates* the subject to act (see Smith, 1994). Brewer, however, specifically focuses on the notion of accessibility, not just on motivation (1999: 154). In this respect, his concerns appear closer to those of Internalists about epistemic justification than those of Internalists about motivating reasons. Perhaps, the Internalist conception of practical reasons is connected with the epistemic view in the following way: a reason can motivate (necessarily) a subject only if that reason is accessible to the subject.

> [...], it seems to me that whenever it is correct to give a reason as *the subject's* reason for making a certain judgement or holding some belief which he does, then his having that reason essentially involves some mental state or other. For reason giving of this kind is only appropriate when the stated reason's status *as a reason* is casually [sic] explanatory; and this in turn depends upon the subject's recognition, or appreciation, in some sense, of its status as a reason, which essentially involves his having an appropriate mental state. (Brewer, 1999: 155)

Thus, it's not just that reasons are mental states *accessible* at the first-personal level to the subject. Reasons must also be actually recognised, and recognised *as* reasons. More precisely, reasons don't just have to be 'recognizable [...] as such' (1999: 163); they are 'necessarily recognized as such' (1999: 165). Brewer labels this the 'recognition requirement' (see, e.g., 2005: 227).

> ***The Recognition Requirement on reasons***
> *R* is a reason *for* a subject *S* to believe that *p only if S* recognises *R as* her reason for *p*.

Obviously, such a requirement on reasons for beliefs is likely to leave proponents of Externalist accounts of justification for reasons unimpressed. For instance, Tyler Burge denies that perceptual experiences provide reasons in this sense. For Burge, perceptual experiences supply some kind of warrant or 'entitlement', which 'need not be fully conceptually accessible, even on reflection, to the warranted individual' (Burge, 2003: 504, 547). Burge doesn't just deny that reasons have to be *actually* recognised as reasons by the subject. He denies that subjects must be *able* to recognise their own reasons *qua* reason, where the kind of recognition at play requires the subject to possess the concept of REASON among other concepts.[16]

In fact, even advocates of Internalist theories of justification and reasons may not go all the way with Brewer on this point. They usually accept that something is a reason for a subject *S* only if it is something that is at least access*ible* to the subject. This doesn't mean that the subject has to *actually recognise* her reason, or that she has to recognise it *as a reason.*

So, again, the question is: how does Brewer motivate such a strong internalist constraint on reasons? And what role does that Recognition

[16] Nevertheless, Burge's notion of perceptual 'entitlement' plays a very similar role to Brewer's notion of 'reason'. Such entitlement '(i) can serve to motivate causally the formation of a belief, (ii) it plays a justificatory role, (iii) can be defeated, and (iv) is determined' but not 'guided' by epistemic norms (*ibid.*). In this respect, it seems too quick to insist that Burge and Brewer operate with distinct conceptions of reasons.

Requirement play in the defence of premise (3). Note, first, that Brewer doesn't really attempt to defend or motivate premise (3) in the above passage. Instead, he seems to be teasing out various consequences supposed to follow from this Perspectival Constraint on reasons. In other words, Brewer seems to be taking premise (3) as a starting point to develop a conception of reasons in which the claims that reasons (a) motivate, (b) consist in conscious mental states, and (c) are necessarily recognised as reasons, play a central role.[17]

But it's unclear how all these considerations connect with the idea that reasons are reasons *for the subject, from her own perspective* (the Perspectival Constraint). In particular, it's unclear why a subject's own reason must be such that that she must recognise it as her own reason (the Recognition Requirement). Suppose $R$ is a subject $S$'s own reason. Admittedly, if $R$ is $S$'s own reason to believe that $p$, $R$ must at least motivate $S$ to believe that $p$. But couldn't $S$ be motivated by $R$ without necessarily *recognising* it as a reason?

It depends, of course, on what (recognising a reason *as a reason*) means. Although Brewer uses this phrase recurrently, he is of very little help in determining its exact content. Does the recognition of a reason *as* a reason require (i) possession of the concept of REASON, which (ii) must be correctly applied to the reason thus recognised? That is, is recognition of reasons factive, such that if one recognises one's reason $R$, it is a fact that one has $R$? Does such recognition amount to (iii) a belief, or does it involve knowledge, or some psychological state of some other type? And (iv) what is the content of such recognition: for instance, does recognition of a reason $R$ *as a reason* involve the recognition that one's reason for $p$ makes it rational to believe that $p$?

Without a clear specification of how much Brewer puts into this Recognition Requirement, it is difficult to evaluate how such a requirement connects with the Perspectival Constraint that reasons are reasons *for* the subject. If, by (recognition of a reason as such), Brewer simply means that the subject is motivated to believe that $p$ by her reason, then the connection between these two requirements is quite tight. On the other hand, if

[17] This condition of recognition apparently connects with McDowell's (1994: 52-3, 166) requirement that reasons can be the object of (self-scrutiny), self-reflection, or rational evaluation (see Brewer, 2005: 227; and also Byrne, 2005; Heck, 2000: 512-3; Peacocke, 2001: 255-6). At least, recognition seems to be presupposed in such a (self-scrutinizing) requirement: in order to be able to self-reflect about one's reasons and evaluate them rationally, I take it, one must first be able to recognise them as such. In this respect, though, Brewer's Recognition requirement seems weaker than McDowell's self-scrutiny requirement.

recognition of a reason involves the deployment of various conceptual capacities in thoughts *about* the subjectÖs reason, it seems possible that, in some cases at least, the Perspectival and Recognition Requirements come apart. For instance, a subject might be motivated to believe that *p* at a certain time *t* without necessarily *thinking* at *t* that *R* is her reason for *p*Ö though *R is* her reason at *t*. Indeed, itÖs hard to resist the impression that by Örecognition of a reason as a reasonÖ, Brewer imposes a rather demanding constraint on reasons such that, in order to have a reason, a subject must actually think of it as a reason. ItÖs hard to resist the impression that Brewer over-intellectualises reasons.[18]

Another issue in need of clarification is BrewerÖs talk of Öappropriate mental statesÖ in connection with the Recognition Requirement. He says that recognition of a reason as such involves on the part of the subject an Öappropriate mental stateÖÖBrewer, 1999: 155Ö There are, however, at least two different points he might be making.

First, he might be saying that having a reason for a belief Öconsists inÖ a certain *mental* state *of* the subject because reasons for beliefs are supposed to be the subjectÖs *own reasons*. But itÖs not entirely clear whether Brewer thinks that ÖÖa reason must involve some mental state *of the subject* so that she recognises the reason *as her own*; or whether ÖiÖa reason must be some *mental* state of the subject so that she can *recognise* it as a reason? Neither seems particularly convincing. If ÖÖ, why does a reason have to be a *mental state* of the subject, rather than some other property of the subjectÖs situation, say? As for ÖiÖ, it is plainly false as a constraint on recognition *simpliciter*: in order for recognition of *x* to be possible, it isnÖt required that *x* itself is a mental state. I can recognise kangaroos, although kangaroos arenÖt mental states of mine. Why should recognition *of reasons* be any different? For instance, if oneÖs reason were a *fact* or a true proposition Öather than a mental stateÖ, itÖs unclear why this should make it any less recognis*able* as oneÖs reason.

Second, the point Brewer might be making with his talk of Öan appropriate mental stateÖ required to satisfy the Recognition Requirement is that the subject must have some mental state of recognition Öof her reasonÖ Indeed, it should be uncontroversial that recognition typically consists in some psychological stateÖ regardless of how to specify such a state exactly. But, of course, a psychological state of recognition is distinct from whatever is being

[18] See also Byrne Ö005: 244, n. 22Öon the implausibility of such a constraint. Nomy ArpalyÖs Ö000Öcases seem relevant here too.

recognised. Hence, if recognition of reasons requires recognitional states, it doesn't follow that reasons – what is being recognised – *are* themselves mental states of the subject.

Recall that, according to Brewer, reasons are supposed to be mental states because, in the first place, they motivate subjects to form/hold certain beliefs. Here, the thought appears to be that reasons must be mental states because, *qua* mental states, they are the right kind of thing to cause other mental states like beliefs. However, once the Recognition Requirement is on the table, things get a bit more complicated. One might ask what, according to Brewer, causes the subject to be motivated to believe that $p$. Is it her reason $R$ for $p$, or is it rather her recognitional state that $R$ is a reason for $p$? If the latter, reasons themselves don't really motivate: the *recognition* of reasons plays this motivational role. On the other hand, if reasons themselves motivate, there doesn't seem to be any need for an additional mental state of recognition of a reason. Insofar as *motivation* is concerned, recognition is redundant.

Brewer, however, may conceive of the Recognition Requirement only as a *necessary* condition on motivation, so that one cannot be motivated by a reason without recognising it as such. Perhaps, the idea is that, 'in order to causally motivate a belief, a reason $R$ must be a mental state $x$, but 'it' $x$ can play that motivational role only in the presence of another mental state $y$, where $y$ is a state of recognition of $x$ as a reason.

I now turn to the second part of Brewer's motivations for '3'. Where the first part of Brewer's discussion of '3' focused on the claim that reasons 'consist in' mental states, the second part is concerned with the content of such mental states in relation to premise '2'. He writes:

> [...], we are interested here not just in any old reasons which there may be for making judgements or holding beliefs [...]' but only in reasons *for the subject* [...] to take things actually to be the way she believes them to be. These must be the subject's *own* reasons, which figure as such *from her point of view*, in virtue of her being in the sense experiential states which provide such reasons. It follows from this that the premise propositions, suitably inferentially related to the contents of the beliefs in question, cannot be related to the relevant sense experiential states merely *indirectly*, as some kind of extrinsic characterization on the part of the theorist. Rather, they must actually *be* the contents of these experiential states, in a sense which requires that the subject has all of their constituent concepts. '(Brewer, 2005: 219)'

This passage, too, raises many questions. The general idea seems to be that, if reasons are to be inferentially related with the contents of the beliefs for which they are reasons, such reasons must be thought of as the contents of the

mental states required by the Perspectival Constraint. But the content of which mental states? As we have seen, Brewer's discussion of the Recognition Requirement above seems to posit at least two kinds of mental states: (a) a mental state in which the reason itself consists, and (b) a mental state of recognition of that reason.[19]

In the passage just quoted, Brewer seems to favour (a), he is less explicit in his (1999: 151-2). He says that it is the content of the subject's *perceptual experience* that is to be inferentially related with the content of the belief for which it provides a reason. But what reason does Brewer offer to think that? For instance, why not think instead that it is the content of the subject's *recognitional state*, which is inferentially related to the content of her belief? Brewer defends (a) by saying, again, that (i) a subject's reason must the subject's *own* reason, such that (ii) it cannot be *indirectly* related to the subject's mental state (b) by a theorist, as it were, and so that (iii) the subject must *possess the concepts* composing that content.[20]

But this is consistent with the proposal that it is the content of the subject's *recognitional state*, and not the content of her experience, which is inferentially related with the content of the subject's belief. For the subject's recognitional state is (i) the subject's own mental state, (ii) the content of which is directly related to such a mental state since it *is* the content of her recognitional state, and where (iii) the subject possesses all the concepts composing that content. As we shall see, this possibility threatens the validity of Brewer's argument in an important way.

[19] Indeed, a certain level of confusion arises concerning the ontology of reasons on Brewer's account. This relates to the question whether Brewer's talk of experiences as 'providing' reasons means that experiences are distinct from, but provide, reasons, or whether it means that experiences *are* reasons. The Inferentialist Constraint in premise (2) suggests that reasons are propositions, so that they can be inferentially related to the content of beliefs for which they are reasons. The Perspectival Constraint in premise (3), however, suggests that reasons 'consist in' mental states 'accessible at the personal level'. Which is it? Are reasons (i) mental states like perceptual experiences, or (ii) their content? Brewer's Recognition Requirement suggest a third possibility: that the proposition inferentially related to the subject's belief is (iii) a proposition *about* the subject's experience and its content, a proposition which might be the content 'for part thereof' of the subject's recognitional state of her reason 'another mental state'.

[20] It's not entirely clear what Brewer means by (iii), perhaps, the thought is that the subject must herself 'instead of a theorist describing her reason: Brewer, 1999: 152 'make the connection between her reason and her mental state', or that the reason must *be* the subject's mental state 'where a relation of identity between reason and mental state is taken to be direct enough'.

*Wrapping up.* In this section, I have tried to look with some care at the considerations Brewer advances in support of premises Ë2Ë and Ë3Ë of his argument for Conceptualism. We have seen how controversial some of the premises in that argument seem to be. They rely upon particular conceptions of reasons and of the representational content of psychological states, which are at the centre of various philosophical disputes. In this light, it would seem natural to expect Brewer to offer a substantial defence of the premises of ËBACË He doesnËt.

We have also seen that, insofar as he does attempt to motivate such premises, itËs far from clear that he succeeds. For instance, BrewerËs defence of the Inferentialist Constraint on reasons shifts from considerations about how subjects express their reasons to considerations about the reasons themselves. As for premise Ë3Ë, we have seen that Brewer does not really attempt to motivate that premise: instead, he interprets it in terms of even stronger requirements on reasonsË like the Recognition Requirement, for instance. Not only does Brewer fail to motivate such stronger constraints on reasons, but his discussion makes it difficult to see how exactly he understands such requirements. In particular, itËs unclear what kind of recognition is at play in the Recognition Requirement. ItËs also unclear what types of mental states are presupposed by the Perspectival Constraint on reasons.

As we shall see in the next section, the fact that there seems to be more than one way of reading premise Ë3Ë is the source of a major difficulty for Brewer. Clearly, the point of premises Ë2Ë and Ë3Ë in BrewerËs argument is to connect reasons with conceptualisation. Thus, premises Ë2Ë and Ë3Ë impose certain constraints on reasons such as ËiË inferential connectedness with the content of beliefs and ËiiË recognisability of reasons as such. According to premise Ë4Ë, which expresses BrewerËs conception of conceptual content, only mental states with a conceptual content can satisfy such constraints.

Premise Ë3Ë in particular is meant to establish that reasons involve psychological states available at the personal level, the content of which can be inferentially related with the content of beliefsË in accordance with premise Ë2Ë Presumably, the thought is that *perceptual experiences* are such psychological states, and that they satisfy such constraints. The problem, however, is that what Brewer says in favour of that premiseË and the considerations he derives from itË is compatible with the possibility that premise Ë3Ë is true, not of the subjectËs experience itself, but of her *recognition* of that experience as her reason.

### 6.3. Is the Argument Valid?

So far, we have seen that the premises of ËBACËare neither uncontroversial, nor satisfactorily motivated. At this point, then, opponents of Conceptualism might just dismiss BrewerËs argument. But this is a too easy way out. Even though Brewer fails to properly motivate the premises of ËBACË, one shouldnËt rule out that itËs possible to do much better.

However, even if the premises of ËBACËwere better motivated, there might still be ways to resist the argument. For instance, one might insist that premise Ë2Ëdoesnt in fact apply to perceptual experiencesË that if such an inferential constraint applies to reasons provided by other beliefs, it need not apply to *all* reasons Ëand not to perceptual reasons in particularË Alternatively, one might reject premise Ë3Ëand argue that subjects need not recognise their reasons as such. One might also reject premise Ë4ËË or, at least, deny that Ë4Ëprovides sufficient conditions for a content to count as conceptual.[21] One might even combine these responses and reject all three premises.

One worry at this point is that the evaluation of BrewerËs argument could easily lead to a stalemate about the truth of one Ëor moreËof the premises. Conceptualists might come up with additional motivations in support of premises Ë2Ë, Ë3Ëand Ë4Ë In turn, their opponents will attempt to disarm such arguments, and provide arguments of their own against BrewerËs conception of reasons. Hence, if one is after a more compelling resolution of BrewerËs argument, another kind of response seems desirable.

If many Non-conceptualists reject some of the constraints Brewer imposes on reasons Ëat least, insofar as they apply to perceptual reasonsË, some Non-conceptualists could very well embrace BrewerËs conception of reasons and still reject Conceptualism. Such a possibility, if it is one, suggests that the premises of ËBACËdonË quite entail its conclusionË and that the argument isnË valid.

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[21] Of course, taken in isolation, none of the three conditions captured in premise Ë4Ëis sufficient to make a content count as conceptual. For instance, certain types of non-conceptual contentsË such as non-conceptualised sets of possible worldsË can certainly be inferentially related with one another, or even with conceptual contentsË fregean contents composed of concepts, say Ësee, e.g., Byrne, 2005: 239Ë The question is whether or not the conditions captured in Ë4Ëare *jointly* sufficient for conceptual content. If one was prepared to deny that they are sufficient, one could then argue that BrewerËs argument is invalid: the fact that reasons require satisfaction of the conditions in premise Ë4Ëneed not entail that reasons require conceptual content.

Here, I will sketch two responses to Brewer's argument, both of which grant all the premises in (BAC). Not that I think premises (2) and (3) should in fact be granted, especially not given Brewer's limited defence. But for the sake of argument, granting the premises helps to see where Brewer's argument really goes wrong, and in an interesting way. The first response (§6.3.2) questions the validity of (BAC). The second response (§6.5) considers whether the conclusion (C) really supports Conceptualism. In both cases, the answer seems to be 'no'.

6.3.1. *From Reasons to Conceptual Content*

First, let's be clear about how the argument is supposed to work. As we saw in the previous section, a slightly better formulation of Brewer's Argument for Conceptualism (BAC) might go thus:

(1) perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs about the external world.

(2′) *R* is a reason for the belief that *p only if R* and *p* are both propositions, such that *R* can be inferentially related with the content that *p*.

(3′) *R* is a subject *S*'s *own* reason to believe that *p only if* (a) *R motivates S* to believe that *p*, (b) *R* consists in a *mental state* of *S* accessible to *S* at the personal level, and (c) *S recognises R as her reason.*

(4) a mental state *M* with the content that *p* is conceptual *if only if* (a) *p* can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument of inference, and (b) *p* is characterisable only with concepts *S* possesses.

(5) Reasons require conceptual content.

**Therefore,**

(C) Perceptual experiences have conceptual content.

If I understand it correctly, (BAC) is supposed to work as follows. Premises (2′) and (3′) each isolate a specific constraint on reasons. First, that reasons are the sorts of things (propositions) which can be inferentially related with the content of beliefs. Second, that reasons are the sorts of things (mental states) accessible at the personal level (which can (a) causally (and rationally) motivate subjects, and (b) are recognised by subjects as reasons.

As it happens, these two kinds of constraint coincide (more or less) with the conditions in terms of which Brewer elucidates the notion of (conceptual

contentË That is, something is a conceptual content *if and only if* ËaËit is the sort of thing that can be inferentially related with the content of beliefs and judgementsË which are typical instances of conceptual contentË by serving as premises in arguments for the content of such states, and ËbËit is the sort of thing that is characterisable only in terms of concepts the subject possessesË which, presumably, is a condition on the fact that the subject recognises it as a reason.

From this, ËcËis supposed to follow. According to premises Ëa´Ëand Ëb´Ë reasons have certain properties, which, according to premise Ë4Ë only conceptual contents can have. Hence, ËcËreasons require conceptual contents. Finally, ËaËand ËcËare supposed to entail ËbË since perceptual experiences provide reasons and reasons require conceptual content, perceptual experiences must have conceptual content.

As we shall see, however, the conclusion doesnË follow. The problem is that, though Brewer *assumes* that premises Ëa´Ë Ëb´Ë and Ë4ËË as well as the intermediate conclusion ËcËË apply to the *content* of experience, this is precisely what Brewer hasnË yet established. In particular, everything Brewer says is compatible with the possibility that such premises are in fact true of another type of psychological state.

### 6.3.2. *Non-conceptual Content and Conceptual Reasons*

In this section, I outline a *possible* version of Non-conceptualism, which endorses all the premises of BrewerËs argument, but rejects the conclusion. I donË mean to suggest that such a conception of the non-conceptual content of experience Ëand of the role it plays in providing reasons for beliefsËis the best option on the market. The important point is that its availability in logical space shows BrewerËs argument to be invalid.

Suppose that Conceptualism is falseË suppose it is false in an absolute way Ën the sense that Strong Non-conceptualism is trueË ItËs not just that *some* experiences have a *partly* non-conceptual contentË so that *not everything* the perceiver experiences requires possession of concepts Ëthat much would suffice to falsify Conceptualism, as we saw in chapter 5Ë Rather, perceptual experiences require possession Ëand deploymentËof *no concepts whatsoever.* Their representational content is entirely non-conceptual. Even so, it looks as though the non-conceptualist theorist can go along with all of BrewerËs premises, and coherently so. Here is how.

First, such a theorist can agree that:

ËËË perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs about the external world.

On her view, premise ËËis true in the following way: it is the *fact* that a subject has a certain perceptual experience which *is* the subjectËs reason. Thus, if a subject perceives, say, a kangaroo, it is a *fact* that the subject has a perceptual experience with non-conceptual content representing a kangaroo in front of her. Such a fact can be described, for instance, by the following proposition:[22]

I have a visual experience of a red kangaroo in front of me.

On such a view, the fact described by this proposition *is* the subjectËs reason to believe the proposition that

There is a red kangaroo in front of me.

In this respect, the subjectËs reason can be said to ËconsistË in her experience: insofar as such an experience is a constitutive part of the fact that it occurs in her, her experience is a constitutive part of her reason. The important point is that the subjectËs reason isnËt identical with her experience, but with the *fact* that she has such an experience. Further, the subjectËs experience is not only *constitutive* of the relevant factË it *provides* her with such a reason at least in the sense that her experience makes the fact that she is having such an experience accessible in some way to her. By having such an experience, the subject is made aware of that fact.

Our Non-conceptualist can also accept premise Ë´ËË as well as some of the considerations Brewer mentions in its support:

Ë´Ë *R* is a reason for the belief that *p only if R* and *p* are both propositions, such that *R* can be inferentially related with the content that *p*.

For instance, it is true on her view that a subject can cite the *fact* that she is having an experience of a kangaroo as her reason for believing that there is a kangaroo in front of her. Indeed, when asked why she believes there is a kangaroo in front of her, this is precisely what the subject cites as her reason:

[22] Note that such a proposition isnËt the content of the subjectËs experience, but a proposition describing a fact *about* the subjectËs experience: that it occurs in *S*. Of course, the proposition in question also embeds a ËpartialËdescription of the non-conceptual content of the subjectËs experience. That a description of such non-conceptual content is available and uses concepts doesnËt make such content itself conceptual, though.

I have a visual experience of a red kangaroo in front of me.

The Non-conceptualist can also say that a subjectÖs reason makes her belief *rational*, and does so in a way thatÖs consistent with the Inferential Constraint on reasons as well as the Constitutive Role of Arguments. The subjectÖs reason makes her belief rational, due to the existence of some argument in virtue of which it is rational for her to believe that there is a kangaroo in front of her because of the fact that she is having an experience of such a kangaroo. Of course, the fact that she is having such an experience may not literally *figure* in the argument in question. Rather, a proposition *describing* such a fact figures as a premise in such an argument. Nevertheless, it is true that the subjectÖs reasonÖ the fact that she is having an experience of a kangarooÖ can be mentioned in the premise of an argument for the conclusion that there is a kangaroo in front of her.

In which case, the Premise Principle is true too, on this non-conceptualist picture: the subjectÖs reason can be inferentially related with the content of her belief. The proposition above describes the subjectÖs reasonÖ the *fact* that she is having an experience of a kangaroo. This proposition can be inferentially related, *via* an argument, to the conclusion that there is a kangaroo in front of herÖ the propositional content of her belief. Importantly, on this view, it is not the *content* of the subjectÖs experience that is so related to the content of the subjectÖs beliefÖ but a proposition describing her reasons Öi.e., that fact that she is having such an experienceÖ

Next, this possible non-conceptualist theorist can agree that the fact that the subject is having an experience of a kangaroo is a reason *for the subject* to form the relevant belief. That theorist can also accept the Recognition Requirement: that such a fact is a reason *for* the subject *only if* the subject *recognises* that fact *as a reason.* Hence, our Non-conceptualist will assent to premise Öj´Ö

Öj´Ö *R* is a subject *S*Ös *own* reason to believe that *p only if* ÖaÖ*R motivates S* to believe that *p*, ÖbÖ*R* consists in a *mental state* of *S* accessible to *S* at the personal level, and ÖcÖ*S recognises R as her reason.*

Presumably, the subjectÖs recognition that the perceptual fact in question is a reason for her will involve some recognitional stateÖ like a beliefÖ with the content that

> The fact that I have a visual experience of a red kangaroo in front of me is a reason for believing that there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

In this regard, the non-conceptualist theorist will agree that reasons, if they are to be recognised as such, Ëconsist inËsome *mental state* of the subject. In fact, this will be true on the Non-conceptualistËs story in at least two ways. First, as we have seen, the subjectËs reason is in some way constituted by her perceptual experienceË a mental state. Of course, the fact that she is having such an experience isnËt itself a mental state: itËs a fact *about the occurrence of a mental state*. Nevertheless, the subjectËs reason Ëconsists inËa mental state of hersË at least partly, since her experience is constitutive of that fact. Second, the subjectËs recognitional stateË her belief that she is having an experience of a kangaroo, and that it is a reason for her belief about a kangarooË is a mental state too.

Also, our non-conceptualist theorist can agree that reasons for beliefs *motivate* the subject to believe. The fact that the subject has an experience of a kangaroo motivates her to believe that there is a kangaroo in front of her. Such motivation is at least causal. The subjectËs reasonË the occurrence of an experience of a kangaroo inË causes her to form a belief that there is a kangaroo in front of her. Admittedly, certain background conditions are required for such a causal relation to hold. Such conditions are likely to include the subjectËs recognitional belief. Thus, the subjectËs belief that there is a kangaroo in front of her may counterfactually depend, not just on the fact that she is having an experience of that kangaroo, but also on her belief that she has such an experience and on her belief that having such an experience is a reason for her belief.

Finally, the Non-conceptualist can also make sense of BrewerËs claim that the subjectËs reason consists in a mental state, the content of which is inferentially related with the content of her belief about a kangaroo. For one thing, the content of the subjectËs recognitional belief can be inferentially related with the content of her belief that there is a kangaroo in front of her. Obviously, the content of such a recognitional belief refers, among other things, to the subjectËs reasonË the *fact* that she is having an experience of a kangaroo. And the proposition describing that fact can be inferentially related with the proposition that there is a kangaroo in front of her.[23]

[23] Also, the representational content of the subjectËs experience is likely to be described by the proposition describing such a fact. And so, the representational content of the subjectËs

Premise Ë4Ëraises no problem:

Ë4Ë a mental state *M* with the content that *p* is conceptual *only if* ëaË*p* can serve as a premise or conclusion in an argument of inference, and ëbË*p* is characterisable only with concepts *S* possesses..

Like many Non-conceptualists and Conceptualists, our theorist shares the view that *only* conceptual contents can be inferentially related to other propositions. Hence, the proposition describing the subjectës reason can be inferentially related with other propositions. And propositions have conceptual content, on this view. Accordingly, the subjectës recognitional belief has a conceptual content. But this doesnë entail that the fact described by such a contentË including the content of the subjectës experienceË is itself conceptual. Obviously, the fact that a recognitional belief has conceptual content need not imply that what is being recognised is conceptual or has conceptual content.

Now, given her acceptance of premises Ë2´Ë, Ë3´Ëand Ë4Ë, our theorist will be led to agree with the intermediate conclusion in Brewerës argument:

Ë5Ë reasons require conceptual contents.

Such a theorist accepts with premise Ë5Ëthat the subject must recognise her reason as such. For her, recognition involves at least a belief about her reason. And beliefs, she agrees, have conceptual content. Hence, it follows that reasons require recognitional states with conceptual content.[24]

What our Non-conceptualist denies is that *perceptual experiences* have a conceptual contentË the conclusion of ëBACË

ëcË perceptual experiences must have a conceptual content.

experience can be inferentially related with the content of her beliefË *albeit* indirectly, *via* the content of her recognitional belief that her having such an experience is her reason. Still, this is not the kind of indirect relation Brewer seems to consider. At least, the relation between ëaËthe subjectës reason ëthe fact that she is having an experienceË, ëbËthe content of her experience, and ëcËthe content of her recognitional belief ëabout the fact that she is having an experience with such contentËis not established by a theorist, but by the subject herself.

[24] There is also a sense in which Ë5Ëis trivially true. This Non-conceptualist accepts that ëëË perceptual experiences provide reasons *for beliefs*, and that ëiË*beliefs* have conceptual content. In which case, she obviously endorses the view that reasons ërequireëË in one senseË conceptual contents ësee, e.g., Heck, 2000: 516Ë

Nothing our theorist has committed herself to entails that she must accept Ë6Ë On her view, premises Ë2´Ë, Ë3´Ë, Ë4Ëand Ë5Ëare true of the subjectË recognition of the *fact* that she is having an experience of a kangaroo and that this fact is Ëprovides her withËa reason for believing that there is a kangaroo in front of her. In this respect, the premises of BrewerË argument are true of the content of the subjectË recognitional belief: a proposition describing the fact that the subject is having a certain experience with a certain content. But they arenË true of the content of her experienceË since, for our Non-conceptualist, perceptual experiences have entirely non-conceptual content.

If the version of Non-conceptualism just outlined is compatible with all the premises in BrewerË argument, this strongly suggests that such an argument is invalid. Even if one grants that premises Ë2´Ë, Ë3´Ë, and Ë4Ë, entail Ë5Ë, ËiËand Ë5Ë fail to entail Ë6Ë True, perceptual experiences are constitutive of Ëand provideË reasons for beliefs. And such reasons *require* conceptual content. But this need not entail that perceptual experiences themselves *have* a content which is conceptual.

The main problem with BrewerË argument has to do with the intermediate conclusion Ë5Ë, according to which reasons *require* conceptual content. In the way Brewer derives such a claim, it is compatible with a variety of interpretationsË and in particular, that reasons themselves donË *have* conceptual contentË but that something else does. Of course, if ËiËperceptual experiences *were* reasons Ëather than the *fact* that one is having an experienceË *and* ËiËif reasons *had* conceptual content Ëather than just requiring itË, the conclusion Ë6Ëmight well follow from the premises.[25] Indeed, I take it that Brewer conceives of premises Ë2´Ëand Ë3´Ëin such a way that there ought to be just *one* mental stateË in this case, a perceptual experienceË which satisfies all the constraints he imposes on reasons.

But as the possible non-conceptualist account of perceptual reasons just sketched illustrates, the premises of ËBACËneed not be true of a unique mental

[25] Note that the sort of Non-conceptualism sketched here doesnË rely on a weak reading of premise ËiËin the sense that experiences merely provide reasons. The Non-conceptualist can grant that perceptual experiences provide reasons, but also that experiences *are* constitutive of reasons. Recall: for the Non-conceptualist, perceptual experiences are reasons in the sense that they are *constitutive* of the fact that the subject has an experience, where that fact *is* the subjectË reason. Perceptual experiences provide reasons in the sense that they make that fact available to the subject. Furthermore, even if the argument presented here did rely on such a weak reading of premise ËiË, Brewer has offered no reason to think that premise ËiËshould be interpreted as saying, not just that experiences *provide* reasons, but that theyË or their contentsË *are* reasons.

state. The Non-conceptualist appeals to *distinct* mental states to make sense of all of Brewer's constraints on reasons. In particular, she exploits the subject's recognitional belief, which has a conceptual content, but is distinct from the subject's experience. Such a state can account for the various considerations associated with the Recognition Requirement, while the content of that belief—the proposition describing the subject's reason—can accommodate the Inferential constraint on reasons. This interpretation of the premises of Brewer's argument is certainly not one Brewer would accept. For him, as I said, premises (2′) and (3′) are supposed to be true of the subject's experience and of its content. The problem for Brewer is that none of the considerations he advances make such an interpretation mandatory.

The Non-conceptualist story just outlined might strike many as implausible. But plausibility is not really the issue here. The point is that such a story presents a *possible*—and apparently coherent—way to make sense of Brewer's premises. If a Non-conceptualist can do this without accepting the conclusion of (BAC), it looks as though the premises of Brewer's argument do not entail its conclusion.

### 6.4. Second-order Explanations

Can Brewer block the non-conceptualist response sketched in the previous section, according to which (BAC) is invalid? He certainly seems aware that opponents of Conceptualism might interpret one of his constraints on reasons in a way that is more congenial to their own view. In particular, he considers how a Non-conceptualist like Peacocke (1992) might account for perceptual reasons. I shall adapt his remarks to the version of Non-conceptualism sketched above.[26] I begin with an outline of Brewer's response (§6.4.1), and then show why that response doesn't work (§6.4.2).

[26] Another response Brewer offers is that such a non-conceptualist explanation is only a 'quasi-rational' explanation of perceptual reasons. The point rests on the following analogy: for the Non-conceptualist, according to Brewer, a perceiver is like a skilled cyclist who adjusts the angle with which she takes a turn' and seem to do so without reason (Brewer, 1999: 160: after McDowell, 1994: 163). There are many problems with this response, which is why I shall ignore it here. One problem is that it's not clear what the point of the analogy with the skilled cyclist is really supposed to be. Another is that it is highly unfortunate that Brewer puts the point the way he does: he seems to be suggesting that the skilled cyclist doesn't have any reason to lean the way she does, because she does it 'without reflection' (*ibid.*). But surely, Brewer does not mean to say that perceptual experiences provide reasons for beliefs because subjects form perceptual beliefs by reflecting upon their experiences and their role as reasons—as was pointed out earlier, such a requirement seems psychologically implausible (although this seems to be a recurrent slip:

### 6.4.1. *The Second-order Challenge*

Recall that, according to our non-conceptualist theorist, the Recognition Requirement on reasons is met by the claim that subjects have recognitional beliefs with the content that their having a certain experience Ïa factËis a reason for a corresponding belief about the environment. Such recognitional states, we have seen, are supposed to be mental states available at the personal level, which contribute to motivate the subjectsËendorsement of such beliefs about their environment. At this point, an additional constraint Brewer imposes on reasons becomes relevant.

He writes:

> I call any account [...] a *second-order* account [...]. Its defining feature is the idea that the recognition requirement upon the provision of reasons for empirical beliefs by perceptual experiences is a matter of the subjectÏs second-order reflection upon the credentials of her first-order method of belief acquisition, where the first and second orders are independent [...]. ÏBrewer, 1999: 129Ë

As the name suggests, the idea behind *second-order* accounts of reasons appears to be that the subjectÏs second-order beliefs about her own experiences and their role as reasons play a central role in the way she recognises those experiences as reasons. It isnÏt entirely clear ÏaËwhat the contents of such second-order beliefs are supposed to be, nor ÏbËwhat exact role these beliefs play in the subjectÏs recognition of her reasons.

But what seems crucial for Brewer is that, on such accounts, subjects are able to recognise their experiences as reasons, *only because* they have second-order beliefs about *what makes it the case* that perceptual experiences provide reasonsË I presume that this is more or less what he means by the ÏcredentialsËof a Ïmethod of belief acquisitionËÏ*ibid.*Ë Hence, it seems, the beliefs in question arenÏt just about the fact that experiences provide reasons, but about how they do so.

So whatÏs so bad about second-order accounts of perceptual reasons? He writes:

> [...] a second-order account [...] appears committed to the view that satisfaction of the recognition condition upon the provision of reasons is in every case quite independent

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compare Brewer, 1999: 166Ë Of course, perceivers might be able to reflect *retrospectively* about their reasons. But then, it seems, the skilled cyclist can do the same. After her ride, she can reflect about what made her take the turn at the angle that she did, for instance.

> of the existence of the determinate empirical beliefs themselves. In the end, I think that precisely this tension is what is fatal to any second order approach (Brewer, 1999: 130).

This worry about the putative *independence* between the subject's first-order and second-order beliefs seems to go like this. If the subject's second-order beliefs about her perceptual reasons are independent from her first-order beliefs about the environment, it should be possible that the subject lacks the relevant second-order beliefs about reasons. In which case, it should be possible for that subject to have an experience of a kangaroo without thereby having a reason to believe that there is a kangaroo in front of her (see also Brewer, 1999: 162, n.12). Hence, the subject's experiences alone may not provide her with reasons. On this ground, Brewer urges that (first-order accounts) of perceptual reasons be sought (1999: 130).[27]

Assume, for the sake of argument, that second-order accounts of perceptual reasons are unacceptable: our Non-conceptualist seems to be in trouble. Recall that the possible non-conceptualist position I outlined above resorted essentially and *deliberately* so to the subject's recognitional beliefs about her reasons, in order to account for the Recognition Requirement. This suggests that the Non-conceptualist is committed to a second-order account of reasons. Indeed, Brewer claims that, in general, non-conceptualist accounts of perceptual reasons must resort to such second-order accounts (Brewer, 1999: 163-8; 2005).

Supposing for the moment that this point is correct, how does it rescue (BAC) from the charge that it is invalid? Perhaps, the requirement that no second-order account of reason is satisfactory ought to be regarded as an additional premise in Brewer's argument:

> (P) *R* is a reason for *S*'s belief that *p* only if *R* motivates *S*'s belief that *p* without relying upon any second-order belief, or instrumental reasoning, about *R*'s status as a reason.

But even if (P) did figure in Brewer's argument, it remains unclear how this extended set of premises anymore succeeds to entail the conclusion (C). There doesn't seem to be any straightforward deductive entailment from (E), (S), + (P)

[27] Another problem, mentioned very briefly by Brewer, is that young children seem to have perceptual experiences which provide reasons for their beliefs. And yet, Brewer seems to think, if second-order accounts were true, they would entail that children cannot have such reasons (Brewer, 1999: 106). Why? Presumably, because the sort of second-order beliefs at issue are beliefs which young children cannot entertain.

to ËbË[28] Perhaps, at this point, BrewerËs argument is best construed as an *abductive* argument. Rather than claim that the premises of ËBACËdeductively *entail* the conclusion ËbË, BrewerËs argument might be that ConceptualismË as opposed to Non-conceptualismË is what *best makes sense* of the constraints he imposes on perceptual reasons.[29]

Does BrewerËs argument succeed in this form? There are at least three reasons to doubt it. First, one might have reservations about ËBË For instance, there might be second-order accounts of reasons which do not face the difficulties Brewer alleges are encountered by all second-order accounts. In particular, there may be second-order accounts of perceptual reasons where the subjectËs second-order beliefs about experiences and their role as reasons are *not independent* from her first-order beliefs about her environmentË as we shall in fact see.

Second, one might wonder whether non-conceptualist accounts of perceptual reasons really have to be second-order ones. Brewer hardly provides an argumentË let alone a satisfactory argumentË for such a claim. For instance, he just asserts that PeacockeËs account of perceptual reasons is forced towards such a second-order account. But, in fact, it seems as though Peacocke does have the resources to avoid this consequence.[30]

More interestingly, one might suspect that Brewer himself is forced towards a second-order account of perceptual reasons. Indeed, it looks as though BrewerËs account has to be a second-order one, given the Recognition Requirement he imposes on reasons. Such a requirement demands that the subject, in order to have a reason and be motivated by it, must recognise her reason as such. But the recognition in question, it seems, involves at least a

[28] In particular, the addition of ËBËdoesnË require that premise ËiËis interpreted as saying that perceptual experiences *are* reasons Ëas opposed to the fact that one is having such an experienceË The two issues are orthogonal: it may be that ËaËperceptual experiences are themselves reasons, but that their recognition involves some second-order beliefs; and it may be that ËbËperceptual experiences are constitutive ofË but not identical withË reasons, or that they only provide reasons, even though the recognition of the reason thus provided does not involve any second-order belief.

[29] See, e.g., Brewer Ë999: 160Ë

[30] See, e.g., Peacocke Ë2001: 257-9Ë According to Peacocke, recognition of experiences *as reasons* requires a *conception* of the relationship between the *contents* of experiences and those of beliefs. Such a conception isnË second-order, Peacocke points out, because itËs not about experiential and doxastic *states*, but only about their *contents* Ë*ibid.*Ë Other recipes may be available to the Non-conceptualist to avoid this problem Ësee, e.g., Heck, 2000: 519-20Ë

judgement on the subjectЁs part about her experience and how it provides her with a reason. In this respect, such a belief is a second-order belief Ёor judgementЁ, distinct from the subjectЁs first-order belief about her environment.

If so, it isnЁt true that Conceptualism best explains perceptual reasons and the constraints Brewer imposes on such reasons. Brewer and Non-conceptualists alike have to face the worry about second-order accounts of reasons. In the next section, I look at the details of BrewerЁs own account and argue that, *if* it avoids the problem allegedly raised by second-order accounts of perceptual reasons, so can the non-conceptualist account outlined previously.

### 6.4.2. *Tu Quoque?*

LetЁs assume for now that second-order accounts of perceptual reasons are a no go. On this ground, non-conceptualist accounts of perceptual reasons like the one sketched above seem to face a problem. But does BrewerЁs account fare any better?

On BrewerЁs own brand of Conceptualism, it is the *conceptual content* of a perceptual experience that constitutes a perceiverЁs reason for her empirical belief.[31] According to Brewer, the *content* of experience figures as a premise in an argument for the conclusionЁ this is how Brewer takes perceptual reasons to satisfy the Inferential constraint.

Thus, suppose that Pauline sees a red kangaroo in the bush. Her experience might have the content that:

ЁЁЁ there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

An experience with that content, it seems, can be a reason for PaulineЁs belief that:

ЁiЁ there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

PaulineЁs reasonЁ the content of her experience in ЁЁЁ clearly satisfies the first constraint Brewer imposes on reasons in premise ЁЁ Surely, there can be an inferential relation between the propositions expressed in ЁЁand ЁiЁ just as *p* trivially entails *p*.

But does this satisfy the other constraints Brewer imposes on reasons? For instance, how does PaulineЁs reason in ЁЁmotivate Ёausally and rationallyЁa

[31] As Martin Ё001: 442Ёnotes.

belief with the content that ËiË, in such a way that Pauline *recognises* ËËas her reason for ËiË Suppose that, instead of being the content of PaulineËs perceptual experience, ËËexpresses the content of a hunchË or any content which the subject entertains Ëout of the blueË, as it were, and which she isnËt quite prepared to endorse. Nothing in the way ËËis specified makes it the content of an experience rather than that of a hunch. But if itËs the content of a hunch, it seems as though ËË, by itself, shouldnËt be a reason for Pauline to believe ËiË Surely, hunches arenËt usually regarded as providing reasons.

Perhaps, then, itËs better to articulate PaulineËs reason *via* the following argument:

ËªË I have a visual experience that there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

ËiË ω there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

where ËªË does express a reason to believe ËiË The above argument does ËarticulateË the source of PaulineËs reasonË even if it doesnËt explicitly articulate why itËs rational for Pauline to believe ËiËon the basis of ËªË In this sense, it seems that Pauline might recognise ËªËas her reasonË she might even cite the fact expressed in ËªËas her reason. Indeed, this is the kind of reason our Non-conceptualist favours. The problem for Brewer is that ËªËdoesnËt look like it expresses the content of a perceptual experience. Rather, it expresses the fact that the subject has had a certain experienceË what might be the content of a belief about that fact.

At this point, it is worth mentioning BrewerËs insistence Ë999: ch. 6Ëthat the representational content of an experience is essentially demonstrative. Perhaps, then, the argument articulating the rationality of PaulineËs reason goes as follows:

Ë**Ë this is a red kangaroo.

ËiË ω there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

Again, though, nothing in the way Ë**Ëis specified makes it the content of an experience. It, too, could be the content of a hunch.[32] But this is precisely what Brewer seems to deny. For him, there is something special about the demonstrative content of perceptual experiences:

[32] See, e.g., Martin Ëoo1Ë

> The suggestion [...] is that a proper account of what is involved in [the subjectÕs] *grasp* of such perceptual experiential contents, as revelatory of the way things are with persisting objects and their properties in the mind-independent world around him, illuminates the source of a personÕs epistemic, albeit defeasible, right to endorse those very contents in belief. [...] Perceptual experiences are essential to a personÕs grasp of certain demonstrative contents, whose reference to particular mind-independent objects and properties is achieved in such a way that his simply entertaining these contents gives him a reason to endorse them in belief ÕBrewer, 1999: 186Õ[33]

The idea, it appears, is that the demonstrative content expressed in Õ**Õis not just *any* demonstrative content. Rather, it is the demonstrative content of the subjectÕs experience, the grasping of which is constitutive of the subjectÕs Õapprehension of the factsÕ her Õ*epistemic openness* to the way things mind-independently are out thereÕÕ999: 204Õ

ItÕs not entirely clear how this suffices to distinguish the content of experiences from that of hunches. Why canÕ hunches be apprehension of facts too Õif they were, though, Brewer might respond that such hunches provide reasonsÕ More importantly, how does this help with the Recognition Requirement and the other constraints on reasons in premise Õ3´Õ Brewer doesnÕ say. Some of the things he says are suggestive, though. For instance, he is explicit that, in order to have reasons, a subject must have a conception of reasons:

> Coming to believe something *for a reason* [...] essentially involves some conception of what one is up to in doing so, some sense of why this is the right thing to do. Thus, if a personÕ reasons are to be cited as *her reasons* for believing or doing what she does, then she necessarily recognizes them as such Õ999: 165-6Õ

But what conception is thatÕ what is its content? In the case of the demonstrative content of perceptual experiences, Brewer suggests that the subjectÕs conception must involve at least the following:

> [...], a perceiving subject of such [perceptual demonstrative] contents necessarily recognizes that the way things currently appear to him is the joint upshot of the way things are anyway, in the mind-independent world around him, and his current point of view upon them and the other relevant circumstances of perception. He is necessarily alive to the possibility of alternative presentations of *that very thing's being thus*, from different points of view or in different circumstances. It is this, I claim, which provides him with a reason to endorse those very contents in belief Õ999: 203-4Õ

[33] See also Brewer Õ999: 204-5Õ

Hence, it seems, such a conception amounts to the subjectÍs realisation that her grasp of a perceptual demonstrative content results from her own interaction with the worldÍ that her having perceptual experiences with such content ÍrevealsÍ the world to her.

But this is starting to sound like a second-order account of reasons. A subject can recognise the demonstrative content of her experience as a reason just because she has a conception of her experiences and their demonstrative content as constitutive of her Íepistemic opennessÍ to her environment. Hence, this is a conception *about* experiences and their epistemic role. And such a conception, it seems natural to assume, amounts at least to a belief or set of beliefs Ímost of which may be tacit, perhapsÍ Thus, the sort of conception Brewer appeals to in trying to explain how subject can recognise the demonstrative content of their experiences as reasons looks very much like a second-order belief about the subjectÍs experiences and how they provide reasons.

Furthermore, Brewer appears to suggest in the passage above that, when the subject entertains the demonstrative content of her experience, it is her grasp of that content, *together with* her conception of such contents, which makes it possible for her to *recognise* the content of her experience as a reason. Hence, it seems, even on BrewerÍs account, merely having an experience with a demonstrative content isnÍt sufficient to recognise it as a reason. For recognition to take place, one must have a conception of why the demonstrative contents of experiences provide reasons. But then, one might ask whether such a conception is independent from the subjectÍs first-order beliefs about her environmentÍ as this was supposed to be the source of the problem with the second-order worry.

Brewer seems aware of this pointÍ i.e., that the Íindependence worryÍcould be raised against his own account. But, he insists, his account of how demonstrative contents satisfy the Recognition Requirement in no way commits him to a second-order account of reasons:

> [...] my account is indeed first order in the relevant sense. A personÍs recognition of the reasons which are provided by his perceptual experiences for his perceptual demonstrative beliefs, as the reasons which they are for him to believe such things, is, on my account integral to his very understanding of the contents in question, so integral to his possession of empirical beliefs with such contents, and absolutely not derived from

> any independent reflection upon the general reliability of the method by which such beliefs are acquired [1999: 219][34]

The crucial point, I take it, is the claim that the subject's recognition of her experience as a reason is 'integral' to her first-order belief. What does this mean? Brewer is not, I assume, denying that the subject's conception of what it is for her to have a perceptual reason is *about* reasons, *about* experiences, and *about* how experiences provide reasons for beliefs. And if *being about* such things is all it takes for a state to be second-order, then Brewer isn't denying that a second-order conception ought to play some role in the way subjects recognise their experiences as reasons.

What Brewer *is* rejecting is a certain description of the role played by such a conception of the demonstrative contents of experience and how they provide reasons. By claiming that the subject's conception of reasons is *integral* to her first-order beliefs about the environment, Brewer apparently takes himself to be denying that the subject's conception of perceptual demonstrative contents as reasons is *independent* from such first-order beliefs. The point seems to be that the subject's conception of how experiences provide reasons is *constitutive* of what it is to understand the content of a first-order belief about the environment. On this view, the subject's ability to grasp the demonstrative content of her experience' and to believe it' depends on her understanding 'or conception' of the epistemic role of that content.

Hence, the point isn't so much whether the Recognition Requirement is to be accounted in terms of *second-order* conceptions, beliefs, or recognitional states. The point is whether such second-order states are *independent* from the empirical beliefs for which perceptual experiences are reasons. Brewer's own solution to that problem is to say that the subject cannot grasp the demonstrative content of a perceptual experience' and believe such a content' without having a conception of how such demonstrative contents provide reasons.

But now: if this additional claim suffices to get Brewer's account of perceptual reasons off the hook and turn it into an appropriate first-order account 'or at least into a benign second-order account', then the same machinery seems available to the Non-conceptualist. She, too, can claim that the subject's ability to recognise a particular fact 'the fact that she is having an experience of a kangaroo' as a reason is one of the components underlying her

[34] Compare also the comments Brewer makes at [1999: 238-9]

capacity to form the belief that there is a kangaroo in front of her. For instance, the Non-conceptualist might say that beliefs about the environment come packaged with beliefs about experiences and their epistemic role. Hence, it might be that a subject cannot understand the proposition that:

> There is a red kangaroo in front of me.

without being *able* to grasp ËËanother proposition *about* her experience:

> I have a visual experience of a red kangaroo in front of me,

as well as ËiËone about the epistemic role of her experience:

> The fact that I have a visual experience of a red kangaroo in front of me is a reason for believing that there is a red kangaroo in front of me.

In other words, a subject cannot understand what it means for a kangaroo to be in front of her without some grasp of what it is to perceive a kangaroo and how perception of a kangaroo supports the truth of a belief about the presence of a kangaroo. In this sense, the subjectËs recognition of her reason is *integral*, or constitutive, of her belief about the environment.

Furthermore, this dependence need not entail that the subject *reflects* her way from ËËto ËiËin order to form a belief about the kangaroo in front of her. The claim here is about a certain dependence between the subjectËs *capacities*: her capacity to understand the content of first-order beliefs depends on her capacity to grasp ËËand ËiË and *vice versa*. This doesnËt mean that, when the subject *manifests* such capacities, the manifestation of one capacity is dependent Ëemporally or otherwiseËupon the manifestation of another. Of course, the three propositions above may be inferentially related Ëogether, perhaps, with some other propositionsË But this need not entail that, when a subject forms a belief about the kangaroo in front of her on the basis of the fact that she is having an experience of that kangaroo Ëhe fact described by proposition ËËË she actually goes through the inferenceË namely, that she entertains ËËand ËiË reflect upon such propositions, and infer her first-order belief from them.[35]

[35] At times, Brewer seems to suggest that whatËs wrong with second-order accounts of perceptual reasons is that they require the subject to form first-order beliefs on the basis of an inference from her second-order beliefs Ësee, e.g., 1999: 129Ë If this is BrewerËs complaint, it hardly squares with BrewerËs own Inferential Constraint on reasons, which, under some interpretation, seems to have the very same consequence Ësee, e.g. 1999: 160-6Ë

If this is correct, BrewerËs second-order challenge falls short of presenting any serious problem for our Non-conceptualist. Whatever resources are available to Brewer to escape that challenge seem available to the Non-conceptualist too. In which case, this second-order challenge fails to block the charge that the Non-conceptualist can accept all the premises of BrewerËs argument whilst denying its conclusionË and hence, that BrewerËs argument is invalid.

*Wrapping up:* I have argued in this section that BrewerËs argument for Conceptualism is invalid. This is illustrated, I have claimed, by the availability of a non-conceptualist position, which accepts all the premises of BrewerËs argument, but not its conclusion. I have also tried to show why BrewerËs second-order challengeË the challenge that Non-conceptualists must appeal to second-order states to explain how perceptual reasons can be recognised as suchË does not really threaten this kind of Non-conceptualism. A similar worry threatens BrewerËs own account. Insofar as BrewerËs own view escapes such a threat, the very same resources seem available to the Non-conceptualist to alleviate BrewerËs second-order challenge.

### 6.5. Conceptualism Really?

Finally, I want to outline one last respect in which BrewerËs argument seems to fail. Even if the premises of ËBACËwere well-motivated and the argument valid, a remaining worry still lingers over the conclusion:

ËbË perceptual experiences must have a conceptual content.

The worry is: does such a conclusion really support the conceptualist view of experience, as I described it in chapter 5?

***Conceptualism***

iË*Possession Constraint.* For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, if *S*Ës perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x*, *S possesses some* concept *C* for *x* at *t*.

iiË *Deployment Constraint.* For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, if *S* Ës perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x*, *S deploys some* concept *C* for *x* in *e* at *t*.

iiiË*Supervenience Thesis.* Necessarily, any representational difference between the contents of experiences $e_1$ and $e_2$ comes with a conceptual difference between $e_1$ and $e_2$.

where theses ËËand ËiËeach capture a necessary condition Conceptualists impose on the representational content of experience, and thesis ËiiË summarises the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCË

We saw that there are two ways in which to reject Conceptualism, depending on how one denies thesis ËËand ËiË According to the first way, the representational content of perceptual experience requires no concepts at all:

> ***Strong Non)conceptualism***
> For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, if *S*Ës perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x*, it is **not** the case that *S* ËË*possesses* and Ëi*deploys* in *e* *some* concept *C* for *x*.

On this strong version of Non-conceptualism, perceptual content is entirely non-conceptual.

According to a secondË and weakerË way to deny thesis ËË, the representational content of experiences requires possession Ëand deploymentË of some concepts. But it is not the case that everything represented in a given experience needs to be conceptualised:

> ***Weak Non)conceptualism***
> It is **not** the case that, for any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, if *S*Ës perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents, *S* ËË*possesses* and Ëi*deploys* in *e* *some* concept *C* for *x*.

Hence, on this view, the content of experience may be conceptual in part onlyË and partly non-conceptual too.[36] In what follows, I shall focus on Weak Non-conceptualism only.

The availability of this weak form of Non-conceptualism in logical space shows how the conclusion of ËBACËdoesnË really support Conceptualism as such. Advocates of Weak Non-conceptualism can accept the conclusion of BrewerËs argument: that is, they can accept that, insofar as perceptual experiences provide reasons, they have conceptual content. This is consistent with the claim that the representational content of perceptual experiences is partly conceptualË but partly non-conceptual too. Hence, it is possible to reject Conceptualism as I characterised it above and still accept the conclusion of BrewerËs argument. Assuming that that argument worked, its conclusion

[36] Both versions of Non-conceptualism, we have seen, are committed to the denial of thesis ËiiË both ways to reject theses ËËand ËiËentail that the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCËis false. If itËs not the case that everything represented in experience requires the possession and deployment of concepts Ëor if nothing doesË, then there can be representational differences in experience without conceptual differences.

clearly rules out the strong version of Non-conceptualism. But it doesn't entail the truth of Conceptualism, since it is compatible with a certain kind of Weak Non-conceptualism.

Of course, in order to accept (b), the Weak Non-conceptualist might have to admit that only *parts* of the representational content of experiences—namely, those parts which are conceptual—provide reasons. I presume that not all proponents of Weak Non-conceptualism will be prepared to grant that much. Peacocke (2001), for instance, insists that experiences with non-conceptual content can provide reasons too.

Thus, the particular kind of Weak Non-conceptualism in question will impose some sort of restriction upon which parts of the content of perceptual experiences provide reasons. In accordance with (b), the Weak Non-conceptualist might say that:

(1*) for any object *o*, property *f*, relation *r*, ..., which is represented in *S*'s experience *e*, *e* provides *S* with a reason for a belief about *o*, *f*, *r*, ...., *only if* *S* possesses and deploys a concept for *o*, *f*, *r*, ...

Such a claim captures the sense in which the relevant kind of Weak Non-conceptualist might accept premise (1) in Brewer's argument.[37]

At this point, Brewer might attempt to defend Conceptualism against Weak Non-conceptualism by insisting that nothing warrants the sort of restriction imposed by Weak Non-conceptualists in (1*). He might argue that, in fact, every object, property, and relation represented in the content of a subject's experience provides at least a reason for some belief or other—whether or not the subject forms or endorses such a belief. Thus, Brewer might prefer the unrestricted:

(1**) for any object *o*, property *f*, relation *r*, ..., which is represented in *S*'s experience *e*, *e* provides *S* with a reason for a belief about *o*, *f*, *r*, ....

[37] Though I have phrased the argument in this section in terms of my own account of Conceptualism using theses (i), (ii) and (iii), the argument works just as well on Brewer's definition of 'conceptual content'. The conclusion of (BAC) leaves it open that only parts of the representational content of perceptual experiences provide reasons for beliefs. If Brewer's argument worked, it would show that these parts of the content of experience, by satisfying the constraints Brewer imposes on reasons, thereby satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions he imposes on conceptual content. What Brewer's argument fails to establish is that, if there are parts of the content of experience which don't provide reasons, they have to be conceptual too.

The problem for Brewer, however, is that he is in no position to argue that Ë**Ëis preferable to Ë*Ë By BrewerËs own lights, Ë*Ëis true. And it has to be true, because it follows from the constraints Brewer imposes on reasons Ëassuming such constraints entail the conclusion of BrewerËs argumentË Nor can Brewer say that Ë*Ëis unmotivated: it is motivated by acceptance of the premises and conclusion of BrewerËs argumentË and by the acceptance of ËBACËs intermediate conclusion Ë5Ë in particular. And so, Brewer cannot really respond that premise ËËshouldnËt be understood in terms of Ë*Ë

If this is correct, then ËBACËdoes not support Conceptualism. Even if BrewerËs argument worked, it would only establish that *some* strong version of Non-conceptualism is unacceptable. But *not* that *all* are! And if ËBACËis supposed to be the main argument for Conceptualism, one would hope that it establishes more than that.

### 6.6. Concluding Remarks

In chapter 1, I distinguished three problems of perception. Aside from the metaphysical problem, there was the epistemological and the psychological problems of perception. The epistemological problem of perception is: how to account for how perceptual experiences justify beliefs about the environment and serve as a source of knowledge of the external world. What I called the psychological problem of perception covers a range of different questions about the various properties we must ascribe to perceptual experiences *qua type* of psychological state. Among those properties figure the *representational* properties of experienceË their content. And I have argued that the dispute between Conceptualists and their critics is at heart a disagreement over the nature of such properties.

In this chapter, I have tried to evaluate the epistemic argument Brewer puts forward in favour of Conceptualism. Such an argument ties two problems of perception together: a solution to the epistemological problem of perception, it is argued, makes mandatory a certain answer to the psychological problem of perception about the representational content of perceptual experiences.

I argued that ËBACËfails in more ways than one. To repeat, given the controversial nature of some of the premises in ËBACË, without better motivations for such premises, ËBACËcan only serve to preach to the converted. Second, the argument is invalid and BrewerËs attempt to resist this non-conceptualist response fails. Finally, BrewerËs argument isnËt really an argument

*for* Conceptualism since opponents of Conceptualism Ësome of them, at leastË can embrace its conclusion.

In a way, it isnË surprising that an argument like ËBACËis unsuccessful. The epistemological and psychological problems of perception concern distinct questions about distinct properties of perceptual experiences. Though this isnË to say that these two problems are entirely independent from one another, itËs far from obvious why an answer to one problem forces upon us an answer to a distinct problem.

The assumptions Brewer exploits in premises Ë2Ë and Ë3Ë of ËBACË are supposed to establish a link between the epistemological and psychological problems of perception. From an epistemological claim about perceptual experiencesË premise Ë1Ë together with certain claims about reasons Ëand a definition of conceptual contentË, a psychological thesis about the conceptual content of perceptual experiences is supposed to follow. But as we have seen, different accounts of the representational content of perceptual experiences are in fact consistent with BrewerËs preferred answer to the epistemological question. Perceptual experiences can provide reasonsË in the sense constrained by Ë2´Ëand Ë3´ËËeven if their content is non-conceptual.

Conversely, Conceptualism might be compatible with a variety of views about the epistemological role of perceptual experiencesË as is Non-conceptualism. For instance, Coherentists about justification might agree with Brewer and McDowell that the representational content of perceptual experiences is entirely conceptual, and still hold that only beliefs are reasons for other beliefs. Perhaps, on such a view, perceptual experiences must have a conceptual content in order to cause beliefs with a related conceptual content. This possible view, if coherent, suggests that Conceptualism as such is in fact silent on the epistemological problem of perception.

CHAPTER 7

# *The Conceptualisation of Experience*

Why else be a Conceptualist? As I said earlier, key conceptualist figures like John McDowell and Bill Brewer have focused their attention on the epistemic argument considered in the previous chapter. Since, as we have seen, the argument can be resisted in a variety of ways, it is natural to ask whether there exists other argumentsËstrengthening the case for Conceptualism.

There seems to beË though most of these arguments arenËt discussed by Brewer or McDowell. In this section, IËl briefly survey four such argumentsË not that this survey is exhaustive, though it pretty much covers the main arguments to be found in the literature. These arguments come in three guises. First, IËl discuss two arguments that impose what IËl call ËognitivistËconstraints upon perceptual experiences, *qua* type of psychological *state* Ës7.1-7.2Ë Second, IËl look at a type of argument exploiting the existence of causal interactions between concepts and the content of experience Ës7.3Ë Finally, IËl review an argument focusing on some similarities between experiences beliefs Ës7.4Ë

None of these arguments, IËl try to show, are very compellingË though some are better than others.

## 7.1. The Understanding/Appreciation Argument

Perhaps, the most basic consideration supposed to motivate Conceptualism is the idea that, in order to be in a psychological state with contentË a propositional attitudeË a subject must be able to understand or ËappreciateË that content. Thus, Christopher Peacocke writes:

> [...], it is in the nature of representational content that it cannot be built up from concepts unless the subject of the experience himself has those concepts: the representational content is the way the experience presents the world as being, and it can hardly present the world as being that way if the subject is incapable of appreciating what that way is. Only those with the concept of sphere can have an experience as of a sphere

> in front of them, and only those with spatial concepts can have experiences which represent things as distributed in depth in space. (Peacocke, 1983: 7)

The argument in this passage seems to run like this (I call it the 'Understanding Argument' or 'UA'):

(1) a subject *S*'s perceptual experience *e* represents an object *o* as being a certain way *w only if S* understands/appreciates what *w* is.

(2) *S* understands/appreciates what *w* is *only if S* possesses concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, ...., necessary to understand/appreciate what *w* is.

**Therefore,**

(3) *S*'s experience *e* represents *o* as being *w only if S* possesses concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, ...., necessary to understand/appreciate what *w* is.

And so, the thought goes, the representational content of perceptual experience is conceptual: if it weren't, the subject wouldn't be able to understand/appreciate what she experiences. And by (2), what she cannot conceptualise isn't in fact represented in her experience. Presumably, the argument generalises to everything's and not just objects's represented in a subject's experience.

There is one major problem with this argument: why believe premise (2)? What motivates such a premise? It can't just be the following line of thought: (i) the representational content of *all* thoughts is such that, if one entertains a certain thought, one must be able to understand its content, and (ii) experiences are thoughts. This appears to presuppose that Conceptualism is true: that experiences are thoughts with the same kind of content as beliefs. Yet, 'UA' was supposed to offer a motivation *for* Conceptualism. Once this questionable line of thought is set aside, however, it's unclear what else might support premise (2) in the Understanding Argument.

Furthermore, it seems as though premise (2) is false. As many have insisted, it seems possible to entertain the content of certain thoughts without being able to understand that content's at least not entirely. For instance, a child might only partially understand some of the thoughts she entertains. Another example has to do with thoughts the content of which involves the natural kind concept WATER. On some externalist theories of content, one may be thinking water-thoughts about the substance one is environmentally related

[1] See Noe (1999, 2004: ch.6) for a rejoinder. Obviously, Peacocke (1986, 1989, 1992, 1998a, 2001b) has changed his mind on this point, since he is now a staunch critic of Conceptualism.

with, without necessarily understanding what exactly these thoughts are about. Thus, one may not know that water is $H_2O$, although one is in fact thinking about $H_2O$ when thinking about the water in one's environment. Thus, content externalism might lead on to reject premise (i).

More importantly, premise (i) seems false when applied to perceptual experiences. Consider the following example:

> THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE. What is in fact a stone from outer space suddenly lands on your desk. You have never seen anything like this before. Its color, insofar as it seems to have one, looks completely different from any color you might have experienced in the past; and likewise for its shape. It's not even clear that what is in front of you is an object.

This case suggests that a perceiver can see certain objects and some of their properties: her experience represents the mysterious stone as being a certain way *w*: even though she doesn't understand, and is completely ignorant of (even mystified, or baffled, by): what *w* is.

No doubt, proponents of (i)/(A) will deny that such a case is possible. They will argue, either (a) that the object in question is not represented in the subject's experience: and neither are its properties: or (b) that the subject can at least understand that the mysterious object in front of her is an object, that it has some shape and some colour: and conceptualises it as such.[2]

The problem with (a) is that it seems implausible. A normal subject is likely to be puzzled by such an experience. The subject's experience has an unusual phenomenology: still, it seems to represent some kind of thing in front of her. What kind of object is in front of her: and what its weird properties are: is the source of her puzzlement. She is not puzzled because her experience doesn't represent anything. She is puzzled because her experience represents something she doesn't know and doesn't understand. Thus, unknown objects and unknown properties can be represented in experience. Otherwise, how can the subject even be puzzled by what she sees?

As for (b): it simply misses the point. The question is not whether (i) the subject can conceptualise in some way or other what she experiences, but whether (ii) she *understands* or *appreciates* the way in which what she experiences is represented as being: in the sense that she possesses the appropriate concepts required for such an understanding. The subject in our example

[2] Or in terms of demonstrative concepts like *THIS* for the stone and *THUS* for the way *w* in which is it experientially represented as being. See chapter 9 for a detailed discussion of a similar move: the Demonstrative Strategy: in response to an objection *against* Conceptualism.

might deploy as many concepts as Conceptualists wish. Such conceptualisation, however, adds nothing to her understanding of what she experiences. She still doesn't understand what is in front of her, or the way in which it is represented as being, even if she can think about and refer to it in terms of *some* concepts.

Perhaps, proponents of EJA will insist that a normal perceiver is at least able to appreciate the way *w* in which the mysterious object is represented in her experience, in the sense that she is able to describe the way in which this unknown object *appears* to her.[3] Thus, in a weaker sense of 'appreciation', the subject may be able to appreciate how a mysterious object appears to her, even if she cannot understand what that object *is*.[4]

But this brings out another problem with argument EJA. The subject's judgement about how the mysterious object appears in her experience isn't to be confused with her experience and the content of that experience. That is, the content that *w* appears in such-and-such a way, or that *w* is puzzling and unknown, is the content of a judgement *about* the subject's experience and *about* its content. At best, it's the content of a judgement about the object of her experience and some of its properties, or about the way that object appears, formed *on the basis of* that experience. But it need not be the experience's content.

The problem is that, in order for the subject to understand or appreciate what *w* is, her experience must first represent the object of her experience in way *w*. That is, she must first be presented with the object of her experience and way *w*, before she can be in a position to understand or appreciate *w*, or before she is able to form judgements that *w* is unknown, mysterious, puzzling,

[3] Alternatively, they will press that the perceiver can at least understand that way *w*, the way in which the mysterious object is represented as being in her experience, is puzzling, mysterious. That is, she understands that this unknown object seems to have an unknown shape and an unknown colour. This means that she can at least appreciate what she experiences as something unknown, which she doesn't understand.

[4] This is assuming that the mysterious stone *appears* in such a way that is identifiable by the perceiver, at least to some extent, perhaps *as* some appearance of some sort with some shape and some colour of some sort. But the point of the example is to suggest that the visible properties of the extra-terrestrial stone are so strange and unfamiliar that a normal subject may not even be able to do that. Of course, it isn't easy to imagine (visually imagine) such a case, since it isn't easy to imagine something that may not fit any of our concepts, not even that of OBJECT, or our concepts of SHAPE and COLOUR. But this example is supposed to capture what is at least a metaphysical possibility. The point of the example is to show that such a possibility *must* be rejected by Conceptualists.

etc. At least, this is the sort of response a Non-conceptualist is likely to press. For her, the conclusion of ËUAËmight be true about thoughts based on oneË experienceË thoughts which *do* have conceptual content. But unless one simply assumes that perceptual experiences *are* thoughts with conceptual content, she will argue that argument ËUAËdoes not support Conceptualism. At best, if premise ËiËwere true about experiences, ËUAËwould only show that subjects must be able to have certain thoughts about their experiencesË or about the objects of their experiencesË in order to have such experiences. But this need not entail that the content of experience is conceptualË in the sense captured by thesis ËCË

Given the availability of this sort of response, itË unclear how proponents of this Understanding Argument could successfully motivate premise ËiËas a constraint on ËiË perceptual experiences themselvesË and not just ËiiËon judgements *based on* experience, or judgements *about* the experience. So much, then, for this Understanding Argument.

### 7.2. The Discrimination Argument

A loosely related argument for Conceptualism insists on the allegedly essential role of discrimination and categorisation in experience Ësee, e.g., Jackson, 2003Ë The idea is that ËiËperceptual experience involves discrimination and categorisation and that ËiiËthe latter are a conceptual affair. Call this the ËDiscrimination ArgumentËËDAË

ËiË a subject *S*Ë perceptual experience *e* represents an object *o* as *F only if S* discriminates and categorises *o* as *F*.

ËiiË if *S* discriminates and categorises *o* as *F*, then *S* applies the concept of an *F* to *o*.

**Therefore,**

ËiiiË a subject *S*Ë perceptual experience *e* represents an object *o* as *F only if S* applies the concept of an *F* to *o*.

Again, there are some problems with premise ËiË Why should it be true? Admittedly, most of us categorise and discriminate what we see most of the time. This fact, however, doesnË entail that perceptual experiences *always* involve discrimination and categorisationË let alone that they *necessarily* require discrimination and categorisation.

Another difficulty concerns what one might mean exactly by ËdiscriminationËand ËcategorisationËin this argument. I take each notion in

turn. We saw in §4.4.1 that there are at least two distinct notions of perceptual ËdiscriminationËFirst, there is

> ***Differentiation***
> *S* perceptually differentiates *x* from *y* *if* ËËSË experience *e* represents *x* and *y*, ËiËe represents *x* and *y* differently, and ËiiËthe representational difference between the perceptual representation of *x* and that of *y* is such that it can cause *S* to react differently to *x* and *y*.

where perceptual discrimination of *x* and *y* in this sense is merely a matter of differences in the way *x* and *y* are represented in experience. But there is also:

> ***c)discrimination***
> *S perceptually* discriminates *x* from *y* *if* ËËS identifies *x* as an *F*, ËiËS identifies *y* as a *G*, and ËiiËS recognises the difference between *x* being *F* and *y* being *G*.

where the discrimination of *x* and *y* requires not just a representational difference between *x* and *y*, but where such a difference is *grounded* in the distinct concepts the subject applies to *x* and *y* in experience.

Obviously, if the notion of discrimination at play in the Discrimination Argument is the first one, premise ËËwill be rather uncontroversialË in particular, Non-conceptualists will accept it. But then, it becomes unclear why premise ËiËshould be true. If, on the other hand, discrimination means *c-discrimination*, premise ËËis highly controversial and certainly in need of strong considerations in its support.

What considerations? Not anything will do, obviously. Since the notion of *c-discrimination* presupposes that the subject conceptually identifies the objects and properties represented in her experience, it requires that subjects possess and deploy concepts for these objects and properties. And so, Non-conceptualists are likely to respond that premise ËËin ËDAËis question-begging. Again, the Discrimination Argument was supposed to be an argument for Conceptualism. Yet, its first premise simply takes for granted that perceivers must conceptually identify what is represented in their experience.

Furthermore, Non-conceptualists will warn that considerations in favour of premise ËËcannot rest on the confusion encountered earlier between ËË perceptual experiences and ËiËjudgements based on such experiences. Non-conceptualists might well grant that, insofar as judgements or thoughts based on perceptual experiences are concerned, such judgements usually involve *c-discrimination*. But, they will point out, judgements based on experience are

distinct from the experiences they are based on. Constraints on the former need not translate into constraints upon the latter.

What about categorisation? Again, perceptual ËcategorisationËhad better not just mean the application or deployment of concepts in experience. Otherwise, premise ËËin ËDAËwill seem to simply assert the truth of Conceptualism. Proponents of ËDAËmight insist that *all* representational psychological states require categorisationË in the sense of the application of concepts to the objects and properties represented in those states. ThatËs just what mental representation means, they might sayË as reflection on the case of thoughts like beliefs shows. Hence, the truth of Conceptualism would be established by definitionË hardly a cogent or substantial motivation for Conceptualism.[5]

The Discrimination Argument thus fails in ways similar to the Understanding Argument considered previously. First, itËs hard to see how its main premise can be motivated in a way that doesnËt just beg the question against Non-conceptualists. Second, Non-conceptualists can always retort that, in attempting to motivate premise ËËŸ proponents of ËDAËconfuse two distinct psychological states: ËËperceptual experiences and ËiËjudgements based on such experiences.

### 7.3. The Conceptual Influence Argument

A similar response might be made to another argument allegedly supporting Conceptualism. The main idea behind such an argument is that a subjectËs sudden recognition of certain perceived objects and properties might bring a change in the way these objects and properties appear to her. In other words,

[5] Furthermore, such a premise seems false, if so interpreted. Again, the example of THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE considered in the previous section suggests that perceivers do not always conceptually categorise the objects and properties represented in their experience. In particular, they do not categorise objects and properties they are ignorant about.

Of course, they may be able to categorise such unknown objects and properties as *UNKNOWN*. But if distinct unknown properties are represented differently in experience Ëas in the case of the stone from outer space where the shape and colour of that stone are representedË then we will have a failure of the conceptualist supervenience thesisË thesis ËCË There will be representational differences in experienceË different properties represented differentlyË without conceptual differences, since they are both conceptualised as *UNKNOWN*. Can these subjects categorise the unknown properties they see in terms of demonstrative concepts like *THIS* and *THAT*? They may certainly ***conceptualise*** what they see in terms of such conceptsË i.e., deploy such concepts. What kind of ***categorisation*** this sort of conceptualisation amounts to is unclear, however.

deployment of certain concepts in experience might ensue in a modification of the contentË and phenomenologyË of experience. Christopher Peacocke describes such a case:

> You may walk into your sitting-room and seem to hear rain falling outside. Then you notice that someone has left the stereo system on, and realise that the sound you hear is that of applause at the end of a concert. It happens to many people that after realising this, the sound comes to be heard as applause: the content of experience is influenced by that of judgement. ËPeacocke, 1983: 6Ë

Similar examples are familiar. The perception of spoken words, for instance, is said to differ whether or not you understand the language in which the words are spoken. That is, recognition Ëand understandingËof those words modifies oneË experience of the sounds uttered by the speaker ËSeager, 1998: 187; Heil, 1991; Siegel, 2005bË Likewise, a suddenly recognised face Ëor objectËmight seem to appear differently to the perceiver ËDennett, 1991: 334-5; Millar, 1989: 145Ë the way it is represented in experience seems to change. Or consider JastrowË famous duck-rabbit figure. Recognition of the duckË or of the rabbitË may change the way in which the figure looksË as a rabbit, or as a duck Ësee, e.g., Budd, 1991: 79, 81-2, 97-8Ë

A related idea is that the more concepts a subject possesses, the more representational properties her experiences gains. Thus, for instance, William Seager writes:

> In terms of the aspects under which we can become conscious of objects, development of a richer set of conceptual resources is the acquisition of a richer set of such aspects. The entirely plausible implication is that the veteran astronomerË consciousness of the night sky is radically different from a five year oldË. The fund of aspects available to the astronomer greatly enriches the state of consciousness produced by the sensory data available from the stars and planets, etc. Ësee Churchland, 1985Ë It would be natural to say that the child and the astronomer get into distinct states of consciousness in virtue of the possession and deployment of distinct sets of available concepts which can figure as aspects under which they are conscious of the night sky.
>
> [...], the astronomer example reveals that it might be very difficult, conceivably even impossible, to retreat to a purer or more direct apprehension of the experiential content. Such content might, so to speak, be *erased and overwritten* with a thoroughly conceptualised version. ËSeager, 1999: 187Ë

Again, examples like this abound. It is said that the gustatory experiences of expert wine tasters are representationally richer than those of novices. That, in

[6] By Ëaspects under which we can become conscious of objectsË I assume that Seager means: the ways in which objects are represented in ËconsciousËperceptual experienceË their content.

general, the perceptual experiences of adults represent more things and more *kinds* of things than those of children and animals. For instance, possession of the concept MONEY allows one to see certain pieces of paper, not just *as* pieces of paper, but *as* bank notes.[7]

These considerations might be put together into the following argument for Conceptualism – let's call it the 'Conceptual Influence Argument' or 'CIA':

(1) if a subject $S$ deploys a concept $C$ for an object $o$ she has just recognised at $t_2$ and had not previously identified in terms of $C$ at $t_1$, $S$'s experience $e_2$ at $t_2$ represents $o$ differently than her experience $e_1$ at $t_1$ did.

(2) if two subjects $S_1$ and $S_2$ perceive the same object $o$ and $S_1$ possesses and deploys some concept $C$ applicable to $o$ which $S_2$ does not possess, then $S_1$'s experience $e_1$ represents $o$ differently than $S_2$'s experience $e_2$ of $o$.

(3) if a subject $S$ possesses more concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, $C_3$, ..., applicable to an object $o$, then $S$ is able to enjoy more experiences of $o$, which represent $o$ differently.

**Therefore,**

(4) Conceptualism is true.

It's not entirely clear whether such an argument is valid – at least not as a deductive argument. Perhaps, the thought is that Conceptualism provides the only available explanation – or at least, the best explanation – of the facts reported in premises (1), (2) and (3).[8] And so, the argument is best thought of as an abductive argument. Presumably, the thought is that it's only because experiences have conceptual content that their content can be influenced or modified by the deployment of concepts.

This argument fails too, though. First of all, it fails to support Conceptualism because Conceptualism isn't necessarily the best explanation of premises (1), (2), and (3) – at least, it's not the only available one. For instance, a

[7] See also Martin (1992a: 755).

[8] Provided, of course, that they are facts. Note that (1) and (2) differ in that (1) concerns representational changes over time for the same perceiver while (2) concerns representational changes across different perceivers at the same time. Both are weaker than (3). The first two premises make particular claims about particular situations. Furthermore, they only say that the two experiences under consideration will be different in content. Premise (3) makes a more general claim, and suggests that perceivers with more concepts will not only have different experiences, but that such experiences will have more representational resources.

Weak Non-conceptualism who thinks that the representational content of experience is only partially conceptual can account for ËËË ËËË and ËËjust as well. Thus, the claim that the representational content of perceptual experience is partlyË but not fullyË conceptual suffices to account for ËË the change in the content of *S*Ë perceptual experience at *t*2 can be explained by the fact that a new concept is deployed for *o*. This says nothing about how other objects and properties are represented in *S*Ë experience at *t*2, and whether perceptual representation of *all* such objects and properties requires the possession and deployment of concepts.

The same is true for premise ËË $S_1$ and $S_2$ have experiences which represent *o* differently because they deploy different concepts for *o*Ë but for *o* only. Again, ËË is silent on whether the representation of other objects and properties in $S_1$ and $S_2$Ë respective experiences require the possession of concepts. There is no need to suppose that the content of experience is fully conceptual and that thesis ËCËis true.

*Ditto* with ËËË the acquisition of more concepts might allow a perceiver to have experiences representing more things and more properties. This doesnË show that everything thatË represented in her experiences requires the possession Ëand deploymentËof concepts. It only shows that the perceptual representation of those things for which the subject has acquired new concepts can be modified by the deployment of such concepts. But this doesnË even entail that experience of such things *requires* possession and deployment of these new concepts Ëor of any concept, for that matterË

Thus, ËËË ËËË and ËËonly supportË if at allË a restricted claim according to which, for *some* objects and properties represented in experience, the possession Ëand deploymentË of different concepts *may* give rise to representational differences.[9] But this isnË what Conceptualism says: in particular, itË much weaker than thesis ËCË

Second, while these three premises are in fact consistent with Weak Non-Conceptualism, they can also be accommodated by proponents of what I have called Strong Non-conceptualism On this view, nothing represented in experience requires the possession Ëand deploymentË of any concept.

[9] Note that this raises another worry about the direction of explanation. Thesis ËCËis a claim about the supervenience of the representational on the conceptual: representational differences must come with conceptual differencesË the latter being necessary for the former. Premises ËË and ËËË however, seem to go in the opposite direction: they say that conceptual differences must come withË and thus are sufficient forË representational differences.

Proponents of such a view will insist that the Conceptualists and Weak Non-conceptualists alike simply misdescribe the examples supposed to motivate premises ËËË ËËË and ËËË This time, IËl take each premise in reverse orderË since premise ËËwill prove slightly more difficult to handle.

What is true about the sort of cases behind premises ËËand ËËË the Strong Non-conceptualist will retort, is that the possession of more concepts will allow a subject to form more judgements with different contents on the basis of her experiencesË judgements, the content of which is conceptual. This doesnËt show that the representational resources of her experiences have changedË let alone that the content of her experiences is conceptual.

Thus, for instance, the expert and novice wine tasters might have exactly the same experiences of the taste of a wine: itËs just that the expert wine taster is able to *identify* more flavours in the wine, and will thus form a variety of distinct *judgements* about such flavours. All these flavours, however, may be represented in the noviceËs experiences too. ItËs just that she is unable to isolate and identify them at the time.[10]

The same type of explanation applies with the veteran astronomer and the child. All the astronomical properties represented in the veteran astronomerËs experiences of the sky, this Strong Non-conceptualist will insist, may be represented in the childËs experiences too. The only difference between them is that the astronomer is able to recognise and form judgements about such propertiesË whereas the child isnËt. And similarly with most of the other cases.[11]

In this respect, ËËË and ËËË fail to support even Weak Non-conceptualismË as against Strong Non-conceptualism. ThatËs because,

[10] Furthermore, her ability to acquire the relevant concepts and to apply them to the flavours in the wine depends on her ability to react Ëperhaps, when guided by the experienced wine tasterËto properties of the wine represented in her experience. Such properties arenËt suddenly represented in experience just when the subject becomes able to identify them: they must be experientially represented beforehand, if the subject is to learn how to identify them on the basis of her experience.

[11] The case of money might demand a slightly different explanation. It may be that the economistËs experience of a bank note and the childËs experience of the same bank note both represent the bank note as a piece of coloured paper. ItËs just that the economist forms different beliefs Ëwith different contentsËon the basis of such an experience. The important point is that Strong Non-conceptualism doesnËt necessarily commit one to an impoverished view about the kinds of objects and properties represented in experienceË for instance, it need not be restricted to colours and shapes Ësee Siegel, 2005bË

according to the Strong Non-conceptualist, the description of cases allegedly motivating ËâËand ËãËsuffers from the same confusion between ËäËthe content of experiences and ËåiË the content of judgements based upon such experiences.[12] There need be no difference in the representational content of the subjectsËexperiences in those cases. At least, this Non-conceptualist will insist, no reason has been offered to think that there is. ItËs just that some subjects are able to form different judgements with different contents Ëinvolving different conceptsËon the basis of the same experiences. Such ability may consist entirely in the subjectËs capacity to conceptually identify more things in experienceË not in the experience having different representational contents. This kind of description, it seems, can account just as well for the sorts of cases behind premises ËâËand ËãË And the description is compatible with the claim that the representational content of perceptual experiences is entirely non-conceptualË that only the content of judgements involves possession and deployment of concepts.

The same move might work with at least some cases mentioned in support of premise ËäË Thus, itËs not entirely clear that, in PeacockeËs example, the subjectËs perceptual experience of the sound has to change. It seems as though the properties of the sound itself may be represented in exactly the same way, whether the perceiver thinks it is rain or applause she is hearing. What differs is the content of the judgements she forms on the basis of her experienceË and how she conceptually identifies what she hears. Hence, itËs only if one already presupposes that the representational content of experience is conceptual, the Strong Non-conceptualist will argue, that one might be tempted to think that differences in how the sound is identified constitute differences in the representational content of experience.

However, some examples really seem to involve a representational difference in the content of experience itself. For instance, the sounds produced by a speaker of a language L might really appear to be different, depending on whether one understands L and is able to recognise words in L. Likewise, the sudden recognition of a face or object might seem to be accompanied by a genuine modification of the appearance of that face Ëor objectË For instance, a black spot on a sofa might first appear as a black

[12] As Vision Ë1998: 425Ëpoints out, Conceptualists like McDowell even fail to distinguish ËäË and ËåiËfrom ËäiiËrecognition or conceptual identification. While ËäiiËseems to be a necessary precondition for ËåiË it is distinct from both ËäË and ËåiË Further, Vision argues, ËäË is a precondition for ËäiiË not the other way around.

cushion until you recognise that itË a cat lying on the sofa. Recognition of the cat doesnË just involve a different judgement about what you see: it seems to involve a change in how the black spot appears to you Ësee, e.g., Millar, 1989: 145, as well as Millar, 1991b: 36Ë[13]

But even this fails to present a substantial challenge for the Strong Non-conceptualist. She can grant that the representational content of experience changes in such cases, but explain these changes in ways which do not entail that the representational content of experience in any way requires possession and deployment of concepts. I will briefly sketch one such possible alternative explanation.[14]

To begin with, we should ask: in what way does the representational content of an experience change before and after recognition of a perceived object Ëor propertyËrepresented in that experience? According to Alan Millar Ë1989: 145Ë what happens in such cases is that different parts of the perceived object Ëor of the whole perceptual sceneËbecome *salient*. What this means is that different parts somehow come to occupy the perceiverË attention, where the parts in question are differentiated against a background. Salience in this sense depends on the emergence of certain contrasts within the content of experience between a particular part of an object and its background: a grouse camouflaged in tall grasses isnË salient, but it is when seen against a white wall ËMillar, 1991b: 36Ë Thus, an object may be salient if it is at least *differentiated*Ë in the sense specified in §4.5.1 aboveË in the content of experience. Often, too, when different parts of a visual scene become salient, different spatial and mereological relations between such parts become salient as well.

Thus, for instance, the black spot on the sofa might seem to have different parts, which are related differently to one another, whether itË recognised as a cushion or a cat. Suddenly, you become aware of the head of the cat, of its legs and body, and of the ËmereologicalËrelations between them. The same might be true for sentences in a foreign language: when you get to understand that language, certain parts ËwordsË and some of their relations Ëgrammatical structureËbecome salient. You can discriminate such words and their relations to other words, and you can focus your attention on them.

[13] Assuming that there is a tight connection between the phenomenology and the content of experience, some might say that a change in the phenomenology or phenomenal character of the experience occurs too Ësee Millar, *op.cit.*Ë

[14] This sort of explanation is discussed in more detail in my Ë2002Ë

Next, there is an issue about the order of explanation. A proponent of the Conceptual Influence Argument (CIA) will insist that recognition of an object comes first and causes a change in salience. That is because, on such a view, the deployment of different concepts is supposed to modify the way in which things are represented in experience. But is that right? According to Millar (1989: 145; 1991b: 35-7), the explanation goes the other way around. A change in salience causally triggers recognition. That is, it is because different parts of the black spot on the sofa become salient that the perceiver is suddenly able to recognise it as a cat.[15] Similarly with the perception of a sentence: it is because parts of the sentence suddenly become salient that you are able to recognise words and their grammatical relations.

One advantage of this latter account is that it provides some explanation (or at least, the beginning of an explanation) as to how perceptual recognition takes place. Changes in salience, on such a view, make recognition possible. By contrast, the Conceptualist can only say that recognition is a matter of conceptual identification (something the Non-conceptualist might grant). But the Conceptualist can (not) say what triggers such recognition. Worse, since a change in salience is supposed to occur after recognition has taken place (as a result of it), the Conceptualist seems committed to saying that recognition of $x$ takes place shortly before $x$ becomes salient to the perceiver. This seems implausible: recognition of the black spot on the sofa as a cat doesn't occur while it still looks to you like a cushion. Rather, it is because it starts looking like a cat that you can recognise it as such.[16]

[15] See also Köhler (1947: 80-2) and Kahneman and Henik (1981: 183) for this type of explanation. Martha Farah (2000: ch.5) suggests that face recognition might be a matter of perception of second-order spatial relations between different spatial parts of a face. Hence, the salience of such relations might causally explain facial recognition.

[16] What might cause such a change in salience? One possible explanation is that shifts in the direction and focus of attention may cause different parts of an object to become salient (see, e.g. Millar, 1991b: 35-6; and also Robinson, 1998: 34). If this is correct, it helps to account for the fact that, sometimes, judgements do seem to cause changes in the representational content of experience. For instance, it is said that, when presented with Jastrow's duck/rabbit figure, one can decide at will which aspect to see (Budd, 1991: 94-5). Thus, the deployment of the concept DUCK in a judgement or decision may give rise to an experience of the figure as a duck. According to the Strong Non-conceptualist, however, this does not entail that the content of experience itself engages the concept DUCK. What happens, rather, is that the subject's judgement causes her to focus her attention on the figure in a particular way (since, it is assumed, perceptual attention can be under the control of judgements or beliefs. Perhaps, a belief of the subject

In such cases, then, the Strong Non-conceptualist will insist that changes in the non-conceptual content of experience can causally trigger different judgements on the perceiverËs part. ItËs because the objects and properties represented in experience are represented differently Ëwith a different appearanceËthat the perceiver is led to apply different concepts to what she experiences.

Hence, the Conceptual Influence Argument ËCIAËclearly fails to show that Conceptualism provides the best explanationË let alone the only explanationË of ËËË ËËand ËËË Rather, it seems as though proponents of such an argument presuppose the truth of ConceptualismË or at least Weak Non-conceptualismË in order to describe the sorts of cases allegedly motivating premises ËËË ËËË and ËËË

### 7.4. The Ineffability Argument

I now turn to an argument questioning the coherence of Non-conceptualism. The argument exploits the relationship between the content of experiences and that of beliefs Ësee Alex Byrne, 2005Ë[17] The argument might prove a little more difficult for Non-conceptualists to handleË still, there are ways to respond to such an argument. IËl call this argument the Ëneffability ArgumentË ËAËË though, strictly speaking, Byrne Ë2005: 245Ëmentions ineffability only in the context of another argument, with what seems like a similar starting point. Byrne writes:

> All parties agree, in effect, that perceiving is very much like a traditional propositional attitude, such as believing or intending; the issue is whether the contents or propositions that perceiving is a relation to are conceptual. When it is put like that, non-conceptualism is decidedly puzzling. When one has a perceptual experience, one bears the perception relation to a certain proposition p. The non-conceptualist claims that it is

causes her to look for something in her surroundings, and the activity of looking gives rise to changes in the focus of her attention. In turn, this shift of attention may cause different parts of the figure to become salientË to the effect that the figure looks like a duck. For this type of Ëindirect causal explanationË see Millar Ë991a: 496-7Ë as well as Pylyshyn Ë999; 2004: ch.3Ë Again, this sort of explanation is entirely compatible with the claim that the representational content of perceptual experiences is entirely non-conceptual.

[17] Here I ignore another of ByrneËs Ë2005Ëarguments allegedly undermining the coherence of certain motivations for Non-conceptualism, based on first-person introspective reflection about the content of experience. Even if the argument worked, most considerations in favour of Non-conceptualism do not seem to rest only on such first-person introspective reflections. Further, there may be other ways to reflect on the content of oneËs own experiences, which avoid the difficulty raised by Byrne.

> impossible to bear the *belief* relation to pË but why ever not? Absent some argument, the natural position to take is that the contents of perception can be believed. ÏByrne, 2005: 245Ë

The argument might be parsed thus:

ÏtË a perceptual experience of an object *o* as *F* is a psychological state with the proposition *p* Ïthat *o* is *F*Ëas its content.

ÏuË the natural assumption is that it is possible to believe *p*.

ÏvË but if Non-conceptualism is true, it is *not* possible to believe *p*.

**Therefore,**

ÏwË Non-conceptualism is false Ïor puzzling, without an argument for ÏvËË

I'll consider three responses on the Non-conceptualist behalf. First, a little bit of caution about premise ÏvË Why think that Non-conceptualists are committed to saying something like the consequent of ÏvË Elsewhere, Byrne writes:

> [...] McDowell disparages non-conceptualism as another version of the Myth of the Given, and the comparison is particularly apt. The traditional Given is ineffable, a feature shared by non-conceptual content. The non-conceptual content of experience is not *thinkable*Ë and it cannot be whistled either. ÏByrne, 2005: 245Ë

Is it correct to say that, on the non-conceptualist conception of experience, the content of experience is ineffable? It depends. A Non-conceptualist need not deny that some perceivers might possess a sufficiently rich conceptual repertoire to be able to conceptualise everything represented in their experiences. If so, the content of their experiences isn't ineffable for them. And so, such subjects might be able to entertain, think, and believe, the content of their experience. All the Non-conceptualists needs to say in order to reject the conceptualist supervenience thesis ÏCËis that it is possible that *normal subjects*, due to their lack of certain relevant concepts, are unable to conceptualise what they experienceË and so, that they are unable to have thoughts and beliefs with the exact same content as their experiences. In this respect, Non-conceptualists need not think that the content of experience is ineffable *tout court*, or even *in principle*Ë it's only that it is sometimes ineffable for some subjects, as a contingent matter of fact.

And again, the difference between Strong and Weak Non-conceptualism is relevant here. A Strong Non-conceptualist will think that the representational content of experience is entirely non-conceptual, and always is so, for all

perceivers. On her view, the content of experiences and the content of beliefs are just two different kinds of content. And so, it is indeed impossible that a perceptual experience and a belief have the very same content.

What *is* possible, on such a view, is to have beliefs about the very same objects and properties Ëelations, events, states-of-affairs etc.Ërepresented in experience. But the fact that two contents are about the very same things need not entail that they are the same contentsË let alone the same ***kinds*** of contents, this Non-conceptualist will observe. On this view, the expert phenomenologists might possess Ëand deployË appropriate concepts for everything represented in her experience. But this doesnË show that the content of her experience is conceptualË only that she is able to form judgements, the content of which exactly matches the content of her experience, by representing the very same objects and properties. Such judgements have a conceptual content, and so are distinct from her experience, since they have contents of a different kind. In other words, to adopt BymeË Ë2005: 245Ëterminology, it may be possible for such a subject to think *about* the content of her experience Ëa belief about what her experiences represents and howË But itË not possible to think *with* the content of her experienceË in the sense of having a belief with the very same content.

Hence, this Strong Non-conceptualist is likely to reject premise ËËin the Ineffability Argument. She will say that, on her view, this premise rests on a confusion between ËËthe claim that experiences and beliefs can represent the very same things and ËiËthe claim that experiences and beliefs can have the very same kinds of content. She might grant ËË, but sheË deny that ËËprovides any reason to believe ËiË

This brings us to a third point in BymeË argument. He says that, without argument for Ë3Ë, the Strong non-conceptualist position is Ëpuzzling ËË that ËË is the ËnaturalËthing to believe.[18] Here, then, is an argument to think that, on the contrary, the consequent of premise Ë3ËË and not premise ËËË is true. The argument relies on two assumptions. I shall not defend them here, since Byrne himself seems to accept them.

The first assumption concerns the relationship between the phenomenology of psychological states and their content. First, consider Intentionalism about the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences. Intentionalism is another supervenience thesis, according to which the

[18] See also Crane Ë2001: 140Ëand Stalnaker Ë998: 351-2Ë

phenomenal character of an experienceË the way it feels like for the subject to be having that experience, according to the usual understanding of such a notionË is determined by its representational contentË how things appear to the subject. That is,

ËNTË if any two experiences $e_1$ and $e_2$ differ phenomenally, then they have a different content.

In other words, phenomenal differences come with representational differencesË but not necessarily *vice versa*. ThatËs because, according to an advocate of ËNTË how things appear in experience Ëthe content of the experienceËdetermines how it feels to have such an experience.

This claim about the existence of a particularly tight relationship between content and phenomenology will prove important for discussions in chapter 9, 10 and 11. For now, suffice it to note that both Byrne Ë2001Ë and Conceptualists ËMcDowell, 1998: 441; Brewer, 1999: 156Ëseem to endorse it.[19] In fact, ËNTËis entailed by a more general thesis, which Byrne Ë2001: §2Ë endorses too, and which he calls ËUnrestricted IntentionalismË On this view, the supervenience of phenomenology on content is true of *all* psychological states with a representational content:

ËNT+Ë for any two representational psychological states $m_1$ and $m_2$, if $m_1$ and $m_2$ have a different phenomenal character, they have a different representational content.

Note that ËNT+Ëis trivially true about those representational statesË if there are anyË that lack phenomenal character. Since, in such a case, the antecedent of ËNT+Ëis false, ËNT+Ëitself will be true whether or not its consequent is true. This stronger claim, ËNT+Ë is our first assumption.

The second assumption is that, even if perceptual experiences and beliefs could have exactly the same content, it is uncontroversial that they usually differ phenomenologically. Suppose you both visually perceive that $p$ and believe that $p$ at the same time. Still, itËs not quite the same

[19] Other Intentionalists include Dretske Ë995Ë Harman Ë990Ë Jackson Ë001Ë Tye Ë995, 2000Ë And for a different kind of Intentionalism, see Crane Ë001Ë Their opponents are Block Ë002, 2003Ë Chalmers Ë004Ë Horgan and Tienson Ë002Ë Peacocke Ë983, 2001aË among others. For some useful reviews of the dispute, see Byrne Ë001Ë Crane Ë998Ë Siewert Ë003Ë and some of the essays in Villanueva Ë996Ë as well as Jokic and Smith Ë003Ë

thingË phenomenologically speakingË to perceive that *p* and to believe that *p*.[20]

The combination of these two assumptions suffices to cause trouble for premise Ë2Ëin ByrneË argument. Suppose with premise Ë2Ëthat you are in fact both visually perceiving that *p* and believing that *p*. In other words, your experience and your belief donË just have the same kind of content, they have the very same content. According to our second assumption about the phenomenology of beliefs, two things are possible. Either Ë2Ëyour belief that *p* differs phenomenologically from your visual experience that *p*, or Ë2Ëit doesnË. If the latter, it seems possible that you entertain the very same belief with the same content that *p*, but at a later time, while your eyes are closed. Either way, it seems possible that you can have a visual experience and a belief with the same content that *p*, but which differ in their phenomenal character.

However, given Unrestricted Intentionalism ËINT+Ë, if two representational psychological states differ phenomenologically, they cannot have the same content. Hence, our two assumptions about the phenomenology of beliefs and experiences force us to reject premise Ë2Ë

IËve already mentioned that Byrne Ë2001Ë seems to accept both assumptions.[21] The important point is that such an argument against premise Ë2ËdoesnË rely on any non-conceptualist assumption. On the contrary, it relies only on assumptions both Byrne and ConceptualistsË as well as Non-conceptualistsË seem to accept. We seem to have a good reason, then, not to grant premise Ë2Ëin ByrneË Ineffability Argument.

## 7.5. Conclusion

I have briefly reviewed four arguments sometimes mentioned in support of Conceptualism: ËIË the Understanding Argument, Ë2Ë the Discrimination

[20] In fact, one could even grant that your experience and belief have the same phenomenology on that particular occasion. The important point is that you could have the same belief that *p* without any phenomenologyË or at least, with a distinct phenomenology, whether the phenomenology of your belief is entirely, or only slightly, distinct from that of your experience that *p*.

[21] Indeed, he endorses another similar argument for a related intentionalist view about experiences in different sensory modalities. According to what he calls ËIntermodal IntentionalismË ËByrne, 2001: §2Ë, the fact that perceptual experiences in different sensory modalities are phenomenologically different entails that they have different contents. In other words, due to their phenomenological differences, a visual and a tactile experience simply cannot have the same contentË though they might represent similar things.

Argument, ËÉthe Conceptual Influence Argument, and ËÉthe Ineffability Argument. Most of these arguments provide no support for Conceptualism. Not only do they fail to entail Conceptualism *per se*Ë as opposed to Weak Non-conceptualism. But even Strong Non-conceptualists have various ways to disarm such arguments.

So where does this leave Conceptualism? In pretty bad shape, IËd like to suggest. First, most of the arguments reviewed in this chapter can easily be addressed by advocates of Weak Non-conceptualism. Second, we have seen that many of the arguments advanced here even fail to motivate this weak form of Non-conceptualismË as opposed to Strong Non-conceptualism. The distinction between ËÉthe content of experience and ËiËthat of judgements based on experience allows Strong Non-conceptualists to resist many of the arguments discussed here.

Therefore, it seems fair to say that Conceptualism remains unmotivated. In the next part of this work, I turn to reasons for thinking that Conceptualism is false.

CHAPTER 8

# *Phenomenological Arguments*

Why reject Conceptualism? In the previous two chapters, we saw how difficult it is for Conceptualists to come up with a good argument for their view. In itself, of course, this doesnÏt mean that perceptual experiences have a different kind of contentÏ a kind of content about which thesis ÏCÏis false. Something else is needed if one is to think that perceptual experiences have such non-conceptual content.

The next three chapters discuss three different arguments for the conclusion that Conceptualism is false and that perceptual experiences must have some kind of non-conceptual content. Two of these arguments fail, unfortunately. The third one seems more promising.

The point of the present chapter is to introduce some background for what is to come next. First, I distinguish two kinds of objections raised against Conceptualism, and explain why I focus upon the second kind only ÏSÏ8.1Ï Then, I present two particular phenomena which form the basis of this second kind of argument, and explain in what respects these phenomena differ ÏSÏ8.2Ï

## 8.1. Arguments against Conceptualism

At least two kinds of arguments against Conceptualism can be found in the literature. The first focuses on allegedly problematic consequences supposed to follow from Conceptualism. Such consequences donÏ concern the content of experience directly, but have to do with broader issues in the philosophy of mind. Arguments of this first kind usually have the following structure: ÏiÏ Conceptualism is said to entail a certain consequence $\omega$ about subject-matter $\omega$; ÏiiÏit is then argued that $\omega$ is false Ïor incompatible with some other plausible assumption $\omega$ about $\omega$Ï and so, ÏiiiÏ by *modus tollens*, it follows that Conceptualism must be false too. IÏ call arguments of this type ÏConsequence ArgumentsÏ

The second kind of arguments against Conceptualism is directed more specifically at the ConceptualistsÏaccount of perceptual content, and attempts to show why such an account is inaccurate. Usually, this second kind of arguments consists in counter-examples to the conceptualist supervenience

thesisË thesis ËCË Since the counter-examples in question are often based on phenomenological considerations, I shall call this second kind of arguments ËPhenomenological ArgumentsË

In what follows, IË focus exclusively on the second kind of argument. The reasons are threefold. First, I lack the space to review in detail all the arguments against Conceptualism presented in the literature. Second, and more importantly, one disadvantage of Consequence Arguments is that, instead of focusing directly on the conceptualist account of the content of experience, they focus on something elseË namely, consequences such an account is said to have for other issues. Yet, Conceptualism is in the first place a theory about perceptual experiences and about the nature of their content. Hence, it seems that, in order to evaluate the conceptualist view, one ought to focus primarily on that. Third, Consequence Arguments often rely on assumptions about those other issues relative to which Conceptualism is said to entail problematic consequences. And as we shall see, one easy way out for Conceptualists is to reject such assumptions.

Before I describe Phenomenological Arguments in a little more detail Ës8.2Ę here are two well-known instances of Consequence Arguments. A brief look at these arguments will help to see ËaË what I mean exactly by ËConsequence ArgumentË and ËbËwhy one might question their cogency.

### 8.1.1. *The Concept Acquisition Argument*

Conceptualism is often taken to entail that concepts cannot be acquired Ëor learnedËon the basis of experience Ësee, e.g., BermËdez, 1998: 58-60; Peacocke, 2001b; and for a more developed version of the argument: Roskies, 2004a, 2004bË The argument begins with the assumption that Concept-Nativism is false Ësee, e.g., Cowie, 1999; Prinz, 2002Ë That is, it is possible to learn or acquire at least some concepts on the basis of experience: hence, not all concepts are innate. In particular, the assumption goes, it is possible to acquire *simple* conceptsË i.e., concepts not composed of other conceptsË like *RED* or *ROUND* on the basis of experience. Indeed, doesnË it seem plausible that we acquire colour concepts by being visually presented with instances of such colours? But, the argument continues, this isnË possible if Conceptualism is true.

Simplifying slightly from Roskies Ë2004aĘ the argument can be reconstructed thus:

ËËË it is possible for a normal subject *S* to learn the simple conceptË notcomposed of further conceptsË *RED* on the basis of experiences of red things: repeated perceptual experiences representing red things contribute to *S*Ës acquisition of that concept.

ËËË if Conceptualism is true, perceptual experiences of red things necessarily require possession and deployment of a concept *C* for the colour red on *S*Ës part.

ËËË if *C* = the concept *RED*, then *S* already possesses the concept *RED*: she cannot learn that concept on the basis of experience.

ËËË if *C* ω *RED*, then acquisition of the concept *RED* must involve composition of *RED* by other concepts like C.

ËËË But the concept *RED* is simple: it is not composed of other concepts.

**Therefore,**

ËËË Either way, Conceptualism makes it impossible for *S* to acquire the concept *RED* on the basis of experiences of red things.

In other words, Conceptualism has the consequence that premise ËËcannot be true. But since premise Ë*is* true, proponents of the argument contend, Conceptualism must be false. Admittedly, this is a rough and ready representation of a rather complex argumentË and omission of certain complexities might not do it justice entirely. Nevertheless, this representation of the argument suffices to see where the difficulties lie.

One obvious problem concerns premise ËË Admittedly, it is quite plausible that at least some concepts are learned: their possession isnË innate. This suggests that Nativism, as a general thesis about *all* concepts, is false. Still, a weaker form of Nativism could nevertheless be true: *some* conceptsË including, perhaps, the ones mentioned in premise ËËËmay be innate.

More importantly, however, the mere fact that premise ËËis plausible has little weight against some of the considerations advanced by Nativists. For instance, Nativists need not deny that an infantËs first *deployment* of colour concepts like *RED* is causally triggered by experiences of redË this is consistent with the claim that such concepts are *possessed* innately Ëor discussion, see Cowie, 1999Ë In other words, the sort of examples usually appealed to by Concept-Empiricists are consistent with the position of Concept-Nativists. The latter can always redescribe such cases in a way that fits the claim that

*possession* of certain concepts is innate. Hence, without a proper argument for it, premise ËëseemsËsomewhat unmotivated.

Another more important problem has to do with premise Ë4Ë If the concept *C* the perceiver deploys in an experience of red isnËë *RED* itself, why then assume that *RED* can only be acquired *compositionally*Ë i.e., by being composed from other concepts including *C*? Why couldnËë *RED* be acquired in a way that is non-compositional but involves *C*, for instance? The *process* of acquisition of the concept *RED* might well involve concept *C*. But this doesnËë mean that the *concept* thus acquiredË *RED*Ë also depends on *C* Ëet alone, compositionally depends on *C*Ë Of course, itËs unclear what such a process might be. And Conceptualists, if they want to resist the argument, owe us an account of such a process.

Still, we can see that various avenues are open to Conceptualists in order to resist this Concept-Acquisition Argument. These avenues, however, involve complex issues about Concept-Nativism and the acquisition of concepts. In particular, two questions have a central importance: ËaËwhich concepts are plausibly acquired on the basis of experience, and ËbËwhat sorts of processes might be at work in the acquisition of such concepts? Though answers to these questions are very interesting, their complexity induces me to keep my distanceË at least for the purposes of this work.

### 8.1.2. *The Animal Perception Argument*

Another problematic consequence Conceptualism is supposed to have is that it creates trouble for our understanding of Ënon-humanËanimal perception Ësee, e.g., Dretske, 1981: 153-4; Dretske, 1993; Hurley, 2001; and Peacocke, 2001b: 613-4Ë The argument relies on two assumptions: ËaË that the perceptual

[1] For instance, imagine that a little homunculus reads the instructions for using the concept *RED*: such instructions contain concepts $C_1$, $C_2$, etc., describing the conditions in which deployment of the concept *RED* is appropriate. But this doesnËë mean that the concept so described is *composed* of concepts describing its use. Admittedly, this analogy is very simplistic and misleading in more ways than one. For one thing, we donËë learn a concept by reading instructions for its useË at least not usually. Still, it suggests that a wide range of distinct mechanisms could be at work in the acquisition of concepts. Teaching is likely to play an important role in concept-acquisition, for instance. Thus, the teacher might use concepts the subject already possesses to isolate the property the learner is perceiving, and for which she is being taught a new concept. This doesnËë mean that this new concept is composed out of other concepts the subject already possesses. Surely, not all concepts are compositional in this sense. Whether a given concept *C* is compositional or not shouldnËë just depend on whether other concepts play a role in its acquisition.

experiences of Ïnon-humanË animals are very similar to ours in how they represent the environment, and ÏbË that Ïnon-humanË animals lack conceptsË or, at least, they lack many of the sophisticated concepts we are said to have. Thus,

ÏiË animals have very similar experiences to humansË at least a core of the representational content of their experiences is the same as ours.

ÏiiË animals lack conceptsË at least, they lack many of the concepts we have.

ÏiiiË If Conceptualism is true, anything represented in experience requires the deployment of a concept such that any difference in the content of an experience *e* requires deployment of different concepts in *e*.

**Therefore,**

ÏivË animals cannot have experiences similar toË continuous withË those of humans.

Here, Conceptualism is supposed to entail that the combination of two plausible assumptions about animal perception and animal concepts is untenable. Since both assumptions are plausible, proponents of the argument contend, Conceptualism must be false.[2]

The problem with such an argument is easy to see: both premises ÏiËand ÏiiË are questionable, and each has been questioned Ïsee, e.g., NoË, 2002cË For instance, one might think that, after all, there is evidence suggesting that animals donÏt have experiences so similar to ours. Some animals seem to see more colours, some hear more sounds. Some animals see less colours, others canÏt even see what happens on a television screen. In light of such differences, itÏs unclear what evidence one might appeal to in support of premise ÏiË More interestingly, it might be argued thatË contrary to what premise ÏiiË assumesË animals have more sophisticated concepts than we might have assumed at first ÏNoË, 2002c; 2004, ch.6Ë

In this respect, Conceptualists are likely to reject either ÏiËor ÏiiË They might even suggest that these two premises undermine one anotherÏs plausibility. Thus, if animals lack concepts, itÏs likely that the contents of their psychological states differ from ours. On the other hand, if the content of their experiences are like ours, isnÏt this a reason to think that animals possess more concepts than we might have thoughtË or so a Conceptualist is bound to

[2] For a different way of representing the argument, and further criticism of it, see Byrne Ï2005: 236-7Ë

retort ËByrne, 2005: 237Ë Of course, some of these responses presuppose Conceptualism, but not all do. Some Conceptualists, for instance, base their response on empirical research about animal concepts Ësee NoË, 2002cË

Finally, a Conceptualist might grant the premises of the argument but reject its conclusion. If a core of the representational content of the perceptual experiences had by animals is similar to ours Ëas premise ËËsaysË, this may be explained by the fact that animals possess concepts similar to ours. The fact that animals lack the more sophisticated concepts we possessË premise ËbËË is compatible with that fact. Indeed, such a fact might explain why, despite core similarities, there are important differences between animal experiences and our own nonetheless.

Again, then, the Animal Perception Argument leaves many avenues open to Conceptualists. And again, some of the issues involved here are very complex: the interpretation of various empirical studies about animal concepts, and the reasonableness of cross-species perceptual comparisons. Since I am comfortable with neither, I shall leave the argument at that.

*Wrapping up.* The point of this brief discussion was only ËaËto give a taste of what I have called ËConsequence ArgumentsËagainst Conceptualism, and ËbË to show how inconclusive such arguments tend to be. This isnË to say that an argument like one of the above cannot be developed successfully against Conceptualism. Such an argument, however, is likely to rely on a substantial amount of empirical evidence about ËËthe mechanisms behind concept-acquisition, or ËiËabout animal concepts. Whether or not sufficient relevant empirical evidence is already available to settle the matter is itself another difficult question.

More importantly, though, Conceptualism is primarilyË as I already insisted aboveË a thesis about the representational content of experience. How it accounts for various aspects of how experiences represent the environment seems to constitute a more central ground to evaluate the viability of such a view. This is why I shall concentrate on what I have called ËPhenomenological argumentsËin what follows.

## 8.2. Two Phenomenological Arguments

Two argumentsË one more familiar than the otherË are typically raised against Conceptualism. They are ËËthe Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience ËAFGË, and ËiËthe Argument from the Informational Richness of

Experience ËAIRË These two arguments will be the topic of chapters 9 and 10, respectively.

Here, IËl try to describe in some detail the distinct phenomena that ËAFGË and ËAIRË rest upon Ë§8.2.1Ë, and explain the differences between these phenomena Ë§8.2.2Ë As we shall see, claims about both phenomena are usually based on phenomenological considerations about ËëË how perceptual experiences represent the environment, and ËiËhow their doing so differs from the way other psychological states represent. In this respect, then, both arguments are instances of what I have called ËPhenomenological ArgumentsË

The general strategy behind ËAFGËand ËAIRËseems to run as follows. Reflection on the phenomenology of experience suggests that ËëË the representational content of perceptual experiences has a certain property $\omega$ The fact that perceptual experiences have $\omega$, together with ËëË certain assumptions about the possession and/or deployment of concepts, seems to entail that ËëËtheir representational content presents a counter-example to the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCË

The first question to ask, then, is: ËëËwhat is property $\omega$? The second: ËiË what assumptions about the possession and deployment of concepts are such that, when combined with $\omega$, they entail the falsity of Conceptualism. Question ËiËwill constitute the main topic of chapters 9 and 10. There, I will look more carefully at the particular structure of each argument. For now, IËl focus on ËëË

### 8.2.1. *The Fineness of Grain and Informational Richness of Experience*

Perceptual experiences seem to have two closely related, but distinct, features. First, perceptual experiences are said to be *fine-grained.* What does this mean? Often, the fineness of grain of experience is presented as a property of the way in which such experiences represent the environmentË i.e., a property of their representational content.

Two examples. First, suppose you go to a hardware shop, and enter a room where all the different shades of colour available from most paint manufacturers are displayed on the walls. Each wall is thus covered with very many colour chips representing a wide variety of different chromatic shades, ranging from Cameo Rose, Puffin Billy, to Olive Moss and Saxon Yellow. Your experience of the room is saturated with impressions of colours. More importantly, it seems as though highly similar shades of the same type of colour look different to you. Your experience is such that it can represent very specific shades of colourË so specific, in fact that you can see differences

between such highly similar shades. Visual experience is fine-grained in the sense that it can represent very similar, but distinct, shades in different ways: it can represent such shades and their difference.

Another way to present the same idea exploits a comparison between Ëvisual Ëexperiences and beliefs. Suppose you believe that œJackie owns a red carœ There are at least two ways you might have formed that belief. On the one hand, your neighbour might have told you about JackieËs red car, for instance. On the other hand, you might have seen JackieËs car. But there is an important difference between your belief that œJackie owns a red carœand your perceptual experience of JackieËs red car. In the case of belief, the content that œJackie owns a red carœ need not specify what particular shade of red is the colour of JackieËs carË it just specifies that the car is some *determinable* shade of red. In contrast, you cannot visually experience the colour of JackieËs car without experiencing the specific shade of red of that car. In this sense, your perceptual experience is finer-grained than your belief. But also: if you are experientially presented with determinate Ëperceptible Ë properties, your experience will inevitably represent them in all their nuanced specificity Ëat least in normal conditionsË

Hence, the claim that perceptual experiences are *fine-grained* amounts at least to this:

> ***The fineness of grain of perceptual experiences***
> ËaËperceptual experiences can represent very specific determinate properties in all their nuance and detail, so that you can see differences between distinct, yet highly similar, such properties; and ËbË unlike other psychological states, experiences typically represent specific properties in such a detailed way.

The second feature of experience is this. Perceptual experiences are also often said to be *replete*, or *rich*, *in information*Ë call this their Ëinformational richnessË Again, there are two ways Ëat leastË to show that perceptual experiences have this feature.

Take the case of the colour room againË a room, the walls of which are covered by different chips of many different shades of colour. When you enter the room, you might be able to see at least three of its walls and all the shades of colour on them. You can see the size of the room, the way the types of colours are arranged on the walls. But you can also see other people in the room: some customers, others wearing the bright blue t-shirt of shop assistants. Thus, when you first enter the room, you might be presented with a

whole visual scene. To some extent, such a scene is constituted by allË or at least most ofË the objects in your visual field, their properties Ëat least those that are visible to you from where you standË, and the properties of the room itself. In this sense, a perceptual experience of such a scene must contain a vast quantity of information about the scene itself, and about different objects in the scene.[3]

Or consider JackieË red car again. When you see her car, you donË see just the car. You might see how many people are in the carË perhaps even *who*, beside Jackie, is sitting in the car. And you also see the car against a background: the street, houses in the street, other cars, pedestrians, and so on. You might also see such properties as the speed of the car, the shape of the curve it takes towards the lane on the left-hand-side, etc. In contrast, your belief that œJackie owns a red carœneed not contain such information: in fact, it only contains the information that œJackie owns a red carœ In this respect, perceptual experiences *tend* to be richer in information than beliefsË this isnË to say that no belief can be rich in information. Hence, the informational richness of experience is a property the representational content of experience has, *relative* to the content of other psychological states: this notion is mainly a comparative notion Ësee §10.1 for a discussion of the scope of this comparisonË

The informational richness of experience is just *that*, then:

> ***The informational richness of perceptual experiences***
> ËaËany single perceptual experience *e* of a subject *S* can represent very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, *simultaneously*; and ËbË in contrast to other types of psychological states, single experiences tend to contain a rich amount of information about the environment.

Now that we have some idea about these two distinctive features of the representational content of perceptual experiences, a word about their differences.

[3] As we shall see in chapter 10, this is not to say that you necessarily see all the visible properties that make up the scene. You may not. Still, it seems reasonable to think that your experience conveys a large amount of information about whatË in the colour room.

8.2.2. *Differences*

These two features of perceptual experiencesË their ËËfineness of grain and ËËinformational richnessË are rarely distinguished explicitly in the literature.[4] In fact, they often seem to be conflated with one another. Thus, for instance, Richard Heck presents what he calls the Ërichness argument against ConceptualismËas follows:

> Consider your current perceptual stateË and now imagine what a complete description of the way the world appears to you at this moment might be like. Surely a thousand words would hardly begin to do the job. And it is not just that the description would be long: [...] Before me now, for example, are arranged various objects with various shapes and colors, of which, it might seem, I have no concept. My desk exhibits a whole host of shades of brown, for which I have no names. [...] Yet, my experience of these things represents them far more precisely than that, far more distinctively, it would seem, than any characterization I could hope to formulate, for myself or for others, in terms of concepts I presently possess. The problem is not lack of time, but lack of descriptive resources, that is, lack of the appropriate concepts. ËHeck, 2000: 489-90; compare Dretske, 1981: 148Ë

If Heck begins by focusing on what looks like the sheer amount of information contained in a single experience, he goes on to suggest that parts of this information might be far more specific than he is able to conceptualise. And, he seems to conclude, it is this last claim which is in fact the source of the problem. Heck is certainly right to think that perceptual experiences instantiate both characteristics. He is wrong, however, to assume that such characteristics are instances of the same phenomenon, or that only one of them can be used to construct an objection against Conceptualism.

Though the ËËfineness of grain and ËËinformational richness of experience are in fact distinct phenomena, there are, admittedly, some reasons why they seem to be closely related. For instance, recall one of the ways in which both phenomena were introduced in the previous section: in terms of a comparison between perceptual experiences and beliefs. One could put this point by saying that the representational content of perceptual experiences differs from that of beliefs in that the former *rules out more possibilities* than the latter ËCrane, 1992: 153; 2001: 151Ë Thus, unlike your belief that ωJackie owns a red carω your experience of JackieË red car rules out that the particular shade of red of JackieË car is Paloma Sun or Tuscan GlowË since it is Hot Lips. And it also

[4] See, for instance, Byrne Ë005: 235Ë Crane Ë001: 151Ë Martin Ë992a: 758Ë Peacocke Ë989: 315-7Ë Some do distinguish them, however: see BermËdez and Macpherson Ë998Ë

rules out that Jackie's red car is a BMW or a Holden, or that it has only two doors or has four.[5]

But to say that experiences rule out more possibilities than beliefs is to under-describe the phenomena under consideration. For there are different dimensions along which experiences rule out more possibilities than other psychological states. Insofar as its fineness of grain is concerned, a visual experience does not contain more information *simpliciter*: it contains more *specific* information about a particular property since it represents a determinate colour, not a determinable one. This might involve only a tiny amount of additional information. Further, it's additional information precisely about a particular property: namely, the colour of the car.

With the informational richness of experience, on the other hand, the information conveyed in an experience is more substantial in quantity, but it may not be more specific. The fact that there are people in the street where you see Jackie's red car is part of the background of your experience. All you might see are vague silhouettes, but not how many people there are, and how exactly they look. Thus, your experience might present a lot of information about all the objects in the scene but no specific information about any of them.

Of course, it's usually the case that the rich information conveyed in experience is also quite fine-grained, up to a point as Heck's example suggests. Indeed, most perceptual experiences are both fine-grained and informationally replete. Still, even if these two characteristics of perceptual experiences are often enmeshed in complex ways, it is important to see that they are, in fact, logically distinct.

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[5] Other reasons why the fineness of grain of experience and its informational richness are presented as one and the same phenomenon include the following. On a possible-worlds account of content, a state contains more information just in case it rules out more possibilities whether it contains more fine-grained information about a particular thing or whether it just contains information about more things.

Alternatively, one might think that the fineness of grain of a particular representation *R* is made possible by the richness of information that can be conveyed within the *whole representational system* to which *R* belongs. For instance, a painter might possess a whole range of fine-grained colour concepts. Her capacity to master one of these concepts depends in part on her capacity to distinguish it from other such concepts. The set of such concepts may then be seen as some sort of network: the fact that individual concepts can be fine-grained and how fine-grained they can be depends on the richness of the information that can be conveyed in the whole network. The more shades the network can represent, the more fine-grained individual concepts within the network might be.

Thus, suppose you find yourself in a psychologist's lab, and are presented with a red dot against a uniform white background. Both the background and the dot are lit in such a way that no light-effects can be detected, and the texture of these things is indiscernible. Although your experience of the whole scene accurately represents the specific shade of red of the dot, it conveys very little information in contrast to a visual experience of a street scene, say. Your experience is fine-grained, because it represents the specific shade of the red dot, but not rich in information.

Alternatively, imagine that you are walking on a city street through a heavy fog. Although you can see the whole street, everything looks vague and a bit fuzzy: no object appears to have any definite shape or contour, and colours look all a bit shaded. There could be an experience of this kind such that, although the experience conveys a lot of information about the whole scene and about individual objects in it, such information is rather coarse-grained. No specific details are seen in any specific manner.[6]

In other words, it's possible to find experiences which instantiate one property, but not the other. But there is another important difference between these two phenomena. In chapter 9 and 10, we'll see that they present distinct objections to Conceptualism. This is because they threaten to undermine *distinct constraints* Conceptualists impose on the content of experience.

To anticipate a little, the fineness of grain of experience seems to raise a problem for the claim that a perceiver must *possess* concepts for everything she perceives: what I called the 'Possession Constraint' in §4.3.1:

> ***Possession Constraint***
> For any object, property, relation, etc., $x$, $S$'s perceptual experience $e$ at $t$ represents $x$ *only if* $S$ *possesses some* concept $C$ for $x$ at $t$.

[6] Of course, to some extent, the difference between 'fineness of grain' and 'informational richness' is a matter of degree. It depends on the degree of additional information conveyed in the content of a perceptual experience. However, it doesn't depend just on that. There are also 'modal differences between these two features of the content of experiences, as well as 'differences relative to what the additional information is about. Thus, the additional information involved with 'the fineness of grain of experience is 'limited in quantity, and 'about particular properties 'such that they are presented in more detail', such that 'it *need* not involve additional information about other elements of the visual scene. With 'the informational richness of experience, the additional information under consideration is 'quantitatively substantial, and 'usually about many different objects and properties, so that 'it *need* not contain specific information about anything in particular.

It does so because, as we shall see, the fact that the representational content of experience is fine-grained is taken to show that perceivers lack *possession* of corresponding fine-grained concepts, matching the specific properties represented in their experiences. And this failure to *possess* fine-grained concepts appears to falsify thesis ÏCË It allows that there can be fine-grained differences in the content of an experience which are unaccompanied by the deployment of *distinct* fine-grained concepts. Of course, if a perceiver lacks such concepts, she cannot deploy them in experience.

The informational richness of experience, on the other hand, threatens to undermine only the *Deployment Constraint* Conceptualists impose on experienceË that a perceiver must deploy concepts for everything she sees:

> ***Deployment Constraint***
> For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*Ï perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x only if S deploys some* concept *C* for *x* at *t*.

That is, the fact that an experience contains a very rich amount of information about many distinct objects and properties in the perceiverÏ visual field suggests that the perceiver may not be able to deploy concepts for everything she sees. In which case, thesis ÏCËis false too. Different objects and properties may be represented in experience, where the subject fails to deploy sufficiently many concepts for all such objects and properties. As a result, there will be representational differences in the content of that subjectË experience without *deployment* of distinct concepts for the objects and properties thus represented. But note: this is entirely compatible with the possibility that the subject does *possess* enough distinct concepts for all the different objects and properties represented in her experience.

IË discuss the minutiae of each argument in the next two chapters. In particular, we will see why these two arguments fail.

## 8.3. Conclusion

The point of this short chapter was threefold. First, I wanted to map out the territory and present a panorama of the different types of arguments raised against Conceptualism. I suggested that there are essentially two such typesË Consequence Arguments and Phenomenological Arguments. And I have presented two instances of eachË though, admittedly, in a very sketchy way.

Second, I have attempted to explain why I shall not concern myself with Consequence Arguments in the remainder of this thesis. Such arguments ËËusually depend on very complex empirical issues, and ËiËpartly for this reason, they fail to refute Conceptualism in any decisive way. Though I will soon argue that the two examples of Phenomenological Arguments fail too, I think that this type of argument is more promisingË as I will try to show in chapter 11. Finally, I have suggested that ËiiËPhenomenological Arguments are more central to the issue at stake between Conceptualists and their opponents: if successful, they would provide direct refutations of Conceptualism. Conceptualism is a claim about the representational content of perceptual experiences. And both the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience ËAFGËand the Argument from the Informational Richness of Experience ËAIRËattempt to show why that claim is false.

Third, I wanted to introduce the two arguments to be considered in the next two chapters by discussing the distinct phenomena they are based upon. Though these phenomenaË and the arguments they give rise toË are often conflated, I have tried to explain what their differences consist in.

CHAPTER 9

# *The Fineness of Grain of Experience*

One of the most familiar objections against Conceptualism exploits the fact that perceptual experiences have a certain *fineness of grain.* We saw in chapter 8 what this is supposed to meanË it amounts at least to the following:

> ***The fineness of grain of perceptual experiences***
> ÏaËperceptual experiences can represent very specific determinate properties in all their nuance and detail, so that a perceiver can see differences between distinct, yet highly similar, such properties; and ÏbË unlike other psychological states, experiences typically represent specific properties in a detailed manner.

The main question to be addressed in this chapter is how this feature of experience is supposed to lead to the falsity of ConceptualismË and of the conceptualist supervenience thesis in particular:

**}C}** Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in experience $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in experience $e_2$ *only if* the perceiverÏsË ÏaË*possessèesè* and ÏbË*deployèsè* in experienceÏsË$e_1$ and $e_2$ distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

The kind of argument which exploits the fineness of grain of experience against Conceptualism is what I earlier called the ËArgument from the Fineness of Grain of ExperienceËor ËAFGË I will argue that such an argument fails to refute thesis ËCË The reason is not that experiences arenË fine-grainedË they are Ïas Conceptualists admitË The problem has to do with certain assumptions about concept-possession, which are supposed to take us from the fact that experiences are fine-grained to a refutation of ËCË This problem is different fromË though complementary toË the ConceptualistsË well-known response to ËAFGË as we shall see.

Before we get there, however, we need to have a clearer idea of what ËAFGË really amounts to. A first difficulty is that itÏs not entirely straightforward how to formulate the argument properly. Second, even once the structure of the argument is correctly laid down, there is an issue about how to motivate its premises. In Ï§9.1Ë I compare two different ways to formulate the

argumentË one loosely based on EvansËoriginal phrasing of the argument, the other, due to Diana Raffman Ë995Ë providing what looks like a better version of EvansËoriginal point.

Unfortunately, even that argument fails. In Ë§9.2Ë I outline the ConceptualistsË now famous response to ËAFGË the Demonstrative StrategyË which appeals to the deployment in experience of fine-grained *demonstrative concepts.* Though I think this is in fact a good response to the objection, one issue threatens to undermine that response. Conceptualists seem to grant a little bit too much to the proponents of ËAFGË As a result, itË unclear whether their version of the Demonstrative Strategy really succeeds in blocking the argument. At the very least, the Demonstrative Strategy seems incomplete.

But there is an easy remedy, or so I argue in Ë§9.3Ë The main problem with the argument has to do with its reliance on a constraint allegedly governing the possession of certain concepts. I argue that such a constraint is too strongË at best, unmotivated. In any case, I suggest, there is no reason to think that the sort of demonstrative concepts mentioned in the ConceptualistsË Demonstrative Strategy are determined by such a constraint.

## 9.1. Structure of the Objection

Why is the *fineness of grain* of experience supposed to be problematic for advocates of Conceptualism? Because, the suggestion usually goes, we can perceive distinct properties and their differences in a fine-grained way, without possessing distinct concepts corresponding to each such property.

This raises three questions at least. First, what is the structure of such an argument? Second, what motivates the idea that we lack corresponding concepts for the specific properties represented in experience? Third, how does such an argument successfully refute Conceptualism?

To make some of the difficulties to be encountered here more vivid, IË begin Ë§9.1.1Ëwith a toy version of the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience ËAFGË How this argument fails is instructive. In Ë§9.1.2Ë I consider an apparently more cogent version of the argument.

### 9.1.1. *EvansèArgument*

In an often quoted passage, Evans writes Ë982: 229Ë ËDo we really understand the proposal that we have as many colour concepts as there are shades of colour that we can sensibly discriminate?ËWhether or not we understand such

a proposal, it seems quite plausible that normal perceivers lack specific concepts for certain shades of colour (see e.g., Peacocke, 1986: 15-6; 1989: 315-17). Once we consider the wide range of determinate colour shades, there does indeed seem to be very many distinct specific shades in the world. It's not unlikely, then, that most of us lack concepts for at least some of them.

This line of thought may give rise to the following simple argument[1] a toy version of (AFG):

(1) it is possible that a subject *S*'s experience *e* represents a very specific shade of colour *f* in a fine-grained manner.

(2) it is possible that *S* lacks a concept for *f*.

**Therefore,**

(3) it is possible that (1) *S*'s experience *e* represents a very specific shade of colour *f* in a fine-grained manner and that (2) *S* lacks a concept for *f*.

But this rather simple version of (AFG) doesn't quite work. For one thing, assuming that Conceptualists grant premise (1), why should they grant premise (2)? Surely, they will retort, if *S*'s experience *e* represents *f*, then *S* must possess a concept for *f*. As indeed, she does. For *S* possesses at least *some* concept for *f*, that is, a concept which applies to *f*. Admittedly, *f* is supposed to be a very specific shade of red, Paloma Sun, or $red_{239}$, let's say. Nevertheless, the subject possesses the determinable concept RED (or the concept COLOURED), for instance, which *does* apply to that shade.

The problem with this particular version of (AFG), then, is that the issue over the fineness of grain of experience is not just whether the subject possesses *some* concept for any particular specific shade of red represented in her experience. The question is whether the subject possesses *enough distinct fine-grained* colour concepts to match the different fine-grained ways in which her experience represents such specific shades of colour.

Why does this matter? It matters because of the conceptualist supervenience thesis (C). According to (C), differences in the representational content of perceptual experiences require the possession and deployment of *different* concepts. Suppose, then, that a subject *S* is presented simultaneously with two distinct specific shades of red, Hot Lips and Tuscan Glow. Though very similar, these two shades are distinct and visibly so: they appear differently

[1] I don't suggest that this accurately reconstructs Evans's argument; it probably doesn't. It's only a possible way to construe what Evans intended to convey with the above remark.

to *S*. Thus, she can discriminate them on the basis of her experienceË she can see that they are different, and *chromatically* different Ënot just in terms of their location in her visual field, sayË In which case, there is a representational difference in how *S*Ës experience represents such shadesË a difference in the content of her experience.

But now, suppose that *S* possesses a specific concept only for Hot Lips: she lacks a specific concept for Tuscan Glow. And so, though *S*Ës experience represents these two shades differently, *S* doesnËt possess Ëand so, doesnËt deployË*distinct* concepts for them. This means that we have a counter-example to thesis ËCË

At this point, Conceptualists might retort that the subject could deploy a distinct *determinable* concept like *RED* for the second shade represented in her experienceË the one for which she lacks a specific *determinate* colour concept. But this wonËt do. We can suppose that, in addition to perceiving Hot Lips and Tuscan Glow, *S* simultaneously perceives a third specific shade of redË Paloma SunË which is closely related, and yet distinct, from the other two. Perhaps, the Conceptualist might suggest that the perceiver can deploy yet another determinable conceptË *REDDISH*, or *RED-ORANGE*Ë for this third shade of red. But then, we can suppose that a fourth shade of red, distinct from the other three, makes its way into the representational content of SËs experience, and so on.

Ultimately, a certain number of distinct shades of red will be represented differently in *S*Ës experience, and *S* will lack enough distinct colour concepts for all such shadesË or so the assumption goes. In which case, there will be at least two shades represented in *S*Ës experienceË represented differently, that isË such that *S* lacks a distinct concept for at least one of them.

We can represent this version of the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience thus:

ËËË it is possible that a subject *S*Ës experience *e* represents differently two distinct, yet closely similar, properties $f_1$ and $f_2$.

ËËË it is possible that *S* does not possess distinct concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

**Therefore,**

ËËË ¬ ËCË

This version of the argument seems to be valid and, if successful, it would falsify thesis ËCË that is, the conjunction of premises ËËand ËËappears to give rise to a counter-example to thesis ËCË But thereËs still a problem: why should anyone believe premise ËËË

It does seem plausible that the perceiver could lack such concepts. However, Conceptualists might insist that, given ËËË finding ËËplausible merely reveals oneËs predilection for Non-conceptualism. What is needed here is some independent motivation to think that ËËis true.

9.1.2. *Concepts and Re-identification*

The crucial question, then, becomes: how can proponents of ËAFGËestablish that normal subjects actually lack *specific* concepts for the specific shades of colour represented differently in their experiences? That is, how to warrant premise ËËË The following will not do. It canË be that premise ËËis based on the fact that normal subjects lack words for the specific colours they experience. Of course, we can express many of our concepts with the appropriate words. But this is no reason to think that, in order to have a concept *C* for a property *f*, one must have a particular word to express *C*.

Indeed, one often hears the complaint that Conceptualists, as well as their opponents, presuppose that concept-possession is very tightly connected with mastery of a language.[2] But surely, the complaint goes, one cannot deduce that a perceiver lacks a concept for a certain property just because she lacks a word for it. For instance, such a criterion would rule out young infants and cognitively sophisticated animals from possessing concepts *by definition*Ë whereas it seems to be an empirical question whether or not they possess concepts.

What else, then, might serve to motivate premise ËËË The following two-step strategyË due to Diana Raffman Ë995ËË might seem to work. First, proponents of ËAFGËexploit what is often presented as a fairly uncontroversial constraint upon the possession of concepts such as GREEN, SQUARE, KANGAROO, etc. Call it the ËRe-identification constraintËor ËRCË

***The Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***

a subject *S possesses* a concept *C only if S* is able to re-identify different objects $o_1$, $o_2$, ..., $o_n$, as falling under the concept *C*.

[2] See, e.g., Crane Ë001: 153ËË Luntley Ë999: 304ËË and also Jackson Ë003ËË

Undoubtedly, there is some intuitive appeal to ËRCË For instance, one would naturally suspect that if a subject fails to identify kangaroos when presented with such animals, or if she fails to re-identify some kangaroos as the same kind of animal she has encountered earlier, this strongly suggests that she lacks the concept *KANGAROO*. Indeed, ËRCËseems to be one of the criteria we regularly resort to in attributing concepts to one another. The idea appears to be that, if a subject *S* fails to deploy a certain concept *C* when presented with something that falls under that concept, then, all things being equal, this is a reason to think that *S* does not possess *C*.

The second step in this new strategy to motivate premise ËËrelies upon an empirical claim about perceptual memory. When it comes to re-identifying specific shades of colour they have visually discriminated earlier Ë.e., re-identify them as the same shadesË there is evidence that normal perceivers tend to perform poorly. ItË not just that they make occasional errors. Rather, they appear to lack the general ability to re-identify the samples they are presented with as instances of the same shades they earlier encountered Ësee Raffman, 1995: 294-6, as well as Dokic and Pacherie, 2001: 198, for reference to the relevant empirical literatureË This fact suggests that certain limitations hold on how fine-grained the short-term perceptual memory of normal subjects isË since short-term memory seems to be required by the ability to re-identify things one has previously experienced.

The following scenario can help to bring the point home ËKelly, 2001b: 411; Smith, 2002: 111Ë

> THE HARDWARE SHOP CASE. you find yourself in the paint section of a hardware shop, looking at various colour charts Ëimagine you want to repaint your kitchen wallË You can discriminate many highly similar shades on such charts. After a while, you come to make up your mind upon a particular shade of beige. All of a sudden, though, you accidentally drop the chart. You pick it up promptly and look at it again. But you cannot tell which shade of beige you had chosen for your kitchen wall.

In situations of this kind, as Sean Kelly puts it, Ëi]t can be very difficult to remember which [shade] you earlier judged to be preferableËË*ibid.*Ë[3] At least, it seems plausible that, in such a case, you fail to re-identify the particular shade of beige you had set your sight upon just seconds earlier.

[3] Of course, you might be able to pick up the sample of the colour youË previously chosen simply on the basis of its location on the chart. But the crucial point is that you might fail to re-identify the sample in question on the basis of colour alone Ësee Kelly, 2001b: 410Ë

The reasoning behind premise ËÉË can then be summarized as follows. Typically, normal subjects have a feeble memory of the specific shades of colour they have recently experienced, as is shown by their inability to re-identify such shades, even seconds after having been presented with instances of the shades in question. Given the Re-identification Constraint on the possession of concepts ËÈCË, it follows that normal subjects must lack concepts for such shades. Hence, we have a motivation for premise ËÉË In turn, since, according to premise ËÍË, it is possible for normal perceivers to discriminate such shades visually Ëgiven that their experiences represent such shades differentlyË, the conjunction of ËÍË and ËÉË falsifies the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËÇË *Ergo*, Conceptualism is false.

This gives rise to a more complex version of ËÀFGË

ËÍË it is possible that a subject *S*Ës experience *e* represents differently two distinct, yet closely similar, properties $f_1$ and $f_2$.

ËÉË it is possible that *S* cannot re-identify $f_1$ or $f_2$ across different perceptual encounters.

ËÊË if *S* possesses a concept *C*, *S* must be able to re-identify objects Ëor propertiesËfalling under *C* across different perceptual encounters.

ËÌË it is possible that *S* does not possess distinct concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

**Therefore,**

ËÊË ¬ ËÇË

The argument seems valid: ËÌËappears to follow from ËÉËand ËÊË, and the conjunction of ËÍËand ËÌËseems to present a counter-example to ËÇË[4] Furthermore, the premises of this version of ËÀFGËseem well-motivated.

[4] Where premise ËÌËin this new version of ËÀFGËis the equivalent of ËÉËin the previous version. Note also that the argument is concerned with representational differences *within a single experience*Ë premise ËÍË Of course, in order to establish that the perceiver lacks distinct concepts for the properties represented differently in her experience *e*, the Re-identification Constraint in premise ËÊËpresupposes that different experiences are involved when the perceiver fails to re-identify one of the two properties under considerationË $f_1$ or $f_2$Ë across different perceptual encounters. The point is that, if the perceiver is unable to re-identify either of these two properties *at the time* she can perceptually discriminate them, then, at *that* time, she lacks distinct concepts for such properties. This is so, even if the subjectËs inability to re-identify such properties at that particular time makes reference to experiences at other times Ëeither before or after the experience mentioned in premise ËÍËË

Premise ËÉËis based on both intuitive examples and empirical evidence that subjects can fail to re-identify specific properties they have just perceived. And premise ËÉËexpresses what seems to be a plausible constraint on the possession of concepts.

Still, the argument fails. I consider the ConceptualistsËresponse in the next section Ë§9.2Ë The response works, but only up to a point. I consider a more important reason why the argument fails in Ë§9.3ËË one which is compatible with the ConceptualistsËresponse and constitutes, I think, an improvement on that response.

## 9.2. The Demonstrative Strategy

According to Conceptualists like McDowell Ë1994: 56*ff*, 172Ëand Brewer Ë1999: 170-4Ë the fault with the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience ËAFGËresides with the intermediate conclusion Ë4Ë The point is not so much that, taken in isolation, Ë4Ëis falseË surely, it is at least *possible* that a subject lacks fine-grained concepts for certain specific properties. Rather, the argument is invalid in the transition from ËËto Ë4Ë

Both premises ËËand Ë4Ëcontain the modal operator ËtËs possible thatË The semantics for such operators is usually construed in terms of possible worldsË maximally consistent ways in which Ëthe totality ofËthings might be. That is, Ët is possible that *p*Ëis true if and only if ËpËis true in some possible worldËsË The problem can now be stated thus. The set of possible worlds in which premise ËËis true may not be the same as the set of possible worlds in which Ë4Ëis trueË they may not even overlap with one another. Indeed, Conceptualists will insist that they cannot be the same worlds. As a result, it doesnËt follow that there is *one* possible world Ëor a set thereofËin which the conclusion Ë§Ëis true.[5]

The reason advanced for this modal mismatch is that, in that context, the intermediate conclusion Ë4Ëis inconsistent with the fact that normal perceivers can form *demonstrative concepts* for what they experienceË hence the

[5] Usually, ËAFGËis presented in a way that omits the modal concepts in ËËand Ë4Ë and rests upon general claims regarding Ë*Ëwhat normal perceivers *tend to* discriminate in experience, and Ë4*Ëwhich concepts they *tend* to lack. The Demonstrative Strategy is then interpreted as showing the argument to be unsound: Ë4*Ëis false, because it ignores the availability of demonstrative concepts for the shades mentioned in Ë*Ë One reason to prefer the modal version of ËAFGËis that the modal claim allegedly resulting from the conjunction of ËËand Ë4Ëis all it really takes to refute the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCË Hence, even if Ë4*Ëis false, Ë4Ë could still be true.

ËDemonstrative StrategyË[6] That is, whenever *S* perceptually discriminates two distinct shades of red $f_1$ and $f_2$, *S* can deploy the demonstrative concepts *THIS SHADE* and *THAT SHADE*Ë or *THIS* and *THAT*, or $THUS_1$ and $THUS_2$Ë for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively. Hence, even though Ë4Ëmight be true in *some* possible worlds, it isnË true in worlds where premise ËËis true, and where the subject can demonstratively identify the two shades of red she experiences.

In other words, while they acknowledge with premise ËËthat perceptual experiences are indeed very fine-grained, Conceptualists reject that Ë4Ëis true of the situation described in ËË, insisting that, if ËËis true, accepting Ë4Ëin that context rests on an unwarrantedly narrow conception of what concepts are available in experience. Thus, Bill Brewer:

> There is an unacceptable assumption behind this line of argument, that concepts necessarily correspond with entirely context-independent classifications of things, [...]. This restriction unacceptably rules out any appeal to context-dependent demonstrative concepts, thoughË concepts associated with expression like Ëhat shade of redË or Ëjust that large in volumeË grasp of which essentially depends upon the subjectËs relations with the actual entities which constitute their semantic values. ËBrewer, 1999: 171Ë

One obvious question raised by this Demonstrative Strategy concerns the nature of demonstrative conceptsË and demonstrative concepts of colour, in particular. What are they? And what is so special about such concepts? Note first that, whatever demonstrative concepts are, they are distinct from words used to express themË concepts are usually taken to be the meaning of words as the concept *RED* is the meaning of ËredË Thus, we need to distinguish demonstrative concepts from demonstrative expressions like ËthisË or ËthatË which usually serve to express such concepts.

But what makes a demonstrative concept *demonstrative*? It wonË do to say that demonstrative concepts are just those concepts expressed by demonstrative expressions. Even if thatËs true, itËs about as informative as saying that the nature of the concept *RED* is captured by the fact that it can be expressed by ËredË[7] Nevertheless, the semantics of demonstrative expressions

[6] There is a certain amount of confusion regarding the role of the Demonstrative Strategy. As I understand it, such a strategy was never meant to be an argument *for* ConceptualismË as some seem to read it Ëee, e.g., Kelly, 2001b: 409; Heck, 2000: 491Ë Its sole purpose is to provide an escape route to an argument against ConceptualismËËAFGË

[7] Furthermore, it may well be that not all uses of demonstrative expressions serve to express demonstrative concepts. For instance, anaphoric uses of demonstrative expressionsË Speaker

can help to provide some clues as to what is special about demonstrative concepts.

For an expression like ËthisË to successfully refer to a particular object, it is usually assumed that two conditions must at least be satisfied: ËaËhow an utterance of ËthisËsecures a reference is determined in part by the context in which the utterance is made Ëbften, a perceptual context such as the visual scene surrounding the interlocutorsË; ËbËan utterance of ËthisË is usually accompanied by some kind of ËdemonstrationËËusually, some gesture like pointing or indicating, or some movement of the head, of the eyes, etc.Ë Such a demonstration serves to determine the reference of ËthisË as the referent is supplied by the context Ësome object in the visual scene, sayË[8]

The same conditions seem to apply to demonstrative *concepts*. On this model, if there is anything demonstrative about demonstrative concepts, it is that they instantiate the following properties: ËaËthe deployment of a demonstrative concept is *context-dependent* at least in the sense that the context in which the concept is formed partly determines the content of that concept; ËbËthe deployment of such a concept comes with some demonstration of some kind which, together with the context, serves to determine what the concept picks out. We can assume that if there are genuinely demonstrative concepts, they must at least satisfy these two conditionsË whatever other properties such concepts might have.[9]

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#1: ËJohn loves Judy.ËSpeaker #2: ËIs that so?ËË may not express demonstrative concepts. More on this below.

[8] In this second respect, demonstrative expressions like ËthisËare distinct from indexical expressions like ËIË, ËhereËor ËnowË Some authors insist that demonstrations are not necessary for the use of demonstrative expressions ËPerry, 1997: 596Ë; but claim that something like a Ëdirecting intentionËis Ë*ibid.*Ë Presumably, a directing intention involves an intention on the part of the speaker to direct her interlocutorËs attention upon the intended referent of her demonstrative expression. Perhaps, the thought is that in some situations, the context is sufficient to determine the speakerËs directing intention Ësay, there is only one object in the environment that could possibly be the intended referentË; so that no actual demonstration is needed. Nevertheless, we can mean by ËdemonstrationË whatever serves the function of determining the speakerËs directing intention, even if it doesnËt involve any actual gesture on the part of the speaker.

[9] Obviously, this is all a bit vagueË especially what the relevant demonstration might consist in. One problem is that itËs unclear there need be any directing *intention* Ësee previous footnoteË with demonstrative concepts, unless one presupposes a voluntaristic conception of such conceptsË where the subject intends to form a demonstrative concept for a particular object *o*, say. The worry has to do with the fact that the subjectËs directing intention must already contain

Thus, according to Brewer, demonstrative concepts are Ëcontext-dependentË in the sense that the context helps determine which object Ëor propertyËa demonstrative picks out in a context, but also in the sense that the use of such a concept is limited to that context. For McDowell Ë994: 171Ë a demonstrative concept deployed for a specific colour shade Ëexploits the presenceË of a sample of that shade Ë994: 59. 172Ë The reference of such a demonstrative concept, McDowell seems to suggest, is fixed by the fact that the subject who deploys the concept is in perceptual contact with a sample of that shade.

This is one reason why the Demonstrative Strategy might seem particularly appealing. Since the formation and deployment of a demonstrative concept requires mainly that one be *directly presented* in experience with the object or property such a concept picks out in a given context, demonstrative concepts are self-standing in the following way. Unlike other concepts, the possession of a demonstrative concept need not require possession of any other concept Ësee Brewer, 1999: 171; Kelly, 2001b: 408; and Peacocke, 2001a: 610; 2001b: 245, for discussionË[10] In particular, the cognitive resources needed for the possession of such concepts appear to be rather undemanding. ItË almost like tagging what one is presented with. This, at least, seems to be the intuition Conceptualists want to cash on in appealing to demonstrative concepts as providing an answer to ËAFGË the availability of such demonstrative concepts is supposed to make it plausible that Ë4Ëcannot be true when premise ËEËis true.

But how does this square with the considerationsË premises Ë2Ë and Ë3ËË used to motivate Ë4Ë In particular, the obvious question here is whether demonstrative concepts canË and shouldË satisfy the Re-identification constraint ËRCËstated in premise Ë3Ëof ËAFGË

***The Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***

a subject *S possesses* a concept *C only if S* is able to re-identify different objects $o_1$, $o_2$, ..., $o_n$, as falling under the concept *C*.

some way of referring to *o*. And presumably, such way of referring to *o* cannot itself be demonstrative. But then, what is it? A more specific proposal about the relevant conception of demonstration for demonstrative conceptsË one which avoids the difficulties just mentionedË will be considered in chapter 11.

[10] Of course, there can be complex demonstrative concepts such as *THIS SHADE* or *THAT SHADE OF RED* which do require possession of some of the non-demonstrative concepts that compose them. The important point is that there can be pure demonstration concepts, such as *THIS*, *THAT*, or *THUS*, which seem to require possession of no other concept. Thanks to Annalisa Coliva for pressing me on this.

After all, the point of the Demonstrative StrategyË if that strategy is to answer the argumentË isnË just that ËAFGËignores a certain kind of concept. The point must be that ËAFGËignores a kind of concepts which is such that ËËdeployment of such concepts allows subjects to carry out fine-grained chromatic discriminations in experience, and ËiËtheir possession nevertheless satisfies the Re-identification Constraint. In other words, if the Demonstrative Strategy is to motivate the rejection of premise Ë4Ë, Conceptualists had better have some story to tell about premises Ë2Ëand Ë3ËËsince Ë4Ërests on these two premises.

According to McDowell, demonstrative concepts do satisfy ËRCË, but only to a certain degree. In particular, McDowell appears committed to the view that a subjectËs possession of a demonstrative concept can satisfy the Re-identification Constraint, if only for a short amount of time after the experience. Thus,

> We can ensure that what we have in view is genuinely recognizable as a conceptual capacity if we insist that the very same capacity to embrace a colour in mind can in principle persist beyond the duration of the experience itself. In the presence of the original sample, Ëthat shadeËcan give expression to a concept of a shade; what ensures that it is a conceptË what ensures that thoughts that exploit it have the necessary distance from what would determine to be trueË is that the associated capacity can persist into the future, if only for a short time, and that, having persisted, it can be used also in thoughts about what is by then the past, if only the recent past. What is in play here is a recognitional capacity, possibly quite short-lived, that sets in with the experience. ËMcDowell, 1994: 157Ë[11]

Whether Conceptualists shouldË and *can*Ë maintain this line is one of the questions to be addressed in what follows.

ItËs not obvious that they can. After all, the hardware shop example was designed to show that a normal subject might not even have the sort of short-term recognitional capacity McDowell talks about. Such a subject could perceptually discriminate different shades of beige, and get to choose one. Yet, only seconds later after she drops the chart and picks it up again, it seems possible that she fails to re-identify which shade of beige she had just chosen. In other words, it seems possible that this subject fails to re-identify what she has perceived *as soon as* she stops perceiving it.

[11] See also Brewer Ë2005: 224-5Ë and, in particular the top of p. 225.

Therefore, it's not entirely clear whether the Demonstrative Strategy alone suffices to alleviate the threat posed by AFG. Unless Conceptualists also reject condition RC in premise 3, or, at least, reject it as a necessary constraint upon the possession of *demonstrative* concepts, their conception of experience remains under threat. As I shall argue in the next section, however, there are good reasons to think that RC does not determine the possession of demonstrative concepts, nor of any other concept, for that matter.

## 9.3. Concepts and Re-identification

Should we accept the constraint in premise 3 of AFG? According to that constraint:

> ***The Re-identification Constraint on Concept-possession***
> a subject *S possesses* a concept *C only if S* is able to re-identify different objects $o_1$, $o_2$, ..., $o_n$, as falling under the concept *C*.

Before we evaluate the plausibility of such a constraint, we need to know what it means exactly to re-identify different objects as falling under a certain concept. In this respect, we need to look at what proponents of AFG have in mind when they impose such a constraint on the possession of concepts. ditto with Conceptualists who seem to accept it. Finally, we need to see which among various possible notions of re-identification is at work in premise 2 of AFG, and whether it matches the notion of re-identification presupposed by RC in premise 3.

Answers to these questions are explored in the next three sections. Then, in §9.3.4, I suggest that the possession of many concepts cannot be constrained by the version of RC at play in AFG that such a constraint is too strong. And in §9.3.5, I argue that *demonstrative concepts*, in particular, aren't governed by such a Re-identification Constraint.

### 9.3.1. *Re-identification?*

What does it mean to re-identify objects or properties which fall under a concept? Here, I will consider *albeit* very briefly four clarifications of that notion. This will help us decide which notion of re-identification is at play in premises 2 and 3 of AFG.

First, there is a question about the sorts of things *S* must be able to re-identify to possess a certain concept *C*. Of course, it all depends on what the relevant concepts are concepts *of*. And so, we can be liberal about this. Still, in the case that concerns us here, the answer seems fairly obvious. As it was

outlined above, ËAFGËfocuses on perception of specific colour shades. It seems reasonable to assume that these are properties of day-to-day physical objectsË or of their surfaces.

A second question concerns the type of mental states identification and *re*-identification are supposed to consist in. I shall assume that, if *S* is able to identify object *o* as having property *f*, she must at least be able to believe that *o* is *f*. Presumably, the kind of identification at issue in this context is perceptual. And so, SËs belief that *o* is *f* must be based upon her experience of *o*.[12]

Third, what about *re*-identification? Here, the difficulty lies in the fact that there are at least two different readings of what it means to Ëre-identifyËan object or property. On what I shall call the *de re* reading, re-identification just comes down to repeated identification:

***de re re)identification:***
a subject *S* re-identifies *de re* some property *f if* ËËS identifies some object *o* as *f* in context ωand ËiËS identifies some object *o*´ as *f* in context ω.[13]

What is crucial to *de re* re-identification is that the subject identifies instances of *f* repeatedly Ën different contextsË The subject need not believe that the objects or properties thus identified are the same. For instance, she may not remember having identified the object or property the first time aroundË indeed, she may not remember having identified anything *as f*.

On the *de dicto* reading, in contrast, the ËeËof Ëe-identificationËgoverns the content of what the subject re-identifiesË not the state. Thus,

***de dicto re)identification:***
*S* re-identifies *de dicto* some property *f only if* ËËS identifies some object *o* as *f* in context ω, ËiËS identifies some object *o*´ as *f* in context ω, and ËiiË in ω, *S* identifies *f* as being *the same property f* as the one she encountered in ω

[12] A more difficult question is whether identification and re-identification require accuracy. IËm not sure quite what to say about this. Perhaps, the best thing is to follow Sean Kelly Ë2001b: 407Ëand say that, in order to have such ability for re-identification, the subject must at least manifest it *reliably* and *consistently*. This does not mean that the subject is infallible, though. Thanks to David Chalmers for discussion of these points.

[13] This formulation suits our purposes, because ËAFGËis concerned with concepts for properties of day-to-day physical objectsË and the re-identification of their instances. But, of course, this notion of re-identification could be adapted to the re-identification of particular objects Ëepeated identification of the very same object *o*Ë or to the re-identification of properties themselves Ëas when *f* is repeatedly identified as *g*Ë

Clearly, *de dicto* re-identification so construed entails *de re* re-identification. The crucial difference lies in clause ËiiË whereas clauses ËËand ËiËrequire that the subject re-applies the concept IS F to some objects *o* and *o*′, clause ËiiË demands that the subject applies Ëbut not necessarily re-appliesËthe concept IS THE SAME ... AS ... to property *f*. Here, what matters is that the subject realises that the property she identified *o* as having in some context is the same property she identifies *o*′ as having in some other context.[14]

Fourth, an orthogonal distinction concerns the temporal dimension of re-identification. *Synchronic* re-identification allows that *S* identifies objects *o* and *o*′ as *f* in different contexts ω and ω, but *at the same time*. *Diachronic* re-identification of a property *f* requires some temporal gap between the time when *S* first identifies *o* as *f* and the time when *S* identifies *o*′ as *f*. Combined with the *de re*/*de dicto* reading, this temporal distinction gives rise to at least four possible interpretations of the notion of Ëe-identificationËin ËRCË

The question now is: which interpretation is most appropriate to characterise this Re-identification Constraint on the possession of concepts? Before we get to this, it might be worth looking at some of the ways in which ËRCËis phrased in the literature, to see whether they can shed some light on the notion of Ëe-identificationËat play in ËRCË

9.3.2. *A Plethora of Re-identification constraints*

The first difficulty we encounter in deciding which notion of Ëe-identificationË is presupposed by ËRCËis that different participants in the dispute seem to construe that constraint differently. Thus, when McDowell, Brewer, and others, talk about the Re-identification Constraint, they donË seem to have exactly the same thing in mind. Worse, though they sometimes talk of Ëre-identificationËand of Ërecognitional capacitiesË, some of them donË even seem to have any notion of Ëe-identificationËin mind. Here is a brief survey.

To begin with, it is worth going back to what McDowell says in the passage above. Although McDowell talks about a Ërecognitional capacityË, he describes it in a way that does not even seem to involve the capacity to *re-identify*Ë whether *de dicto* or *de re*Ë objects that fall under a certain concept.

[14] Presumably, when *de dicto* re-identification applies to particular objects, it comes close to capturing what we mean ordinarily by the notion of ËecognitionË However, recognition in this latter sense is distinct from the kind of *de dicto* re-identification that concerns us here: a subject need not be able to re-identify a particular *object* as the very same object sheË identified earlier in order to possess a concept for a property of that object.

What McDowell is explicitly concerned with in this passage is the capacity to Ëembrace a colour in mindË Of such a capacity, he says that it Ëcan in principle persist beyond the duration of the experience itselfË ËMcDowell, 1994: 57Ë He also insists that such a capacity Ëcan be used in thought about what is by then the past, if only the recent pastË Ë*ibid.*Ë

This raises an exegetical difficulty: is McDowell really committed to ËRCË Perhaps, he only accepts a much weaker constraint, such as what we might call the ËPersistence ConstraintËor ËPCË

> ***The Persistence Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a demonstrative concept *C* for a specific shade of colour *f* *only if S* is able to ËËembrace *f* in mind while *S* perceives *f*, and ËiËSËs capacity to do so *persists* in such a way she can think about *f*, even after her perceptual encounter with *f* has taken place.

Note that ËPCËdoes not explicitly require *S* to identify or re-identify other instances of *C*Ë objects and properties which fall under *C*. Hence, it does not require that a subject re-identify *f*Ë either *de dicto* or *de re*Ë once she has ËembracedËit in experience.[15]

For instance, a subject might ËembraceËa perceived shade of colour in such a way that she can think about it, even when it isnË in sight any more. Yet, she may not be able to identify that shade again, even if she were to see it again right after her first experience of it. Perhaps, her memory of the shade is fading so rapidly that it loses the fineness of grain characteristic of her experience of the shade. Nevertheless, even a fading memory allows the subject to think about such a shade.

In this respect, itËs unclear where Conceptualists stand on this point. While they profess to accept the Re-identification Constraint as a necessary condition on the possession of demonstrative concepts, they phrase it in such a way that it does not involve any ability for re-identification.[16] In this respect,

[15] As for Brewer, the capacity to re-identify an object that falls under a concept involves ËiËa capacity Ëto keep track of the thing in question over its movement or her [the subjectË] changing positionË as well as ËiËthe capacity to Ëmake sense at least of the *possibility*, under certain specific conditions, of its numerical identity with an object encountered after a break in experienceË Ë005: 225Ë Though these may be pre-conditions for re-identification, neither entailsË nor seems intended to entailË that the subject be able to actually re-identify an object or property across perceptual encounters.

[16] Brewer is explicit that the Re-Identification Constraint Ëcannot require that a person be capable consistently of recognizing or re-identifying the particular in question after a complete

Conceptualists seem to be concerned with a weaker constraint on concept-possession: one which a subject can satisfy even if she is unable to re-identify what falls under the concept she possesses. This suggests that Conceptualists are aware of the problem behind ÏRCË It also suggests that appeal to demonstrative concepts is not all there is to the Demonstrative Strategy. The strategy is in fact complemented by a rephrasing of ÏRCË about which Conceptualists fail to be entirely explicit, unfortunately.

The way in which Conceptualists spell out the Re-identification Constraint contrasts sharply with yet another interpretation of ÏRCË That interpretation is to be found in the work of Sean Kelly Ï2001bË who defends such a Re-identification Constraint on conceptsË and on demonstrative concepts in particular. He writes:

> Let me be as clear as possible about how I understand the re-identification condition. If a subject has a perceptual experience whose content is constituted in part by a demonstrative concept then she must, at that time, have an ability reliably to identify a separate experience as having the same content if it occurs after some interval Ïperhaps extremely shortËof no such experience. ÏKelly, 2001b: 406-7Ë[17]

Here, Kelly appears to be concerned with something like the following:

> ***The Re)identification)of)Experience Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a demonstrative concept *C* at *t*1 ***only if*** ÏËif, at *t*1, *S* has an experience $e_1$, the content of which involves the demonstrative concept *C*, and ÏiË at *t*2, *S* is able to identify an experience $e_2$ as having the same content as $e_1$: i.e., as having a *C*-involving content.

Call this ÏKellyÏs ConstraintË or ÏKCË ÏKCËis problematic, mainly because clause ÏiËsuggests that *experiences* are what the subject must re-identify.

It seems, however, that demonstrative concepts typically applyË in the first place, at leastË to objects and properties in the world, not to experiences of those objects and properties. Thus, if a subject possesses a demonstrative concept for a property *f*, say, it seems natural that she must be able to re-identify *f* and instances of *f*Ë i.e., objects that are *f*. ItÏs unclear, at best, why

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break in experienceËÏ2005: 225Ë Earlier, however, he says that Conceptualists should accept the Re-identification ConstraintË that Ïa subject must be able to consistently re-identify a given object or property as falling under the conceptË Ï*ibid.*ÏË as a Ïnecessary condition upon the [...] possession of demonstrative [...] conceptsË Ï*ibid.*Ë

[17] About such an interval, Kelly Ï2001b: 407, n. 19Ëadds that it ÏiËmust be long enough to counts as a Ïbreak in the original experienceË and ÏiËlong enough to Ïbe experienced itselfË Other than that, it can be Ïindefinitely shortË Ï*ibid.*Ë

she must also be able to identify an *experience* as representing *f*. This suggests, further, that the perceiver might need to possess the concept of EXPERIENCE or of CONTENT OF EXPERIENCE, on Kelly's way of spelling out RCE In this sense, Kelly's interpretation of RCEmakes it a much more sophisticated constraint than it first seemed to be.[18]

Little help is to be gained, then, from considerations of the Re-identification Constraint found in the literature. Some spell out RCEin a way that doesn't even involve re-identification. Others phrase it in such a way that involves much more than the re-identification of objects and properties falling under a concept.

### 9.3.3. *The Threat of Equivocation*

We have seen that there are at least four different ways to construe the notion of 'Re-identification' in RCE It could amount to E synchronic *de re* re-identification, E synchronic *de dicto* re-identification, E diachronic *de re*, or E diachronic *de dicto* re-identification. But which is the most appropriate notion?

To answer this, we need to keep in mind that, in this context, the Re-identification Constraint is put forward by proponents of AFGE For *their* purposes, there is one additional desideratum the notion of 'Re-identification' in RCEmust satisfy. It must be the very same notion of 'Re-identification' that is presupposed by premise E in AFGE If it isn't, the notion of 'Re-identification' in Emust at the very least be entailed by the one at play in premise E Otherwise, AFGE will turn out to be invalid due to some equivocation about the notion of 'Re-identification' in premises Eand E failures to re-identify in Ewill not count as violation of the constraint captured in E

This suggests that the relevant notion of 'Re-identification' at play throughout the argument ought to be that of *diachronic de dicto* re-identification. For one thing, the empirical claim behind premise Econcerns cases where normal subjects fail to re-identify specific shades across different perceptual encounters *at different times*. For another, the kind of failure these subjects exemplify amounts to an inability to re-identify a certain specific

[18] Admittedly, Kelly's Constraint RCEentails RCE if a perceiver is able to re-identify a new experience as having *the same content* as another previous experience, she must thereby be able to re-identify the objects and properties figuring in the content of those experiences. The converse entailment doesn't hold however, for the perceiver might lack a concept of EXPERIENCE, or of CONTENT. In Chuard 'forthcoming', I consider one reason Kelly might phrase RCEin such a way.

shade *as the same shade* they have previously encountered: a failure of *de dicto* re-identification.

Indeed, such cases do not suggest that normal subjects cannot re-identify *de re* the shades in question. Consider again the hardware shop example used to motivate premise Ë2Ë When you pick up the colour chart youËve just dropped, what you might find yourself unable to do is to re-identify *as that very same shade* the particular shade of beige you had previously chosen. This amounts to a failure to re-identify such a shade *de dicto*. Presumably, however, you might be able to identify this shade as *f* again. That is, you might be able to re-identify it *de re*. In this case, what you fail to realise is that the shade you successfully re-identify *de re* is precisely the shade you had, seconds earlier, chosen for repainting your kitchen wall.

One might object: surely, if the subject is able to identify the same shade *as f* again Ëre-identify it *de reË* she must remember that she previously identified the shade she chose for her kitchen wall *as f* too. On this ground, she should be able to infer that the shade she is now identifying *as f* must be *the very same shade* she identified *as f* before. In which case, the objector will protest, she must be in a position to re-identify the relevant shade *as f* not just *de re*, but *de dicto*. In other words, re-identification *de re* and re-identification *de dicto* come together or fail together.

But the subject may not remember that the shade she chose for her kitchen wall was *f*. We are dealing here with specific shades of colour, represented in very fine-grained ways in the subjectË experiences. The particular shade the subject chose for her kitchen wall is one among many highly similar shades that may be represented simultaneously in her experience. What happens in the hardware shop case is precisely that the subject is unable to remember, even after a short period of time, which specific shades she had earlier identified as *f*. This is so, even ifË as it happensË she successfully re-identifies that shade *as f*. She can do so without knowing that, in effect, she is identifying as *f the very same shade* she earlier identified *as f*. And so, it seems, there can be failures of *de dicto* re-identification without failures of *de re* re-identification.

Accordingly, the sorts of re-identification failures mentioned in support of premise Ë2Ëare failures of diachronic *de dicto* re-identificationË not of *de re* or synchronic re-identification. But this suggests that the notion of Ëre-identificationËin premise Ë3Ëof ËAFGËshould likewise be that of diachronic *de dicto* re-identification. For if the sort of cases used to motivate premise Ë2Ë involve failures to re-identify specific shades of colour *de dicto* Ëbut not

necessarily *de re*, then the Re-identification Constraint in premise (3) must at least require *de dicto* re-identification. Otherwise, premise (2) will fail to establish that a subject lacks fine-grained concepts for specific shades of colour: it will not show that such a subject fails to satisfy a necessary condition on the possession of such concepts.

In short, then, the Re-identification Constraint (RC) in premise (3) ought to be rephrased as follows, if (AFG) is to go through:

> ***The* de dicto *Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for a property *f only if S* is able to (i) identify some object *o* as *f* at time *t*; (ii) to identify some object *o'* as *f* at time *t*+1; and (iii) to identify *f* at *t*+1 as *the same property f* encountered at *t*.

The next question is whether such a version of (RC) constitutes a plausible constraint on the possession of concepts (C) and of demonstrative concepts in particular.

It is possible that, in many cases where two objects falling under the same concept *C* are encountered over a short period of time, normal subjects are usually able to remember when they last identified an object as falling under *C*. The question is whether such ability constitutes a *necessary condition* for the possession of concepts in general. The simple answer is: it doesn't. In the next section (§9.3.4), I consider a counter-example to this *de dicto* Re-identification Constraint. In (§9.3.5), I consider whether such a constraint could plausibly apply to demonstrative concepts.

### 9.3.4. *Concepts without* de dicto *Re-identification*

An obvious problem arises concerning *de dicto* re-identification as a *necessary* condition on the possession of concepts. It concerns the following type of situation:

> AMNESIAC CONCEPT-USE. Susie, as the result of a car crash, suffers from short-term amnesia; she cannot remember anything that happened in the past twenty-four hours, though she remembers everything before the crash. As time goes by, she gets to remember things that occurred two days earlier. But her short-term amnesia persists: she cannot remember things that just happened in the last twenty-four hours.
>
> She hasn't lost her general knowledge, and her long-term memory is intact. In particular, she knows what kangaroos are, and she can re-identify successfully any kangaroo she encounters. But, due to her short-term memory loss, if she happens to encounter the same kangaroo or any kangaroo for that matter twice over in a very short lapse of time, she is unable to re-identify that kangaroo as the same she has just successfully identified seconds earlier.

In her situation, Susie is unable to re-identify kangaroos *de dicto*. This, however, doesnËt hinder her possession and ability to deploy concepts for kangaroos. Indeed, nothing in her situation precludes her from knowing what kangaroos are and identifying them successfully on the basis of her experiences of kangaroos. In other words, she possesses the concept KANGAROO.

This suggests that:

> ***The* de dicto *Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for a property *f only if S* is able to ËiËidentify some object *o* as *f* at time *t*; ËiiËto identify some object *o´* as *f* at time *t*+1; and ËiiiËto identify *f* at *t*+1 as *the same property f* encountered at *t*.

in no way constitutes a plausible constraint on the possession of concepts like KANGAROO. Susie can clearly possess such a concept, and yet she cannot satisfy the above constraint.[19]

What Susie can do, however, is re-identify a kangaroo when she sees one. In other words, she is able to apply the concept KANGAROO to kangaroos whenever she has a perceptual encounter with one such creature. That is, she is able to re-identify kangaroos *de re*.[20] So, if any version of ËRCËis to plausibly constrain the possession of concepts, it is more likely to be:

> ***The* de re *Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for a property *f only if S* is able to ËiËidentify some object *o* as *f* at time *t*; ËiiËto identify some object *o´* as *f* at time *t*+1.

This means that the threat of equivocation between premises Ë2Ëand Ë3Ëin ËAFGËis quite real. We saw how the examples behind premise Ë2Ëpresuppose a notion of re-identification *de dicto*. The problem, as SusieËs case makes plain, is that such a notion cannot constitute any plausible constraint on the possession

[19] Cases like this are not merely possible. Knowlton Ë997ËË discussed in Prinz Ë2002: 71ËË has shown that complete amnesiacs can be trained to categorize patterns of dots, without being able to recognize previously encountered patterns. Despite their ability for such categorization, the categorized patterns never seem familiar to those subjects.

[20] The same is true of finer-grained concepts, it seems. For instance, we can imagine that, due to her broad knowledge of marsupials, Susie possesses a wide range of specific concepts for each type of wallaby found in Australia. Her knowledge remains intact after the crash. And so, it seems, she can identify any particular type of wallaby whenever she encounters one: she can identify them repeatedly and successfully. So she can re-identify any type of wallaby *de re*. Due to her amnesia, however, she cannot re-identify them *de dicto*.

of concepts. *De re* re-identification might be such a condition. But, then, examples behind premise ËËdonË seem to suggest that normal subjects fail to re-identify specific shades of colour *de re*.

Suppose that Susie did possess fine-grained concepts for all the distinct specific shades of red available on a colour chart. Perhaps, Susie was an experienced painter before her car accident. Again, her knowledge of colour seems to survive her loss of short-term memory after the crash. In which case, there is no reason to think that she cannot re-identify *de re* particular shades of red. When presented with samples of Paloma Sun, she repeatedly identifies them as such.

At this point, proponents of ËAFGËmight insist: itË possible that a subject who is very knowledgeable about colour possesses fine-grained colour concepts matching the fine-grained ways in which her experiences represent specific shades. But, and this is the crucial point, this isnË true of normal subjects like you and me. Despite their impoverished conceptual repertoire, normal subjects have experiences that seem to represent shades of colour in just as fine-grained a way as SusieË experiences do.

This is where the Demonstrative Strategy becomes relevant. According to Conceptualists like McDowell and Brewer, normal subjects might be able to deploy *demonstrative concepts* for the specific shades of colour they encounter perceptually. In which case, they might be able to re-identify *de re* certain specific shades of colour *demonstratively*Ë by deploying the same demonstrative colour concepts twice. Hence, ËAFGËfails because the proponents of such an argument still havenË come up with a good reason to think that normal subjects lack fine-grained concepts for the specific properties represented in a fine-grained way in their experience.

But notice: the Demonstrative Strategy is compatible with the claim that the possession of such demonstrative concepts is constrained by:

> ***The* de re *Re)identification Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for a property *f only if S* is able to ËËidentify some object *o* as *f* at time *t*; ËiËto identify some object *o*Ëas *f* at time *t*+1.

That is, it seems possible that, when presented with instances of Hot Lips at $t_1$ and $t_3$ Ëbut not $t_2$ so that there is some interval between her two experiencesË, a normal subject can identify them both as *THIS* Ëor as *THIS SHADE*,

or THUS, at both $t_1$ and $t_3$. She just deploys the same demonstrative concept for both samples.[21]

Indeed, this is what happens in the hardware shop case: having dropped the colour charts, a normal subject might nevertheless be able to identify the same shade she had identified earlier using the same demonstrative concept. The fact that she can't remember which shade she had earlier identified, as Susie's case shows, need not hinder the subject's capacity to re-identify *de re* the shade in question. This suggests that, contrary to what Brewer and McDowell seem to assume, the possession of fine-grained demonstrative colour concepts could well require the ability to *re-identify* specific shades *de re*. Hence, a version of RC might well apply to such concepts.[22]

But couldn't possession of such fine-grained demonstrative concepts also require re-identification *de dicto*? To show that concepts like KANGAROO do not need to satisfy such a constraint isn't to show that *demonstrative concepts* don't behave differently. Perhaps, in order to ensure that one deploys the very same demonstrative concept for a specific shade of colour encountered at different times, one must remember which shade one had thus identified the first time. But as we shall see in the next section, it seems clear that one can deploy a fine-grained demonstrative concept without being able to re-identify *de dicto* the specific property thus conceptualised. In fact, it seems as though no re-identification constraint *of any kind* is really necessary for the possession of such demonstrative concepts.

### 9.3.5. *Demonstrative Concepts without Re-identification*

Could it be that possession of fine-grained demonstrative concepts for very specific properties requires an ability to re-identify such properties *de dicto*? We have just seen how unlikely it is that *de dicto* re-identification should be a constraint on the possession of concepts like KANGAROO and other more fine-grained concepts. I'll now try to show that it isn't a constraint on the

[21] This raises a question about the identity-conditions of such demonstrative colour concepts. When does the deployment of two instances of such concepts count as deployment of the very same demonstrative colour concept? Some answers to this question are considered in my 2005, which shows how Conceptualists can avoid the difficulties allegedly raised by the non-transitivity of indiscriminability (see, e.g., Martin, 1992a: 757, n. 14; Peacocke, 1992: 83; and for a much more detailed version of the objection, Dokic and Pacherie, 2001).

[22] A Re-identification Constraint not just in name, but which really involves some ability to re-identify things in the same way at different times.

possession of the kind of demonstrative concepts at work in the Demonstrative Strategy either.[23]

Consider another example:

> THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE. A stone from outer space suddenly lands on Susie's desk. She has never seen anything like it before. Its colour, insofar as it seems to have one, looks completely different from any shade of colour Susie might have experienced in the past; and likewise for its shape. She can point at the stone or at some of its properties and form demonstrative concepts for it for its colour, its shape. When her colleagues ask Susie 'What is *that*?' pointing at the mysterious stone, she is perfectly capable to understand their question, even if she is unable to answer. Likewise, they understand what Susie means when she says 'Why is *this* on my desk?', 'What kind of colour is *that*?', etc.

Here, despite the fact that the subject is presented with an unknown object with unknown colour and shape, it seems as though she can nevertheless form demonstrative concepts for such an object and some of its properties. For instance, there is linguistic evidence that the subject and her colleagues form demonstrative concepts for the extraterrestrial stone when they communicate using demonstrative expressions like 'this' or 'that' to refer to the stone. The fact that they seem to understand one another suggests that they are able to grasp the thoughts expressed by such demonstrative expressions. And, it seems natural to suppose, such thoughts involve demonstrative concepts. What else would Susie's utterance 'What is *that*?' express?[24]

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[23] A more detailed version of this response can be found in Chuard 'forthcoming'.

[24] Of course, demonstrative expressions can sometimes be used anaphorically, to refer to something named, described, or mentioned, earlier in the conversation. For instance, Susie might say: 'The boss said that the new annual budget analysis would be delivered today.' and her colleague respond: 'What does this 'the new annual budget analysis' have to do with *that* 'pointing at the stone''? The first demonstrative expression here has its reference fixed by Susie's definite description. In this respect, it may not express a demonstrative concept, but something like a definite description. The second demonstrative expression, on the other hand, has its reference fixed perceptually, *via* the speaker's pointing at the stone.

One might insist that the mere fact that Susie uses demonstrative expressions to voice her concepts need not imply that such concepts are demonstrative' after all, they could also be disguised definite descriptions of the form *THE SHADE OF THE THIRD OBJECT ON THE RIGHT OF MY DESK* or *THE COLOUR OF THE OBJECT IN THE MIDDLE OF MY DESK, WHATEVER THAT MIGHT BE*. This seems unlikely, however. For Susie's concepts do satisfy a variety of constraints *distinctive* of demonstrative concepts. To repeat, she forms such concepts 'i' in a certain perceptual context, 'ii' on the basis of her experience of the colour of such shades, while focusing her attention on the shade in question. Disguised descriptive concepts, on the other hand, need satisfy none of these conditions. For instance, Susie could have formed the concept *THE COLOUR OF THE OBJECT IN THE MIDDLE OF MY DESK,*

Such demonstrative concepts provide Susie with a way of thinking about the stone, which is intimately linked with her experience of it. In this sense, SusieËs use of demonstrative expressions does express concepts, which are perception-dependent and context-dependent just the way demonstrative concepts are supposed to be. Yet, by hypothesis, Susie has no idea whatsoever about the ËthingËshe thus refers toË except, of course, for its location in her visual field. Her ignorance notwithstanding, she seems able to think demonstratively about it.

Of course, this is no counter-example to the claim that demonstrative concepts must satisfy the *de dicto* Re-identification Constraint as yet. The example must be developed further:

> THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE ËCONTINUEDË More extra-terrestrial stones appear on SusieËs desk. Each stone looks slightly different from the first stoneË they seem to be chromatically and geometrically different, although Susie canËt quite say how. Susie has a careful look around her desk, looking minutely at each stone and its properties. Suddenly, due to the amount of new stones on her desk, Susie finds herself unable to tell which stone first appeared on her desk. Despite their differences, they all look more or less the same. And because of their sheer number, she canËt even recall the location of the first stoneË or its colour or shape. And so, Susie is unable to re-identify which stone it was that first appeared on her desk.

Surely, though, the fact that Susie is *now* unable to re-identify *de dicto* the stone she initially saw appear on her desk doesnËt *retroactively* undermine the fact that she did *earlier* think of that stone demonstratively. She cannot re-identify the original stone by its colour, shape, or location. Yet, when that stone stood alone on SusieËs desk, Susie clearly seemed able to form a demonstrative concept for it, or for its shape or colour.

This suggests that *de dicto* re-identification isnËt a necessary condition on the possession of fine-grained demonstrative concepts for specific shades of colour. But the point generalises: the same reasoning also suggests that *no* capacity to re-identify objects and properties falling under demonstrative concepts is necessarily required by the possession of such concepts. Of course, it might happen that Susie successfully re-identifies the colour of the stone that first appeared on her desk in exactly the same way, using what is in fact the same demonstrative concept. In which case, she might be able to

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*WHATEVER THAT MIGHT BE* just by being told by one of her colleagues that there is such a thing on her desk. Given this, itËs hard to take the suggestion too seriously. At best, a good reason needs to be offered to think that SusieËs concepts are disguised definite descriptions. Thanks to Sean Kelly for drawing my attention to these issues.

demonstratively re-identify *de re* the unknown shade of colour of the stone from outer space.

But suppose that she isn't able to do so. It remains the case that she did successfully identify the colour of that stone with a demonstrative concept the first time around. The fact that she is unable to re-deploy the same concept for that shade need not undermine her earlier achievement. It's unclear, then, why her inability to re-identify a certain shade *de dicto or de re* should, retroactively, make us doubt her earlier ability to identify demonstratively the shade in question. In particular, there seems to be nothing incoherent in the way Susie's situation was described above: at $t_1$, she forms a demonstrative concept for the colour of the first stone from outer space that appears on her desk, although, at $t_3$, she is unable to re-identify that stone in the same way. What reason is there to think that what she does or fails to do at $t_3$ has an effect on what she did at $t_1$?

In this respect, demonstrative concepts seem to behave quite differently from non-demonstrative concepts for the same properties. Thus, recall Brewer's suggestion in the quote introducing the Demonstrative Strategy in §9.2 that demonstrative concepts provide *context-dependent* classifications of objects and properties (Brewer, 1999: 171). The idea seems to be that demonstrative colour concepts like THIS SHADE or THAT RED serve to categorise and identify certain shades, but only *relative to a particular context*.

On such a view, demonstrative concepts are a kind of disposable classificatory device: a subject may need to categorise certain objects and properties in a particular visual scene, only to be able to act upon them at the time. But there may not be any cognitive pressure on the subject to store such classifications in memory. Nevertheless, demonstrative concepts of this kind might fulfil a useful short-term classificatory purpose. To this extent, short-term and long-term conceptual categorisation ought to be kept distinct: the two functions might meet different needs in a subject's cognitive life.[25]

[25] Indeed, this seems to have been one of the main insights of Evans's (1982) seminal work on demonstrative concepts. For him, possession of a demonstrative concept essentially rests upon the ability to know *which* object one is referring to *at the time* (1982: 149, 171). And knowing *which* object one's demonstrative concept picks out requires only that one be *able* to *locate* the object in one's perceptual field (1982: 149. 170); by (focusing one's attention upon it (1982: 172-5); see also Brewer (1999: 186*ff*); Campbell (2002); and Peacocke (1983: 139*ff*). Importantly, seeing the object isn't sufficient to form a demonstrative concept about it: see Evans (1982: 147-50); Hawthorne and Scala (2000). And perceptual attention may be a necessary condition on such concepts. The important point is that, on Evans's view, there is no need to know *which kind* of

## 9.4. Objections and Replies

Are there better ways to motivate premise ËËin ËAFGË Here, IË have a quick look at considerations offered in support of the claim that *demonstrative* colour conceptsË that is, demonstrative concepts deployed for specific properties represented in a fine-grained way in experienceË are constrained by some Re-identification Constraint. The first one is Sean KellyËs Ë2001bË the second is extracted from some remarks by Jacob and Jeannerod Ë2003Ë I take each in turn.

### 9.4.1. *Kellyès example*

Sean Kelly Ë2001bËhas advanced a remake of ËAFGË which directly targets the conceptualist proposal that normal subjects can deploy fine-grained demonstrative concepts for the specific shades they experience. The argument relies essentially on the claim that some kind of Re-identification Constraint ËRCËapplies to demonstrative concepts.

Then, having argued that the possession of demonstrative concepts is determined by such a Re-identification Constraint, Kelly points out that perceptual experiences represent specific properties in such a way that a subject may not be able to re-identify what she had earlier experienced. In which case, the contents of perceptual experiences must be distinct from demonstrative concepts, since they do not have all their properties in common Ëi.e., the latter has the property of being determined by the Re-identification Constraint while the former hasnËËË He concludes that the content of such experiences cannot be conceptualË and in particular, that it cannot be constituted by demonstrative concepts. Thus,

ËËË if a subject *S* possesses a demonstrative colour concept like *THIS SHADE* or *THUS*, S must be able to re-identify shades that fall under *THIS SHADE* or *THUS*.

ËËË it is possible that a perceiver *S* has an experience *e* representing a specific property *f* without being able to re-identify *f*.

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object is being picked out Ë1982: 178-9Ë Such demonstrative concepts lead to Ëdentification-free knowledgeËËEvans, 1982: 173, 181*ff*Ë And if Evans grants the importance of recognitional capacities for cognition in general, he argues that they are not ***necessary*** to form demonstrative concepts Ë1982: 273*ff*Ë Note that Evans was concerned mainly with demonstrative concepts deployed for objects, but the same might go for demonstrative concepts used to conceptualise properties.

(3) demonstrative concepts satisfy the Re-identification Constraint, while the content of perceptual experiences doesn't.

(4) by Leibniz's law, $x = y$ *only if*, for any property $g$, $x$ has $g$ if and only if $y$ has $g$.

**Therefore,**

(5) the representational content of experience isn't identical with constituted by demonstrative concepts.

Kelly's defence of (2) relies on the same sort of examples like the hardware shop case discussed earlier (§9.1.2.). But the relevant premise here is (4), and I shall focus mainly on his defence of that premise. It exploits the following example (Kelly, 2001b: 406):

> THE TRIANGLE CASE. A subject *S* is presented with two objects: a triangle on the left of her visual field and a square on the right. She is able to discriminate the triangle from the square on the basis of her experience. However, when later confronted with the very same triangle ten times in a row, the subject fails to re-identify the triangle, in any consistent way. In particular, she fails to re-identify it *as* the same object she discriminated from a square earlier on. Perhaps, she recognizes the triangle only five times out of ten, and fails otherwise.[26]

On the basis of this case, Kelly concludes:

> I want to suggest that if we were confronted with such a subject we'd have no choice but to think that he does not know what that shape on the left, the triangle, is. [...] I think it is impossible for us to allow that such a person possesses the concept expressed by the phrase 'that shape' said while pointing to what is in fact a triangle. The reason for this, I think, is that one natural condition on the possession of a demonstrative concept is that a person be able consistently to re-identify a given object as falling under a given concept, assuming it does. Hence, the re-identification condition. (Kelly, 2001b: 406)

Kelly's main point seems to be that we are reluctant to attribute possession of a concept for that particular triangle to subject *S*, because her inconsistent re-identification of the triangle *indicates* that she doesn't *know* the shape she was originally presented with.

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[26] Note that Kelly seems to be concerned with failures of *de dicto* re-identification as involving re-identification of the triangle *as the same triangle* encountered earlier. And indeed, that's what the argument requires. Again, since the sorts of cases which motivate premise (2) in Kelly's argument have to do with failures of *de dicto* re-identification and not failures of *de re* re-identification. Kelly's defence of the Re-identification Constraint in premise (3) must show that an ability for *de dicto* re-identification is necessary for the possession of demonstrative concepts.

The argument seems to rely on some connection between ËaËpossession of a concept, ËbËknowledge of the things which fall under that concept, and ËcËthe capacity to re-identify such things. Presumably, the knowledge in question relates to the ***kind*** of thing a triangle is: Kelly is not interested here with whether the subject can track the *particular* object that happens to be a triangle. What matters is whether she can track the property of triangularity instantiated by that object.

Such a connection may be articulated in terms of the following two conditionals:

> ËËif a subject *S* is unable to re-identify a property *f*, *S* has no knowledge of the kind of thing *f* is.
>
> ËiËif a subject *S* has no knowledge of the kind of thing a property *f* is, *S* has no concept for *f*.

Given that, by hypothesis, the subject in KellyËs example is unable to re-identify the triangle as such, Kelly concludes on the basis of ËËand ËiËthat she lacks a concept for triangles. Note that ËËand ËiËare contra-positives, respectively, of the following principles:

> ***No Knowledge of Kind without Re)identification*** **}KKR}**
> *S* knows what kind of thing *f* is *only if S* is able to re-identify repeatedly and consistently objects that are *f*.
>
> ***No Concept without Knowledge of Kind*** **}CKK}**
> *S* has a concept for a property *f only if S* knows what kind of thing *f* is.

Hence, it seems, KellyËs argument must be relying on such principles. However, we have been provided with no reason to think that these principles are true. In fact, there are reasons to doubt that they are.[27]

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[27] Furthermore, even if they were true, such principles do not support premise ËjËin KellyËs argumentË at least, not in the right way. Note that a natural reading of the first principle is in terms of *de re* re-identification: if *S* knows the kind of thing that property *f* is, *S* must at least be able to repeatedly and consistently identify objects which are in fact the same kind of thing as *f* is. This does not require that *S* be able to remember earlier identifications of *f* and to identify newly encountered instances as the same kind of thing as the ones one has previously encounteredË it does not require *de dicto* re-identification. Hence, even if both principles were true, they only seem to support the claim that concept-possession requires an ability for *de re* re-identification. However, for KellyËs argument to be valid, the Re-identification Constraint in premise ËjËmust be understood in terms of *de dicto* re-identification. To repeat, premise ËaËis

The first principle (KKR) is clearly problematic. For instance, I might know a lot about quarks and know what kinds of things they are. This doesn't mean that if I were to be able to see one, I would recognise it as such. Admittedly, Kelly (2001b: 407) insists that the Re-identification Constraint may not apply to *deferential* concepts (concepts that one possesses by deference to the knowledge of an expert). Even so, this first principle seems to be false about some non-deferential concepts. I know what Jedis (or Masons) are (indeed, I may be an expert about the orders or societies Jedis (or Masons) belong to. Yet, I might be incapable to identify or re-identify a Jedi (or a Mason) when I see one. Given such counterexamples, this first principle cannot be taken for granted without further ado (it doesn't seem to be all that plausible by itself, at least not as a general principle.[28] And since it must be this first principle which, ultimately, leads to the Re-identification Constraint in Kelly's argument, one would hope that Kelly had more to say in its support.

The second principle (CKK) is problematic too. Depending on how it is construed, it seems plausible enough: to have a concept of a property *f*, one must at least know what kind of property *f* is. But it all depends on how (kind of property) is understood: understood one way, the principle appears to be false; understood another way, it is innocuous but hardly supports Kelly's conclusion. Since we are here concerned principally with demonstrative concepts of specific shades of colour, I will consider interpretations of (CKK) that are relevant to this case.[29]

According to this second principle, one can possess a concept for a specific shade of colour, only if one knows what kind of thing (or property) that shade is. There seems to be at least three ways in which to construe the notion of a (kind of property) in this context: as (a) a chromatic property (as opposed to a

only concerned with failures of *de dicto* re-identification, and such failures need not entail failures of *de re* re-identification.

[28] One might think that in the case of colour concepts, since the nature of colours is revealed perceptually, such a principle ought to seem obvious: because one knows what kind of thing a colour is through perception, one must be able to re-identify it perceptually. But note, first, that it is contentious that the nature of colours is *revealed* in perception (Boghossian and Velleman, 1989; Johnston, 1996). More importantly, we'll soon see that there is some ambiguity in the phrase (the kind of thing a colour is) which causes some problem with the second principle. In any case, a plausible reading of such a principle about colour supports at best a requirement for *de re* re-identification.

[29] Though similar interpretations are available for shape properties, as in Kelly's example with concepts of triangles.

shape property, sayË ËbËas a chromatic property of a certain hue Ësay red instead of greenË or ËcËas a highly specific chromatic property Ësay Hot Lips rather than Paloma SunË[30]

It seems plausible that if one possesses a concept for a specific shade of colour, one must at least know that itËs a colourË interpretation ËaË Even the subject in THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE example satisfies such a requirement: she knows she is demonstratively thinking of the colour of the extraterrestrial stone, even though she has never encountered such a colour before. On the other hand, the same example seems to falsify interpretations ËbËand ËcËof this second principle ËCKKË Since the subject faced with an extraterrestrial stone may not know anything about the colour of that stone, she may not even know what kind of hue that colour instantiates Ëa hue never encountered beforeË let alone what specific shade of colour it isË even if she knows itËs a colour. Nevertheless, despite not knowing what kind of colour is in front of her, she can form a demonstrative concept for that specific shade of colour, it seems.[31]

Hence, insofar as demonstrative concepts of specific shades of colour are concerned, KellyËs second principle seems true only when interpreted in terms of ËaË This version of the principleË where Ëto know what kind of property *f* isËamounts to knowledge that *f* is a chromatic propertyË is unlikely to deliver the desired outcome, when combined with KellyËs first principle ËKKRË

[30] Here, I disregard metaphysical interpretations of Ëkind of propertyË according to which knowing what kind of property a colour is consists in knowing that it is a response-dependent property or a physical reflectance property. Surely, an account of what it takes to have colour concepts need notË and ought notË contain a solution to complex philosophical problems about the metaphysics of colours.

[31] One could object that, to *know* what kind of property a property *f* is, one must simply be able to discriminate that kind from other kinds of properties. Thus, in the case under consideration, one might insist that the subject is able to discriminate the hue of the extraterrestrial stone against other hues, and that she is able to discriminate its specific shade against other specific shades. Even so, this doesnËt help KellyËs argument. The example of the STONE FROM OUTER SPACEË as was KellyËs original HARDWARE STORE exampleË shows that there can be perceptual discrimination of very specific properties without re-identification Ëin *re* or *de dicto*Ëof those properties. Since it seems plausible that a subject can form demonstrative concepts in such cases, the fact that a subject knows what kind of property she is demonstratively thinking of because she can discriminate it from other kinds of properties doesnËt help to establish that re-identification is necessary for possession of such concepts. Hence, the first principle ËKKRËis likely to be falsified by such cases too: one may knowË in the ËbËor ËcËsenseË what kind of property a specific shade of colour is, because one is able to perceptually discriminate such a kind Ëhue, specific shadeËfrom others, even though one is unable to re-identify Ëre-identify *de dicto*Ëthat kind.

According to the first principle, if a subject knows what kind of property her concept for property *f* is a concept of, she can re-identify other instances of *f*. If the subject possesses a demonstrative concept for a specific shade of colour, it is plausible to think that she knows that her concept is a concept of colour (principle (CKK)), and it is plausible to think that she is able to re-identify other colours as colours. But this doesn't show that she must be able to re-identify other instances of that *specific colour* as such at different times. Hence, even when 'kind of property' is interpreted in terms of 'a', the first principle (KKR) seems false too.

So: not only are the two principles which Kelly exploits in his defence of premise (3) unmotivated, both principles seem to be false under one interpretation or another. When the notion of a 'kind of property' is construed in a quite specific way 'in terms of 'b' or 'c'', it's at best unclear that the first principle (KKR) is true, but the second principle (CKK) clearly isn't. When construed in another way 'in terms of 'a'', the first principle (KKR) is false, even though the second one (CKK) seems true. In other words, there is no plausible interpretation of the notion of a 'kind of property' which makes both principles true.

And anyway, even if both principles could be true under the same interpretation, it seems that they can only plausibly support a version of the Re-identification Constraint on the possession of demonstrative concepts in terms of *de re* re-identification. Hence, Kelly's argument for the claim that demonstrative concepts are governed by the Re-identification Constraint (RC) fails to raise any problem for Conceptualists, for the reasons already discussed above.

### 9.4.2. *No proper Concept*

Another line of thought in support of the Re-identification Constraint is voiced in the following passage:

> Color concepts and shape concepts stored in a creature's memory must allow recognition and re-identification of colors and shapes over long periods of time. Although pure demonstrative color concepts may allow comparison of simultaneously presented samples of color, it is unlikely that they can be used to reliably reidentify one and the same sample over time. [...] Now, if the conceptualist was tempted to turn the tables around and argue that demonstrative concepts 'of shapes or colors' are precisely well-suited to capture the fine-grainedness of perceptual experiences on the ground that they are not designed to achieve recognitional tasks, we would really ask in what sense they would still deserve to be called concepts. (Jacob and Jeannerod, 2003: 25)

One of the threads in this passage seems to be the idea ËËthat, if demonstrative concepts really are concepts of shades of colour, shapes, lengths, and so on, they should behave just like other concepts for such colours, shapes, lengths, etc. Since ËiËconcepts like *RED* or *SQUARE* mainly serve to *categorize*, *identify*, and *recognize* objectsË or so claim Jacob and JeannerodË and since ËiiËsuch concepts serve such a function over a long period of time, ËvËthese concepts must be stored in memory in order to fulfil their function. Hence, a crucial assumption at play here is that demonstrative concepts such as *THIS SHADE* or *THAT RED* should naturally fulfil the same function as non-demonstrative colour concepts, since they can be deployed for the very same properties.

But why believe that? The mere fact that demonstrative concepts pick out the same properties as other concepts shouldnË by itself entail that, as concepts, they fulfil the very same function in the same way. For one thing, there are important differences between concepts like *RED* and *SQUARE* and demonstrative concepts in general. After all, demonstrative concepts *are demonstrative*. To repeat, they are perception-dependent, in the sense that a perceptual experience is necessary for the formation of such a concept. Furthermore, unlike concepts such as *RED* or *SQUARE*, demonstrative concepts are context-dependent. That is, which object or property they pick out is determined, in part, by the context in which such objects or properties are perceived Ësee Brewer, 1999: 172; Kelly, 2001b: 401Ë Finally, we have seen that demonstrative concepts can be thought of as providing ËdisposableËmeans of categorisation and identification. If this is their main function, there is no reason why such concepts should be stored in memory.

In light of these differences, any claim about what common constraints might hold upon demonstrative and non-demonstrative concepts cannot just be taken for granted, but must be properly argued for. Worse, Jacob and Jeannerod simply seem to take it as their starting point that demonstrative concepts must behave like non-demonstrative ones. This not only ignores the above differences, but also begs the question against the Demonstrative Strategy, since the proponents of such a strategy insist on the differences between demonstrative and non-demonstrative concepts.

Perhaps, the thought is that, if the function of demonstrative concepts doesnË even approximate that of concepts like *RED* or *SQUARE*, there is no reason to think that demonstrative concepts really *are* concepts. But, again, why think that? Like *RED* and *SQUARE* and many other concepts, demonstrative

concepts provide a way of thinking of objects and properties like redness and squareness. They also provide a way of categorising and identifying such objects and propertiesË *albeit* a context-dependent and perception-dependent way. These seem to be some of the main functions associated with concepts in general. In this respect, itËs hard to see why demonstrative concepts couldnËt be concepts in the proper sense of the term.

Another theme in the passage from Jacob and Jeannerod is the suggestion that, unless demonstrative concepts satisfy the Re-identification Constraint, there doesnËt seem to be any other condition which could serve to establish whether or not a given subject possesses a particular demonstrative concept. Again, though, itËs unclear why one should accept this claimË in support of which Jacob and Jeannerod provide no argument.

Here, for instance, is an incomplete list of conditions that possession of a demonstrative concept can satisfy, even if possession of that concept doesnËt require the ability to re-identify what falls under the concept. First, demonstrative concepts satisfy two basic constraints considered in chapter 4:

> ***The Identification Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for *f only if S* is able to identify *f* as *C*.
>
> ***The Discrimination Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for *f only if S* is able to discriminate *f* which falls under *C* from other properties *g*, *h*, ..., which do not fall under *C*.[32]

Further, a subject who possesses a demonstrative concept can also satisfy the following general constraint:

> ***The Inference Constraint on Concept)possession***
> a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for *f only if S* is able to draw inferences involving the concept *C*Ë i.e., from the thought that *o* is *C*, *S* may be able to infer that something is *C*, that *o* isnËt *C*è, that if *o* = *o*è, *o*èis *C*, etc.

The thought, here, is that concepts play a central role in reasoning and thought such that there is some constitutive link between possession of some concept and the capacity to draw inferences involving this concept.

Finally, a subject who possesses demonstrative concepts can satisfy EvansË Ï982Ëfamous ÏGenerality ConstraintË[33]

[32] The notion of ÏdiscriminationÏhere at play may or may not be perceptual. For example, I can discriminate quarks from proteins, even if I canÏt perceive any instance of such things.

[33] See, e.g., Evans Ï982: 102Ë, Peacocke Ï992:ch. 2Ë, and Davies Ï989: 148Ë

***The Generality Constraint on Concept)possession***
if a subject *S* possesses a concept *C* for a property *f*, *S* must be able to apply *C* to a host of different objects, such that, if *S* thinks that *a* is *C*, she can also think that *b* is *C*, and that *d* isnÏt *C*, etc.

So, there are at least four constraints on the possession of a demonstrative concept, other than the ability to re-identify objects or properties that fall under such a concept. And a subject to satisfy the Re-identification Constraint can nevertheless satisfy these other constraints, as the following example suggests.

THE STONE FROM OUTER SPACE ÏREVISITEDË Three unknown stones from outer space simultaneously appear on SusieÏs desk. Despite their close similarities, the colour and shape of these mysterious objects look more or less different. Susie attempts to compare them. She can perceive the colour of each stone distinctly and realises that two of the stones have exactly the same shade, while the third differs only minutely from them. Thus, she deploys two distinct demonstrative concepts for the specific shades of each stone: $THUS_1$ for the shade of the first two stones and $THUS_2$ for that of the third. In this respect, Susie ÏconceptuallyË identifies the colour of each stone, and identifies it differently, using two distinct demonstrative concepts $THUS_1$ and $THUS_2$Ë she satisfies the Identification Constraint.

Despite their close similarity, Susie can discriminate the strange and mysterious shades of each stone. In this respect, her deployment of $THUS_1$ and $THUS_2$ satisfies the Discrimination Constraint. She can also draw various inferences about the colours of these objects. For instance, from the thought that *this is thus*$_1$ Ïpointing at the shade of the first stoneË she can infer that *there is something on her desk which is thus*$_1$, or that *there is some colour thus*$_2$ Ïpointing at the third stoneË and that *thus*$_2$ *is different from any other shade she has previously experienced.* And so, she satisfies the Inference Constraint. For the same reason, she satisfies the Generality Constraint: she can think that the first stone is *thus*$_1$, and that the second stone is also *thus*$_1$Ë although the third stone isnÏt.

But then, another twenty-five stones appear in one go on SusieÏs desk. Some of them fill in the space between the three stones that first stood on her desk. Although Susie can locate each stone, focus her attention on their colour, and discriminate their shades from one another, she cannot re-identify the colours of the first three stones. Not only is she unable to re-identify *de dicto* the stones themselves. There are just too many of these weird objects now on her desk.

Despite the fact that Susie is now unable to re-identify *de dicto* the bizarre shades she observed when the first three stones stood alone on her desk, this in no way undermines the fact that she did *then* deploy perfectly respectable demonstrative concepts for such shades. And while she deployed such concepts, she could satisfy the four constraints listed above. Hence, the

possession of demonstrative concepts can be determined by a variety of constraints, none of which needs to entail the Re-identification Constraint.

Thus, Jacob and Jeannerod's remarks don't raise any problem for Conceptualists. Their first remark seems to rely on the same conflation between demonstrative and non-demonstrative concepts outlined earlier. The second point seems unwarranted too: many distinct constraints other than the Re-identification Constraint might in fact determine the possession of fine-grained demonstrative concepts for specific shades of colour.

## 9.5. Concluding Remarks

In this section, I have argued for the following two claims. First, what seemed to be the best version of the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience (AFG)—the version outlined in §9.1.2—fails.

(1) it is possible that a subject *S*'s experience *e* represents differently two distinct, yet closely similar, properties $f_1$ and $f_2$.

(2) it is possible that *S* cannot re-identify $f_1$ or $f_2$ across different perceptual encounters.

(3) if *S* possesses a concept *C*, *S* must be able to re-identify objects or properties falling under *C* across different perceptual encounters.

(4) it is possible that *S* does not possess distinct concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

**Therefore,**

(5) ¬ (1)

It fails due to a crucial equivocation about the notion of re-identification in premises (2) and (3). While the examples supporting premise (2) establish that normal subjects can fail to re-identify certain specific properties *de dicto* but not *de re*, *de dicto* re-identification cannot plausibly constitute a necessary constraint on the possession of concepts in general, though *de re* re-identification might, as the case of the amnesiac shows.

Second, we have seen that the constraint in premise (3) doesn't seem to apply to all concepts anyway, and in particular, not to demonstrative concepts. For instance, normal subjects might deploy demonstrative concepts for specific shades of colour, even if they lack the ability to re-identify such shades *de dicto*. Indeed, demonstrative colour concepts may not even be constrained by re-identification *de re*. It seems plausible that a normal subject

possesses a demonstrative colour concept for a specific shade of colour she experiences at a particular time, even if she is later incapable to re-identify that shade in any wayË as the case of the stone from outer space suggests.

In this respect, then, a crucial premise in this version of ËAFGËremains unmotivated. And itË unclear whether other versions of the argument fare any better. The main problem for proponents of such an argument is to motivate the claim that a normal subject lacks distinct fine-grained concept for the different specific shades of colour she experiences. Once demonstrative concepts are on the table, itË hard to see how such a claim could be true. And without this claim, the fineness of grain of experience raises no problem for Conceptualism.

CHAPTER 10

# *The Riches of Experience*

Suppose you see a red ball. Unless you happen to be in a psychologist's lab, you are unlikely to see *just* the red ball against, say, a white background. Rather, a myriad of objects is *simultaneously* presented to you. For instance, you see the cricket bat beside the red ball, the table upon which they both lie, as well as what's in the background of the table: the wall, the lamp, the bookshelf on the right, etc. Needless to say, you also see the shapes of these objects, together with the manifold of spatial relations connecting them. And for some of these objects at least, you see their particular shade's of colour; even the texture of their surface's.

Most of our visual experiences seem to be like *that*: we are typically presented with a wealth of objects, properties, and relations, etc.[1] This owes partly to the fact that the visual scenes we encounter tend to be complex and 'contain' many objects' in contrast to the psychologist's lab. More importantly, though, each single experience has the propensity to convey a *rich amount of information* about the objects, properties, and relations, which make up such scenes' together with information about the scenes themselves. Call this the 'Informational Richness of Experience' or 'IRE'

> ***The informational richness of perceptual experiences***
> any single perceptual experience *e* of a subject *S* can represent very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, *simultaneously*.[2]

This rich information characteristic of visual experiences, some have suggested 'see, e.g., Dretske, 1981; and Tye, 2005', seems to raise a difficulty for Conceptualism:

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[1] In what follows, I'll focus mainly on visual experiences, which often seem richer in information that experiences in other sensory modalities.

[2] Earlier in chapter 8, we saw that the above claim' labelled 'a' was accompanied by a comparative claim 'b' to the effect that experiences are relatively *richer* in information than other types of psychological states. I'll focus on 'a' for now. Claim 'b', and its separate role in the argument, will be considered later in this chapter.

}c} Necessarily, for any objects, properties, relations, states-of-affairs, etc., $x_1$ and $x_2$, $x_1$ is represented in experience $e_1$ differently than $x_2$ is represented in experience $e_2$ *only if* the perceiverËËËË*possessèesè* and ËËË*deployèsè* in experienceËËË$e_1$ and $e_2$ distinct concepts, $C_1$ and $C_2$, for $x_1$ and $x_2$ respectively.

Why? Because the informational richness of experience suggests that there is much more to perceptual representation than the deployment of concepts allows for.

The general line of thoughtË at least at an intuitive levelË seems to go as follows. First, if the deployment of concepts in thought is anything to go by, it seems plausible that normal perceivers do not always think aboutË and deploy concepts forË everything they see. For instance, you might let your eyes wander on the scene described above Ëthe cricket bat on the tableË, while thinking about the latest test match between Australia and New Zealand. Whilst your thoughts Ëand the concepts you deploy to think about Australia, New Zealand, and cricketË are thus occupied, itËs not as if you stop experiencing the many objects and properties in front of you.

This example seems to suggest that, if you deploy concepts for what you are thinking about Ëcricket, Australia, New ZealandË, it is far less clear that you simultaneously conceptualise what you are seeing at that very same time Ëthe cricket bat, the cricket ball, the table, etc.Ë That is, there seems to be certain limitations on *how much* information you can think aboutË and conceptualiseË at any given time. Hence, given that a visual experience can represent a scene in such a way that it contains a large amount of information about that scene, it seems *unlikely* that perceivers always ËconceptualiseËË or conceptually identifyË *every* object, property, or relation, etc., represented by their experience at the time.

Second, when thinking about the objects you are visually experiencing, it seems natural that you should form very many distinct thoughts about each object, property, relation, etc., in the scene: the cricket bat is made of wood, it lies at the centre of the table, the cricket ball is on its left, the cricket ball is red, it isnË new, the table occupies the centre of the room, it is made of cheap mahogany, the bookshelf is on the left, etc. But entertaining all these thoughts seems to take time. Even if you were to combine all these thought-contents into one long conjunction, it would still take time to consider the resulting thought.

Your visual experience of the scene, on the other hand, presents you with the whole sceneË and the objects and properties that make up such a scene. It

seems possible that your experience could convey such rich information about the entire scene and its constituents, whether it lasted a minute or only a couple of seconds, and regardless of whether or not you had the time to think about everything represented in your experience.

Considerations like these suggest that, given the rich information conveyed in visual experiences, it is *possible* that normal perceivers do not always deploy concepts for *everything* they see. In which case, Conceptualism turns out to be false. Since one might fail to deploy a concept for something represented in one's experience, it is possible that there be representational differences in the content of such an experience which are unmatched by any conceptual difference.

This general line of thought can be encapsulated in a simple two-premise argument. I call it the 'Argument from Informational Richness of Experience' or 'AIR' against Conceptualism:

(P1) for any single visual experience $e$ of a subject $S$, there can be very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, represented *simultaneously* in $e$.

(P2) if $S$'s visual experience $e$ represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, it is possible that $S$ does *not* deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, represented in $e$.

**Therefore,**

(C) $\neg$ (C)

Premise (P1) expresses (RE) the idea that experiences are very rich in information. Premise (P2) has the form of a conditional, the antecedent of which summarizes premise (P1). Its consequent is equivalent to the negation of the conceptualist thesis, since it presents a counter-example to the claim that perceivers must *necessarily* exercise concepts for *everything* they experience. Such a conditional merely summarises whatever additional assumption (S) is needed to secure the entailment from (P1) to (C). I call this intermediate premise the 'Bridging Thesis'. The conclusion (C) is the negation of the conceptualist supervenience thesis. The argument is valid, as it contains a single instance of *modus ponens*.

This chapter has two parts, each concerned with one of the two premises in 'AIR'. Unlike the fineness of grain of experience which is relatively uncontroversial, the claim that visual experiences can convey a rich amount of

information has been contested. Section §10.1 attempts to motivate premise E and to defend it against some of the doubts raised about the informational richness of experience.

Unsurprisingly, premise E is where the real trouble begins. Unlike the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience AFG, which concerns the fact that normal subjects may not *possess* concepts for what they experience, the informational richness of experience suggests that subjects may not be able to *deploy* enough concepts at the time of experience. If it works, the argument would refute C *via* the constraint that:

> ***Deployment Constraint***
> For any object, property, relation, etc., *x*, *S*'s perceptual experience *e* at *t* represents *x only if S deploys some* concept *C* for *x* at *t*.

The problem, of course, is to motivate what I have called the Bridging Thesis in premise E the idea that, because the content of her experience is rich in information, a subject may not deploy concepts for everything she experiences.

The crucial assumption here seems to be that there might be some threshold on how many objects, properties, relations, etc., a normal subject can conceptualise i.e., conceptually identify at a time: a threshold that lies well below the amount of information conveyable in a single experience. More precisely, then, the problem is to find some reasons to think that there is indeed such a threshold. Section §10.2 thus looks at four different ways to defend the Bridging Thesis, and assesses their respective merits.

## 10.1. The Informational Richness of Experience

Why think that the following is true?

> ***The informational richness of perceptual experiences***
> any single perceptual experience *e* of a subject *S* can represent very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, *simultaneously*.

Before we look at what reasons there are to accept a claim like §10.1.2, a word about its exact scope seems necessary. This will help to set aside a certain type of objection to

### 10.1.1. *Inattentional Blindness, Change Blindness, and the Scope of*

Two cautionary remarks about the idea that perceptual experiences and visual experiences in particular have an informationally rich content.

First, to say that visual experiences can be very rich in information is not to say that *all* visual experiences are. There are exceptions, of course. Think of the red ball against a white background in the psychologistËs labË or think of tunnel vision ËMartin, 1992b: 207Ë

Nor is it to say, second, that *every* perceivable object or property in the perceiverËs visual field is perceived, let alone perceived *in all detail*. Clearly, visual experiences arenËt *just like* photographs.[3] For instance, it might be that only those elements of a scene appearing at the centre of the perceiverËs visual field, are represented in any detailË whereas their surrounding isnËt.[4] Still, a visual experience can present a very rich body of informationË including information about hue, shape, size, location, etc.Ë if only about a single object located in the centre of the perceiverËs visual field. WhatËs more, as Dretske Ë1981: 152, 157Ë pointed out, information about objects in the peripheryË though, perhaps, not about all of themË can be conveyed in the same experience. Even if such objects are not represented in *all* detail, information about their location, size, shape, as well as the spatial relations between them, is nevertheless available to the subject of that experience.

The second *caveat* is important. ËREËmust be distinguished from the so-called Ësnapshot conception of experienceËËNoË, 2002b: 4; 2004, ch. 6Ë According to the latter, experiences arenËt just rich in information, but they represent *every* object in the subjectËs visual field, and represent them in *all detail*. Since ËREËdoesnËt claim as much, it is left untouched by various considerations raised against the Ësnapshot conceptionË

Thus, for instance, it has been observed that, when their attention is occupied with some specific task, normal subjects are often unable to notice other objects in their visual fieldË Ëinattentional blindnessËËMack and Rock, 1998Ë A typical example involves a group of people playing with a ball, among whom figures a man wearing a monkey suit. When asked to look at whatËs

[3] We saw in chapter 8 how the claim that perceptual experiences are rich in information ËREËis distinct fromË and does not entailË the claim that their representational content is fine-grained.

[4] This might have to do, in part, with the distribution of receptor cells on the retina. The centre of the retina ËfoveaËcontains a high density of cones Ëcells sensitive mainly to colourËwith very high acuity. In contrast, the periphery of the retina Ëparafovea Ëconsists mainly of rods Ëreceptor cells sensitive to lower light-intensityË which are more dispersed, and thus give rise to a much lower resolution. Hence, only ËfoveatedËstimuli are perceived in any great detail Ësee Bruce and Green, 1985: 25; and for a more complete survey, Findlay and Gilchrist, 2003: 11-18Ë

happening with the players, normal subjects usually fail to notice the fake monkey in the scene.

Similarly, cases of 'change blindness', in which normal subjects fail to notice an obvious change in some object well in sight, suggest that they do not see everything in their visual field (see, e.g., Simons, 2000). For instance, two pictures of the same building might differ in that one represents the building with more windows. Yet, the difference often escapes notice when subjects are presented with one picture of the building after the other.

If such cases cause trouble for the snapshot conception of experience, they are, on the other hand, perfectly compatible with 'IRE'? To repeat, 'IRE' does not require that 'a' one perceives *everything* in one's visual field, let alone that 'b' one perceives everything *in the utmost detail*. Nor does it demand that 'c' one *always* perceives *very many* objects and properties in one's visual field. The content of one's visual experience may still be very rich, even though one fails to notice some of the elements present in a visual scene represented in experience. Hence, once the scope of 'IRE' is laid out, we see that considerations like the above leave 'IRE' untouched.

### 10.1.2. *What Ground for 'IRE'?*

So what reason might one have to accept that *visual experiences*, at least, are so rich in information? At first sight, the answer seems straightforward. By its very nature, 'IRE' must be based on one's familiarity with one's experiences and their phenomenology.

Think again of your experience of the red ball described at the beginning of this chapter' or of any similarly crammed scene. The phenomenology of your experience of such a scene seems to reveal that you are being presented with a multitude of objects, many 'but not all' of their visible properties and relations 'spatial and mereological relations, as well as relations of chromatic difference and similarity, for instance'. This is so, even if you briefly glance at the scene

[5] However, it's not even clear at the outset that cases of inattentional blindness and change blindness do undermine the 'snapshot conception of experience' (*pace* No' '2002b: 7'). For one thing, as Cohen '2002' points out, it might be that inattentional and change blindness only reveal failures to *notice* certain features' which is consistent with the claim that such features are perceived nonetheless. Without further assumptions about how what is noticed constrains the content of experience 'assumptions that are, as we shall see, controversial', cases of inattentional and change blindness show nothing about the content of experience. For further discussion, see the essays in No' '2002a' and Coltheart '1999', as well as Braun '2001', Moore '2001', Rensink '2000a, 2000b'

and close your eyes straight away. Thus, it seems that the overall spatial arrangement of the scene is represented in your visual experience. But this means that the shapes of the various objects that make up the display, together with their location and the spatial relations that hold between such objects, must also be represented in your experience. And if you can perceive the shape and location of these objects, this must owe partly to the fact that their coloursË and chromatic differences with their respective backgroundsË are, too, represented in your experience. Phenomenological reflection thus suggests that a very rich amount of information can be conveyed in a single experience.

What you make of such information is a different question. Consider the following exampleË adapted from Fred Dretske Ë993Ë

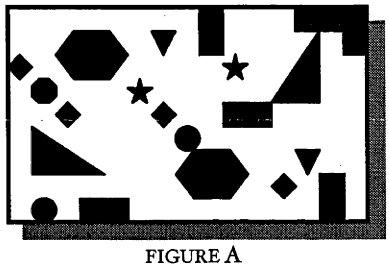


FIGURE A

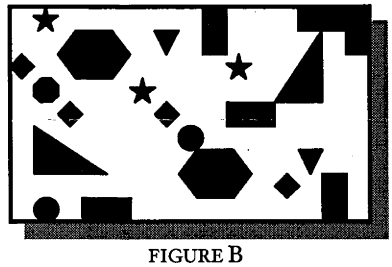


FIGURE B

No matter where you focus your attention, it seems plausible that the whole display of shapes in FIGURE A and B can be represented in your experience. In fact, even if you fail to notice it, it is quite plausible that the particular shape marking the difference between FIGURE A and FIGURE B is represented in your experience too. After all, the two figures occupy the centre of your visual fieldË you are seeing them from a reasonable distance. It would be somewhat surprising, then, that your experience failed to represent a particular shape right in front of you, even if you donË in fact notice that shape.

And in such a case, the fact that you fail to notice the additional shape in FIGURE B suggests that your experience contains too much information for you to process at once. Indeed, the fact that some information isnË accessed at a certain time need not imply that such information isnË access*ible*. And the fact that you *can* notice the difference between FIGURE A and FIGURE B if you look at them for a longer interval suggests that information about such a difference must be available in your experience. If it werenË, how could you come to notice such a difference?

As we shall see, the temptation to restrict what is represented in experience to what the subject notices or attends to is quite congenial to Conceptualism.

However, such a temptation must be resisted. For what remains unattended or unnoticed can nevertheless contribute to the phenomenology of experience in an important way. The point can be made quite vivid, with the help of an example from Barry Dainton ËooooË Dainton imagines what the phenomenology of experience would be like, if visual experiences were indeed exhausted by what a subject actually notices:

> You are sitting in an armchair, you have stopped daydreaming and have become engrossed in your book, which has taken an interesting turn, when suddenly the *entire* phenomenal background disappears, not just peripheral sound and vision, but mood and bodily experience too. The effect would be dramatic: it would seem as though the surrounding world had vanished, and your body with it. You would not feel the surrounding and supporting armchair; and since the surrounding room would no longer be present in your experience Ësave for the page of the book you were readingË you would be both surrounded and filled by void, physically and emotionally. [...]
>
> Since the phenomenal background is not usually the object of our attention, we are rarely attentively aware of it. But it would be odd to say we have no awareness of it whatsoever, of any kind; it is, after all, a constant presence in our experience. ËDainton, 2000: 32Ë

Clearly, many of our visual experiences arenËt like the one described in DaintonËs thought-experiment. Phenomenologically, visual experiences seem to have a background: they represent more than just what is attended to or noticed. This holds for the background of visual experiences proper, as well as for what is experienced in other sensory modalities Ëas is emphasised in DaintonËs example which uses the notion of ËbackgroundËin a broader senseË[6] And so, visual information about some of the objects and properties in the background of visual experience makes a proper part of the content of such experiences.

A final point in support of ËREËis provided by the contrast between normal visual experiences and the experiences of subjects whose visual system appears to function less than optimally. Thus, consider the experiences described by

[6] The notion of ËbackgroundËat play in this context, I take it, is determined in a contrastive manner, in terms of what is not being attended. In this respect, the background of experience need not coincide with the periphery of the subjectËs visual field, which depends on where the subjectËs gaze is directed. But attention and direction of gaze are distinct: see Pashler Ë998: 38Ë and Findlay and Gilchrist Ë003Ëfor a detailed and critical discussion of this distinction. Thus, items located at the periphery of the subjectËs visual field might nevertheless attract the perceiverËs attention. For instance, while your gaze is directed at the car in front of you, your attention may be attracted by the flashing lightË in the corner of your eye, as it wereË of the police car about to overtake.

subjects suffering from various perceptual deficits, from blind-sight Ëa ËblindË area in the visual fieldË, to apperceptive agnosia Ëto simplify greatly, a failure to perceive the whole shape of objectsËand hemispatial neglect Ën most cases, an apparent inability to perceive global scene structureË[7] Admittedly, it is hard to imagineË or Ëpicture ËË the phenomenology of such experiences, where some perceptual information seems to be missing and is thus unavailable to the subject Ëhence, their inability to perform a variety of perceptual tasksË Nevertheless, it isnËt hard to imagine that, in contrast to such experiences, most of our visual experiences are at least quite rich in information.

So, to recapitulate: most of the considerations in favour of ËREËare based on the phenomenology of experienceË on phenomenological descriptions of our own experiences, on thought-experiments about the phenomenology of experience, as well as on phenomenological comparisons between different types of experiences. Hence, if Conceptualists wish to resist ËREË, they must show either ËËthat ËREËmis-characterises the phenomenology of experience, or ËiËthat phenomenology is a poor guide to the nature of the representational content of experience.[8]

But Conceptualists like McDowell and Brewer do not deny that perceptual experiences can be very rich in information. For instance, remarking on the Ëcharacteristic richness of experienceË, John McDowell doesnËt think that it raises any particular problem for Conceptualism: experience, he writes, is just Ëa rich supply of already conceptualised contentË Ë1994: 49, n.6; compare Brewer, 1999: 240-1Ë

Hence, whether or not the Argument from Informational Richness of Experience ËAIRËcan succeed against Conceptualism depends principally on premise ËiË and the Bridging Thesis. The claim captured in premise ËËËËREËË is, in effect, common ground between Conceptualists and their critics. Where they differ concerns the consequences allegedly following from

[7] See, e.g., Farah Ë2000: 56, 213*ff*, 296-7; 2004Ë

[8] For instance, Conceptualists could resort to a so-called ËDual-ComponentËtheory of perception, according to which the phenomenology of experience is independent from its representational content. Given such independence, the phenomenology of experience is neutral as to whether the content of experience is rich in information. See Smith Ë2002: ch. 3Ë, for a critical discussion of this version of Conceptualism. It is worth noting that such a move is not available to McDowell and Brewer, who clearly deny any separation between the representational content and the phenomenal character of experience: the Ëway it is likeËto be in a given experience, they argue, must be intimately linked with what is presented in the experience Ësee Brewer, 1999: 156; McDowell, 1998: 441Ë

the fact that perceptual experiences are rich in information. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider various attempts to motivate the claim that consequences damaging for Conceptualism do indeed follow from ËIRE Ë

## 10.2. How to Exploit }IRE} against Conceptualism?

So now, the crucial question about the Argument from the Informational Richness of Experience ËAIRËbecomes: what could possibly motivate premise ËBËin that argument:

> ***The Bridging Thesis:***
> if *S*Ës visual experience *e* represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, it is possible that *S* does *not* deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, represented in *e*.

The main difficulty lies in finding the right sort of additional claimËsËin support of this conditional.

In this section, I review three possible strategies to motivate the Bridging Thesis in premise ËBË The first Ë§10.2.1Ërelies on a comparison between perception and belief. The second explores the possibility that premise ËBËis grounded in some kind of general limitationËsËabout concepts Ë§10.2.2Ë The third strategy focuses on a much narrower constraint upon the exercise of concepts in experience Ë§10.2.3Ë

None of these strategies is of any help, I argue. The main point, here, is to illustrate how difficult it is to motivate premise ËBË but I do not claim that the strategies considered here exhaust all possibilities. In the final section Ë§10.2.4Ë, I sketch a more promisingË *albeit* weakerË approach.

### 10.2.1. *Analog and Digital Representations*

Consider the contrast between visual experiences and beliefs: think of the experience of the red ball described at the beginning of this chapter, and compare it with your belief that, say, there is a red ball on the table. The information making up the content of your belief might be limited to the proposition that there is a red ball on some table. Your experience, in contrast, contains much more information about the red ball, the table, and the surrounding elements. Hence, whereas your experience presents a particular visual scene, your belief is compatible with a whole range of distinct such scenes ËCrane, 1992: 153; 2001: 151Ë

It often seems as though such a contrast is the driving intuition behind the Argument from the Informational Richness of Experience ËAIRË The thought seems to go as follows: granted that the content of experience is usually richer in information than the content of beliefs and judgements, and assuming that beliefs and judgements are paradigmatic psychological states with conceptual content, this strongly suggests that the informationally rich content of experience might not be fully conceptual.[9]

We can distinguish at least four claims at play in this line of reasoning. First, there is ËREËproper, the claim that the representational content of visual experiences is very rich in information. Second, there is the ËcomparativeËclaim about experiences and beliefs or judgements ËCEBË

***Comparison between Experiences and Beliefs***

the content of experiences is richer in information than the content of beliefs and judgements.[10]

The third claim is the assumption that beliefs and judgements have conceptual content. The fourth and central claim rests on the idea that there must be some correlation between conceptual deployment and the limited amount of information that seems to be conveyed in the content of most judgements. Thus, the suggestion goes, the quantity of information in the content of a given judgement may have something to do with the number of concepts a subject must exercise in order to entertain that content.

For instance, compare the content expressed by Ëthere is a red ball, a bat, and a cap, on the middle of the table in the living roomËwith that expressed by Ëthere is a red ballË The former is both ËËricher in information and ËiËseems to require the exercise of more concepts Ëif one is to entertain that contentË In this respect, it could be that the more information the content of a judgement conveys, the more conceptual capacities it mobilises. One might then hope to make use of such a correlation, together with the comparative claim ËCEBË to warrant the Bridging Thesis.

[9] Here, IËl focus on judgements more than on beliefs. Since beliefs are usually taken to be dispositional states, itËs not entirely clear what it means to Ëdeploy a concept in a beliefË Judgements, on the other hand, are unproblematic in this respect. A judgement is an event: it can be thought of as the formation or manifestation of a belief.

[10] This corresponds to claim ËbËin the initial statement of ËREËin chapter 8. Whereas claim ËaË captures the idea that experiences are rich in information, claim ËbË expresses the comparative claim that experiences are typically richer in information than other types of psychological states. Note that ËbËis partly based on ËaË

Indeed, this seems to be what Fred Dretske Ë1981Ëhad in mind, when he first drew attention to the fact that perceptual experiences are very rich in information.[11] Dretske begins by distinguishing two ways of encoding information:

> Suppose a cup has coffee in it, and we want to communicate this piece of information. If I simply *tell* you, ËThe cup has coffee in itË this ËacousticËsignal carries the information that the cup has coffee in it in digital form. No more specific information is supplied about the cup Ëor the coffeeËthan that there is some coffee in the cup. You are not told *how much* coffee there is in the cup, how large the cup is, *how dark* the coffee is, what the shape and orientation of the cup are, and so on. If, on the other hand, I photograph the scene and show you the picture, the information that the cup has coffee in it is conveyed in analog form. The picture tells you that there is some coffee in the cup by telling you, roughly, how much coffee is in the cup, the shape, size, and color of the cup, and so on. ËDretske, 1981: 147-8Ë

With such a distinction in hand, he argues:

> The contrast between an analog and a digital encoding of information Ëas just definedËis useful for distinguishing between sensory and cognitive processes. Perception is a process by means of which information is delivered within a richer matrix of information Ëhence in *analog* formË*to* the cognitive centres for their selective use. Seeing, hearing, and smelling are different ways we have of getting information about *s* to a digital-conversion unit whose function it is to extract pertinent information from the sensory representation for purposes of modifying output. [...] The traditional idea that knowledge, belief, and thought involve *concepts* while sensation Ëor sensory experienceË does not is reflected in this coding difference. ËDretske, 1981: 151Ë

The central point in this passage speaks directly to ËCEBË the comparative claim about the information conveyed in perception and judgement. According to Dretske, *only some* information carried by perceptual states in analog form is *selected*Ë or ËextractedËË to be encoded *digitally* by thought-processes. In other words, *a loss of information* characterises the transition from perception to belief Ëor judgementË

But how does this relate to the Bridging Thesis? Perhaps, the connection can be spelt out as follows. First step: the loss of information characteristic of the transition from experience to judgement suggests that judgements and experiences have different kinds of content. That is, while the content of

[11] To be fair, DretskeËs primary target was not Conceptualism *per se*, but the view that sensory and cognitive phenomena are indistinguishable stages in our cognitive architecture. Nevertheless, some of his remarks can be used against Conceptualism, and have often been interpreted in such a way.

experiencesË being informationally richË is analog, the content of judgementsË poorer in informationË is digital.

Second step: since the content of beliefs and judgements is typically conceptual, such a fact might *explain why* their content is digital and poorer in informationË and so, why ËCEBË is true. If so, the connection between conceptual content and the amount of information represented by a given state offers support to the idea that normal subjects can fail to conceptualise everything they perceive. This failure owes to the fact that visual experiences contain more information than what subjects normally conceptualise in judgement. This version of ËAIRËmight then go as follows:

ËËË for any single visual experience *e* of a subject *S*, there can be very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, represented *simultaneously* in *e*.

ËËË the content of experiences is richer in information than the content of judgements.

ËËË the content of experiences is richer in information than the content of judgements because, while the content of experience is analog, that of judgements is digital.

ËËË the digital content of judgements is conceptual: it requires ËËpossession and ËiË deployment of concepts for everything represented in such content.

ËËË the analog content of perceptual experiences is richer in information than conceptual and digitally encoded content.

ËËË if *S*Ë visual experience *e* represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, it is possible that *S* does *not* deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, represented in *e*.

**Therefore,**

ËËË ¬ ËCË

Premises ËËË ËËË and ËËËconstitute the first step of the argument, and ËËË ËËË and ËËËthe second. In turn, ËËËand ËËËentail ËËË

Unfortunately, this attempt to use DretskeË remarks leads nowhere. And the main problem resides in the step from premises ËËËand ËËËto ËËË Suppose that the first step in this reasoning successfully establishes that the contents of

experiences and judgements encode information differentlyË premise Ë3Ë And suppose, more controversially, that this supports the claim that experiences and judgements have different *kinds* of contents.[12] The second step in this reconstruction of DretskeË argument fails to show that such a *difference in kind* pertains to the allegedly *conceptual* Ëor non-conceptualËnature of the contents of experiences and judgements. Granting with premise Ë4Ëthat the digital content of judgements is conceptual, Ë5Ëdoesn'Ë follow: that is, it doesn'Ë follow that the analog content of experience isn'Ë conceptual.

In particular, the argument provides no reason to think that analog and informationally rich content outstrips a normal subjectË capacity to deploy concepts. DretskeË argument exploits three distinctions: namely, between ËiË *analog* and *digital* ways of encoding information, between ËiiËcontent that is *informationally rich* and content that is less so; and finally, between ËiiiË*non-conceptual* and *conceptual* content. The argument would prove problematic for Conceptualists granted that, whereas *conceptual* content is necessarily *digital* and *poorer in information*, analog and informationally rich content is *non-conceptual*. But nothing in the argument supports the assumption that these three distinctions actually match one another in such a way.[13]

In this respect, Conceptualists need not think of conceptual content as an entirely homogeneous kind. They could grant that, while perceptual experiences are analog and rich in information, judgements and beliefs are digital and poorer in information. But, they will insist, such differences capture a contrast between two different *types* of *conceptual* contentË not between conceptual and non-conceptual types of content.[14] In which case, the Bridging Thesis remains unmotivated.

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[12] But it'Ë not clear that such a difference in the way in which information is encoded can really ground a distinction between two *kinds* of content: *analog* and *digital* content. For one thing, such a difference may have something to do with different ways in which the contents of such states are conveyedË i.e., different vehiclesË rather than with the contents themselves. For another, Dretske seems aware that it is possible to construct complex linguistic descriptions Ëmade up, perhaps, of very long conjunctions of simpler sentencesË which capture in exact detail the information contained in corresponding analog representations ËDretske, 1981: 148Ë

[13] For instance, it could be that some conceptual thoughts are analogË mental images and perceptual beliefs, for instance Ësee also Jacob and Jeannerod, 2003: 26Ë To make it all the more perplexing, Dretske himself points out that Ëa signal carrying information in analog form will always carry some information in digital formËË1981: 147Ë

[14] Thus, for instance, normal subjects may be able to deploy more concepts in experience than they can deploy in judgements and beliefsË or so Conceptualists might suggest. Perhaps,

The difficulties encountered here are instructive, nonetheless. They reveal how the following two desiderata must be satisfied by any attempt to exploit the Informational Richness of Experience ËREËagainst Conceptualism. First, a direct connection must be established between the fact that experiences have a content that is rich in information, and the fact that such content isnË conceptual. For instance, one must show that conceptual content *cannot* be so rich in information. Second, the issue really concerns the role played by our conceptual capacities in *experience*. And therefore, considerations of the role played by concepts in other types of psychological statesË like judgements or beliefsË is, to some extent, irrelevant.

10.2.2. *Limited Concept Deployment*

Perhaps, then, a more promising approach would be to appeal to the existence of general limitations on our conceptual capacitiesË and on our capacity to deploy concepts, in particular. Thus, the reason why ËREËcould serve to defeat Conceptualism might have to do with the following fact: we are quite generally incapable of deploying very many concepts *simultaneously* for the many objects, properties, relations, etc., represented in a single visual experience, the content of which is very rich in information. Such a limitation on conceptual content can be quite generalË and not based solely on the contents of judgements and beliefs. But it must apply to perceptual experiences and their contents.

Perhaps, then, something like the following must be combined with ËREËin order to derive the Bridging Thesis:

ËLË normal subjects can only *deploy* a certain number *n* of concepts in *any* psychological state ωat *any* given time.

Thus, if *n* in ËLËwere to fall well short of the corresponding amount of information contained in a single visual experience, it would follow that a perceiver is incapable of deploying enough concepts at a given time to match the amount of information in her experience at that time. The main questions surrounding ËLË of course, are: ËËwhat *n* amounts to, ËËwhether ËLËis true, and ËËhow we can find out.

But itË hard to imagine what considerations could serve to answer questions ËË and ËË For instance, it seems that no phenomenological considerationË based, presumably, upon our familiarity with the way we

this is due to the fact that information is encoded differently in experience and judgement, for instance.

normally deploy conceptsË will do. For one thing, phenomenology is primarily descriptive and concerns the experiences and thoughts we *normally* have. But ËLËrequires something stronger. Insofar as it embodies a general limitation upon our capacity to exercise concepts at a time, ËLËmust entail that it is *not possible* for perceivers to deploy so many concepts at the same time. But grounding this modal claim upon descriptions of the way thoughts, beliefs, and other mental states, *actually* engage our conceptual capacities, seems fallacious.

For the same reason, no empirical consideration seems appropriate either. It may be that normal subjects donË exercise their conceptual capacities to their maximum. In which case, an empirical investigation of the way we *usually* exercise such capacities may not reveal any limitation like ËLË There is also the further difficulty that neither phenomenological, nor empirical, considerations can rest too heavily upon the way we exercise concepts in *beliefs* and other thoughtsË on pain of raising, again, the accusation that such considerations are irrelevant to the way we exercise conceptual capacities *in experience*.

Similar difficulties plague one central empirical consideration proponents of ËAIRËseem keen to exploit Ësee Dretske, 1981; Fodor, 2003; Tye, 2005Ë In order to show that normal perceivers are unable to deploy concepts for everything they see, Dretske Ë981Ë resorts to SperlingË Ë960Ë famous experimentËsËabout iconic memory:

> Subjects [in SperlingË experiment] are exposed to an array of nine or more letters for a brief period Ëso millisecondsË It is found that after removal of the stimulus there is a persistence of the Ëvisual imageË Subjects report that the letters appear to be visually present and legible at the time of a tone occurring 150 milliseconds *after* removal of the stimulus. Neisser has dubbed this iconic memoryË [...] it turns out that although subjects can identify only three or four under brief exposure, ***which*** letters they succeed in identifying depends on the nature of a later stimulus, a stimulus that appears only 150 milliseconds after removal of the original array of letters. [...]
>
> What [SperlingË] experiments show is that although there is a limit to the rate at which subject can *cognitively* process information Ëidentify or *recognize* letters in the stimulus arrayË, the same limitation does not seem to apply to sensory processes by means of which this information is made available to the cognitive centres. Although the subjects could identify only three or four letters, information about *all* the letters Ëor at least *more* of the lettersËwas embodied in the persisting ËconËËDretske, 1981: 159Ë

The natural assumption, I take it, is that what subjects ËdentifyË and ËecogniseËin experience strictly coincides with what they deploy concepts for. The thought, then, is that SperlingË research establishes that ËaË normal perceivers are unable to reportË and thus conceptually identifyË more than four or five items in a display at the time, although ËbËthey can perceive more

items, since they can retrieve information about the overall display on the basis of their iconic memory.[15] While the first point ËaËseems to support the existence of something like constraint ËLËon the deployment of concepts in experience, the second point ËbËis meant to provide support for a version of ËCEBË according to which experiences contain more information than a subject conceptually identifies. Put together, ËaËand ËbËmight serve to motivate the Bridging Thesis. And so, another version of ËAIRËmight go:

ËËË normal subjects only reportË and thus, conceptually identifyË about four or five items in a display: there seems to be a limit on how many items they can processË deploy concepts forË in experience.

ËaË normal subjects can perceive more than four or five items in a display, since their iconic memory retains information about a display of nine items Ëafter the display has been removedË

ËbË thus, if *S*Ës visual experience *e* represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, it is possible that *S* does ***not*** deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, represented in *e*.

**Therefore,**

Ë4Ë ¬ ËCË

[15] Note that, in fact, different experiments support ËaËand ËbË First, it is established that subjects can typically report not more than four or five items, irrespective of the numbers of items in the display and the time during which the display is presented. SperlingËs proposed explanation for this fact is that short-term memory ËSTMËcan only store information about four or five items, and that storage of such information is lost rather slowly Ësee Pashler, 1998: 103Ë Another set of experimentsË where a probe cues the subjectËs attention towards a part of the display very shortly after the displayËs offsetË suggests that ËiËsubjects are able to retrieve information about more items of the display when so cued, though ËiiËthey are able to do so only for a very short amount of time. SperlingËs explanation is that, since short-term memory can only store information about four or five items, there must be another memory buffer Ëdubbed Ëiconic memoryËË which ËiËholds more information about the display, ËiiËis subject to rapid decay, and ËiiiËis usually characterised by the subjects themselves as a brief visible presence ËPashler, 1998: 103-4, 321Ë

Note also that, strictly speaking, SperlingËs results do not prove the existence of iconic memory: for instance, the data is consistent with the possibility that when the subjectsË attention is cued as in the second set of experiments, this has an effect on howË and how muchË information is stored in STM. For discussion, see Coltheart Ë1975, 1980Ëand Pashler Ë1998: 107, 320Ë

But there are at least two problems with this argument and with premises  and  in particular.

The first problem concerns premise  it has to do with the interpretation of Sperling's data and its significance for our understanding of the role of iconic memory in experience. Iconic memory (which is supposed to be distinct from short-term memory, see Pashler, 1998: 102-9) of a display consists in the rapidly fading iconic persistence of information about the display, just a few milliseconds after the display itself has been removed. The problem is that when the display is followed by the presentation of a mask in this case, a bright field at the same time as the subject's attention is cued by a probe, hardly any iconic memory (or none at all) is manifest. The suggestion (by Sperling and others) is that such backward masking erases iconic memory (see Pashler, 1998: 105).

This is a problem because such masking appears to be common in normal perceptual situations. As Pashler notes, backward masking in normal situations results from saccadic eye movements, where a new fixation will replace and mask the previous one:

> [...] the conditions under which iconic memory is observed in the laboratory are not typically encountered in natural environments (or even in most conventional memory experiments) [...] Usually, a fixation ends when the observer makes a saccadic eye movement to fixate some new object. When this happens, the portion of the retina previously fixated receives new input, rather than no input at all [...]. The new input is likely to mask the contents of the old fixation, because backward masking depends primarily on retinal overlap [...]. Therefore, whereas iconic memory might seem to offer the potential for prolonging our access to a given fixation, this is probably prevented by masking caused by input from the subsequent fixation. [...]
>
> If iconic memory is irrelevant within most fixations and useless for solving the problems generated by saccades, what possible function does it have? One may be left with exotic and seemingly trivial possibilities (e.g., reducing the impact of eyeblinks?) or the chance that it may be devoid of any function whatever (Pashler, 1998: 107-8)

The suggestion, here, is that iconic memory might play little role in real-life situations. And so, the significance of Sperling's experiment in relation to perceptual experiences in general is somewhat unclear.

The second problem relates to premise  It concerns the relevance of Sperling's research for the issues at hand. Sterling's results show that normal perceivers can report only four or five items in a display of nine letters. The problem is that it's unclear whether such limitations indicate (a failure to conceptually identify all the letters in the display, rather than merely (a failure to report what the subject has already conceptually identified. The

argument assumes that what is conceptually identified exactly corresponds with what is stored in short-term memory, and then reported by the subject. But it's unclear why this is so.

The result of Sperling's first set of experiments (see note 15) is explained in terms of storage-limitations in the subject's short-term memory (STM). Typically subjects can only store information about four or five items in their short-term memory and, as a result, can only report these four or five items. But why think that such limitations have anything to do with the deployment of concepts? After all, the items that are reported could have been conceptually identified prior to being stored in the subjects' short-term memory. This means that more items might have been conceptualised, but weren't stored in STM.[16] Hence, it's unclear that limitations on how many items subjects are able to report at the time can be treated as a measure of how many items they are able to conceptualise at that time.[17]

So there is no straightforward route from Sperling's experiment to (1) and the refutation of Conceptualism. Without a better understanding of how short-term memory relates to conceptualisation, Sperling's experiment fails to show that any limitation like (1) constrains the amount of concepts a normal subject can deploy in experience. The Bridging Thesis is still unmotivated.

More generally, the difficulties encountered with (1) suggest that a weaker requirement might have to do the job instead. Perhaps, it is simply *possible* that perceivers sometimes fail to conceptualise everything they experience at a time, even though they *can* conceptualise it in most situations. Thus, all it

[16] Indeed, Sperling's results are consistent with the possibility that information stored in iconic memory does involve information/categorisation about the items (which letters they are), even though such information plays little role in the selection of information that's transferred from iconic memory to short-term memory (as opposed to spatial information about the location of the letters, which seems to play an important role; see Allport (1989), Duncan (1981), Merikle (1989), and Pashler (1998; 55, 132).

[17] Presumably, the reason for thinking that it does goes: (a) the transformation of information from iconic memory into a conceptual representation takes time; (b) since the information stored in iconic memory is preserved only for a very short lapse of time, (c) there is only that much information that can be extracted from iconic memory, (d) conceptualised, (e) stored in STM, and then (f) reported by the subject. However, it's a mistake to think that limitations on the information stored in STM owes to the rapid decay of iconic memory (see Coltheart, 1977; and Pashler, 1998: 104, 106, 410, n.3). In particular, it is wrong to assume that information stored in short-term memory must have been first stored in iconic memory and then extracted from it to be transferred into STM: the same amount of information is stored in STM even when no iconic memory seems to be present (see Pashler, 1998: 105, as quoted above).

would take to justify the Bridging Thesis would be to show that perceivers occasionally fail to deploy a concept for at least one of the features presented in their experience. Indeed, this is just the sort of possibility mentioned in the consequent of the Bridging Thesis.

### 10.2.3. *Noticing and Deploying Concepts*

The two previous approaches failed to reveal the existence of any limitation on how many concepts a normal subject may be able to deploy in experience. And without such limitation, there is no reason to think that, due to the rich information conveyed in visual experience ËREË the Bridging Thesis is true.

Instead, one might try to exploit a constraint *Conceptualists themselves* impose on the deployment of concepts in experience. Then, all it would take to motivate the Bridging Thesis would be some examples where the representational content of experience seems to be richer in information than what the conceptualist constraint allows for.

So the first question is: what might such a constraint be? For Conceptualists, perception is essentially a *cognitive* state. This is so even if, as we have seen ËS1.2.3Ë Conceptualists do not identify perceptual experiences with judgements or beliefs. Still, what a perceptual experience represents is intrinsically connected, on their view, with what the perceiver *cognitively accesses* in experienceË that is, what the perceiver *would* form beliefs about, absent considerations that the world is not really as it seems.

Hence, the ConceptualistsË insistence on the role of concepts in experienceË and on conceptual identification and discrimination of what a subject experiences. On this view, the deployment of concepts in experience allows the perceiver to form beliefs and thoughts *on the basis* of her experience. Otherwise, Conceptualists argue, such thoughts and beliefs cannot be linked *rationally* with the content of experience ËMcDowell, 1994, 162*ff*; Brewer, 1999: 158*ff*; see the discussion in chapter 6Ë

Besides conceptualisation, it is natural to think that what perceivers *cognitively access* in experience is determined by what they *notice*. In general, a perceiver will have cognitive access to a perceived object *x* *only if* she has noticed *x*. If she hasnË, one can rightly predict that her experience will not give rise to a belief about *x* Ëunless, of course, it concerns the absence of *x*Ë

On this ground, Conceptualists are likely to impose the following restriction upon what can figure in the representational content of experienceË call this the ËNoticing ConstraintËor ËNCË[18]

***The Noticing Constraint* (NC)**
an object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëis represented in a subject *S*Ë experience *e only if S notices x* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

According to Conceptualists, the representational content of experience *is* conceptual at least in the following sense: an object *x* figures in the content of a subject *S*Ë experience *e only if S* deploys some concept for *x* in *e*. But now, since the conceptual content of experience is constrained by ËNCË, it seems to follow that *S* will deploy concepts in experience only for what she notices. Hence, the deployment of concepts in experience is, too, constrained by what a subject notices. Thus,

***The Noticing Constraint on Conceptual Deployment in Experience***
a subject *S* deploys a concept for an object *o* Ëor property *f*Ëin an experience *e only if S notices o* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

Call this second constraint ËNË Now that we have ËNË, the strategy consists in finding cases where a subjectË experience seems to represent more than she actually notices. Given ËNË, such an example might provide a reason to accept the Bridging Thesis. IË consider two such cases.

ËË*Perceptual Memory*. Fred Dretske Ë969, 1993Ëand M.G.F. Martin Ë992aË have argued that a perceiver might remember an object she had previously experienced, even if she didnË notice that object at the time. This suggests that what she remembers was, although unnoticed at the time, nevertheless represented in her experience:

[18] Martin Ë992a: 758Ëemphasizes this conceptualist commitment. Admittedly, it is difficult to specify exactly what *noticing* amounts to. Some ËGraff, 2001: 928Ëhave suggested that noticing involves at least ËËa belief about what is noticed, which is ËiËbased upon the experience. But if Conceptualists deny that experiences are beliefs, they are likely to reject this account of noticing. According to Alan White Ë964: 22-31Ë noticing *x* requires at least ËËa focus of perceptual attention on *x*, ËiiËwhere *x* is discriminated against a background, and ËiiiËthe subject ËealizesËthe presence of *x*; it is also ËvËinvoluntary and ËvËeffortlessË even though ËviËone can try to notice *x*, when one is looking for it. One crucial question, of course, is what Ëealizing the presence of *x*Ëmight mean.

THE GENERALËS MOUSTACHE. You spent the evening talking to the General at the RegimentËs party. You failed to notice the GeneralËs thin moustache, despite the fact that you were facing him for most of the evening. Perhaps, you were simply too absorbed in the GeneralËs conversation to notice his moustache.

Later, you come to realise that he had a moustache, by recalling the way his face *looked like*. That is, you retrieve such information after having had the experience, on the basis of your *perceptual* memory. But if you can remember such information, this must mean that you *did* experience the GeneralËs moustache in the first place.

One natural assumption here is that perceptual memory is representational: the subject remembers the way something Ëe.g., the GeneralËs moustacheË appeared to her. And if the memory in question is faithful, it must contain information about the way the GeneralËs moustache *actually* appeared to her in her experience of the General ËMartin, 1992a: 750-2Ë

This example suggests that there may be information in the representational content of experience which goes unnoticed. Hence:

***Unnoticed perceptual information*** **(UPI)**
it is *possible* that Ëan object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëis represented in a subject *S*Ës experience *e* and *S* does not notice *x* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

In other words, if Dretske and Martin are right, what is *cognitively* access*ible* in the representational content of experience is not necessarily access*ed* at the time of experience, although it might be accessed later.

Such a possibility, together with thesis ËNË, suggests that a subject might fail to deploy a concept for what she fails to noticeË the Bridging Thesis. And so, we obtain yet another version of ËAIRË

ËËË for any single visual experience *e* of a subject *S*, there can be very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, represented *simultaneously* in *e*.

ËËË it is possible that, at *t*2, *S* remembers perceiving an object *o* Ëor a property *f*Ëat *t*1, even though *S* didnË notice *x* Ëor *f*Ëat *t*1.

ËËË if, at *t*2, *S*Ës memory of perceiving *o* Ëor *f*Ëat *t*1 is faithful, *S*Ës experience *e* at *t*1 must have represented *o* Ëor *f*Ë

ËËË hence, it is *possible* that Ëan object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëis represented in *S*Ës experience *e* and *S* does not notice *x* Ëor *f*Ëin *e*.

ËËË *S* deploys a concept for an object *o* Ëor property *f*Ëin *e only if S notices o* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

(6) thus, if S's visual experience *e* represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, it is possible that S does *not* deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, represented in *e*.

**Therefore,**

(7) ¬ (C)

Premises (2) and (3) are supposed to lead to (4) claim (PI) In turn, (4) and (5) thesis (NE) support the Bridging Thesis. And again, (1) and (6) entail (7)

Unfortunately, this version of the argument fails too. As Martin (1992a: 753) seems to appreciate, Conceptualists could reject the example used to motivate premises (2) and (4) Thus, Conceptualists might respond that such an example simply begs the question against (NC) the Conceptualists' claim that what is represented in experience must be noticed by the subject of that experience. Finding such an example plausible, they might insist, is just to manifest one's predilection for Non-conceptualism.

At the very least, Conceptualists will question the assumption in premise (2) that you could fail to notice the General's moustache: 'fail to notice' in what sense, they might ask? Perhaps, while listening carefully to what the General was saying, you did not consciously think about his moustache, Conceptualists will admit. But this doesn't show that you failed to notice it perceptually at the time.[19] After all, how could you fail to notice the General's moustache? Wasn't it right in front of you?

Thus, without any better reason for this assumption, it's unclear why premise (2) ought to be true. And without premise (2), we have been given no reason as yet to accept (4) or so Conceptualists might point out. So, if Dretske and Martin's appeal to perceptual memory is inconclusive, other considerations must be found in support of (4) the claim that what is represented in an experience can go beyond what the subject of that experience notices (PI) Here is one.

[19] At first sight, such a response seems less readily available with Martin's (1992a: 750) own scenario, where a subject is looking for cufflinks in her cupboard, fails to find them, but later remembers that she had seen them in one of the drawers she searched. Here, had the subject noticed the cufflinks the first time around, she would presumably have found them. However, Conceptualists can reject the intuition that the subject could later remember having seen the cufflinks. Alternatively, they might argue that she might have noticed them in some way or other, without realising *that* they were the cufflinks she was looking for.

ËiË*Perceptual Attention.* Noticing in experience seems to be generally related to perceptual attention: we usually notice things if our perceptual attention is directed onto such things.[20] For example, had your attention not been focused on the red spider next to you, itË unlikely that you would have noticed it. Perhaps, the dependence goes the other way too.[21]

In general, then, noticing an object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëcomes together with directing oneË perceptual attention onto *x* Ëor *f*Ë This is so, whether noticing *x* causes a shift of attention onto *x* or whether a shift of attention towards *x* makes it possible to notice *x*. However, it seems possible to perceive an object Ëor propertyËwithout attending to itË and hence, without noticing it either.[22]

Consider the following example, which has to do again with your encounter of the General and his moustache Ësee, e.g., Block Ë2002Ëfor a similar exampleË

> THE MILITARY CHOIR CASE. A military choir has been performing at the other end of the room during the entirety of your conversation with the General. Again, your attention was fully focused on the GeneralË words. But itË not as if you were deaf to the sound of the choir. Rather, it seems that the choir was in the background of your auditory experience all along.

[20] Perceptual attention is extremely difficult to characterize. Some simply equivocate attention with noticing, or think of it as some form of perceptual information-picking. Others conceive of perceptual attention as some kind of perceptual gaze or spotlight, while some distinguish between focal and cognitive attention: see Martin Ë1997, 1998Ë; Peacocke Ë1998bË; and White Ë1964Ë Pashler Ë1998Ëand Wolfe Ë2000Ëprovide useful reviews of the empirical literature and of the various ËformsËthat perceptual attention might take, including the difference between selective and divided attention, as well as cases of Ëpop outË

[21] Sometimes, it seems as though a shift of attention may be caused by noticing an object. Thus, it might be that your visual attention was attracted towards the swooping magpie only when you began noticing it.

[22] There is a variety of empirical evidence that perceivers sometimes perceive without attention: see, for instance, Ben-Av et al. Ë1992Ë; Braun and Julesz Ë1998Ë; Braun and Sagi Ë1990Ë; Fernandez-Duque and Thornton Ë2000Ë; Iwasaki Ë1993ËË see also Pashler Ë1998: 44-5, 51-5, 95, 137-9Ëand Wolfe Ë2000Ëfor useful surveys. There is also evidence of some ËdistinctËpre-attentive processing of visual information, as when certain items in the perceiverË visual field might seem to Ëpop outËfrom a display of items, and then attract the subjectË attention: see Enns and Kingstone Ë1995Ë; Hoffman Ë1979Ë; Wolfe Ë1997Ë; and Wolfe Ë2000Ë Finally, there is some evidence that the unattended background of experience can influence perception of what is presented in the foreground. For example, shape-perception depends in part on the chromatic and luminance contrasts between the object and its background: see, for instance, Moore and Egeth Ë1997Ë; Kimchi Ë1992Ë; Paquet Ë1992Ë; Robertson et al. Ë1993Ë; Wolfe Ë2000Ë

To see this, suppose that your attention is suddenly attracted by that background sound. You begin noticing it. No one else has drawn your attention to it. The sound itself has remained constant, so that no change in the sound can have caused your attention-shift. Perhaps, you just stopped listening to the General. In any case, whatever caused your attention to shift in this situation, it seems as though the background sound must have been represented in your experience before you shifted your attention to it: whatever caused your attention to be re-directed must have involved a perceptual representation of the choirËs sound. The same goes with noticing: how could you have come to notice the sound of the choir if you werenËt perceiving it in the first place?

This suggests that objects, properties, relations, etc. which figure in the background of experience are, while unattended and unnoticed, nevertheless *represented* in experience. It is the perceptual representation of such a background sound which is, in part, causally responsible for a shift of attention. But if your experience of the sound causes that shift, then, obviously, the sound itself must have been perceived. And it might have been perceived before it caused a shift of attention. If so, it is possible to perceive something without attending to itË or noticing it. This sort of case, then, provides another reason to accept:

***Unnoticed perceptual information*** **(UPI)**
it is *possible* that Ëan object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëis represented in a subject *S*Ës experience *e* and *S* does not notice *x* Ëor *f*Ëin *e*.

The resulting version of ËAIRËwould then go:

ËËË for any single visual experience *e* of a subject *S*, there can be very many objects $o_1$ ... $o_n$, properties $P_1$ ... $P_n$, and relations $R_1$ ... $R_n$, represented *simultaneously* in *e*.

ËËË it is possible that *S*Ës experience *e* of an object *o* Ëor a property *f*Ëat $t_1$ causes *S* to notice and/or focus her attention upon *x* Ëor *f*Ëat $t_2$.

ËËË if *S*Ës experience *e* of *x* Ëor *f*Ëat $t_1$ causes *S* to notice and/or attend to *x* Ëor *f*Ëat $t_2$, then *x* Ëor *f*Ëmust have been represented in *S*Ës experience *e* at $t_1$ while it was unattended and unnoticed.

ËËË hence, it is *possible* that Ëan object *x* Ëor property *f*Ëis represented in a subject *S*Ës experience *e* and *S* does not notice *x* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

ËÊË a subject *S* deploys a concept for an object *o* Ëor property *f*Ëin an experience *e only if S notices o* Ëor *f*Ëin having *e*.

ËÉË thus, if *S*Ës visual experience *e* represents simultaneously very many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, it is possible that *S* does *not* deploy a concept for at least one of the many objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$, properties $P_1 \ldots P_n$, and relations $R_1 \ldots R_n$, represented in *e*.

**Therefore,**

ËÈË ¬ ËÇË

Again, premises ËÂËand ËÃËare supposed to entail ËÄËËUPIËË while ËÄËand ËÅËË ËNËË support ËÉË, which, together with ËÍË, entails ËÈË Again, however, Conceptualists might reject the example behind premises ËÂËand ËÃË

Two crucial assumptions in the example are: ËËËnoticing requires perceptual attention, ËiËthere can be perception without attention. From this, itËs supposed to follow that what remains unnoticed can nevertheless figure in the content of experience. In which case, given ËNËin premise ËÊË, we have a reason to accept the Bridging Thesis. But Conceptualists might reject ËËË They could insist, for instance, that unattended objects can be noticed nonetheless. This is why, they might claim, the objects in question are perceivedË in accordance with ËNÇË

They could also reject ËiËand claim that, appearances notwithstanding, you did in fact attend to the sound of the choir while listening to the General, even if very briefly and without thinking about it. The fact that you do not think about what you focus your attention upon or notice in experience does not show that you fail to notice or attend to it. And it is this previous episode of focusing your attention on the choirËs sound which caused you to re-direct your attention onto it later, not a perceptual representation of the sound without attention. Hence, in this case, there is no reason to think that such a background noise must have been perceived without attention.

In other words, there are, again, various avenues open to Conceptualists to resist the sort of examples behind premises ËÂËand ËÃË And without a stronger motivation for these two premises, it is entirely open to Conceptualists to redescribe such cases in their preferred terms. This is why attempts to motivate the Bridging Thesis on the basis of ËNËare, at best, inconclusive.

But there is another, rather obvious, reason why the two previous versions of ËAIRËmight seem far from compelling. I have so far taken for granted that Conceptualists endorse ËNË

***The Noticing Constraint on Conceptual Deployment in Experience***
a subject *S* deploys a concept for an object *o* Ëor property *f*Ëin an experience *e* *only if S notices o* Ëor *f*Ëin *e*.

Then again, they might not. If such a constraint fits quite naturally the conceptualist view of experience, there is little textual evidence that Conceptualists endorse it. Indeed, when presented with some of the examples reviewed here, Conceptualists might reach the view that such a constraint embodies a rather ËoadedËconception of the deployment of concepts in experience, according to which one conceptualises a perceived object *only by noticing* that object.

On the contrary, Conceptualists could insist, it is possible that perceivers deploy concepts even for what they fail to notice. For instance, it might be that a subject does not notice an object, either because ËaËshe does not see it, or, more interestingly, because ËbËthe object in question is quite familiar to her. Being familiar, the object in question constitutes no unexpected element in the subjectËs visual field. Hence, it may remain unnoticed. But the fact that such an object provokes no surprise in the perceiver suggests that she must have conceptualised it in some way or other. In which case, it might turn out that perceivers are quite able to deploy concepts in experience even for objects they do not noticeË *contra* ËNCË

The two versions of ËAIRËoutlined in this section cause little trouble for Conceptualists. Not because these arguments are invalid or commit some unnoticed fallacy, but because some of their crucial premises are difficult to warrant without begging the question against Conceptualists. In particular, the various examples used to motivate premises Ë2Ëand Ë3Ëin these arguments can in fact be described differently, in ways which are more congenial to the conceptualist conception of experience. Without more principled reasons to endorse these two premises, the last two versions of ËAIRËhave hardly any bite against Conceptualism.

### 10.2.4. *An Explanatory Challenge*

All three attempts to motivate the Bridging Thesis considered so far have been unsuccessful. The key problem with these attempts owes to a reliance on constraints about the deployment of concepts in experience, which Conceptualists need not accept.

First, there is no reason to think that how normal subjects deploy concepts in judgements and beliefs has any relevance for the way they deploy concepts

in experience. Nor is there any reason to think that, because the rich information conveyed in experience is encoded analogically rather than digitally, perceivers may not deploy concepts for what they experience.

Second, there doesnËt seem to be any reason to think that our capacity for deploying concepts in general is limited in any way. In particular, a failure to report what one experiences should not be confused with a failure to deploy concepts.

Third, itËs not entirely clear why Conceptualists should accept that normal subjects deploy concepts only for what they notice in experience. Worse, putative examples of unnoticed Ëand/or unattendedË objects that are nevertheless represented in experience are just *that*: putative examples. Without some reason to think that the descriptions offered of such examples are correct, these examples carry little weight.[23]

The Bridging Thesis thus remains unmotivated. And without it, itËs hard to see how one could derive a counterexample against the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCËbased on the fact that experiences are informationally replete ËREË Hence, it seems, attempts to construct deductive arguments against Conceptualism on the basis of ËREËare bound to fail.

Does this mean that ËREËis completely unproblematic for proponents of ConceptualismË that they can endorse such a claim without fear of contradiction? Perhaps not. There remains a lingering worry about how Conceptualists can square their view with the fact that experiences can be very rich in information.

Consider, for instance, the spatial structure of a visual scene, and the very rich spatial information conveyed in an experience of such a scene. Is it really plausible to suggest that perceivers, at the time of experience, deploy enough distinct spatial concepts in a way that captures such information in its entirety? For one thing, itËs unclear how the concepts they deploy for such spatial

[23] Admittedly, many of the above arguments fail, partly because Conceptualists are elusive about the details of their own position. Thus, it is difficult to find any constraint Conceptualists might impose on the deployment of concepts in experience. Without such a constraint, one cannot even start to construct counter-examples which might cause trouble for Conceptualism. In this respect, HumeËs dictum seems appropriate: ËÏis impossible to refute a system, which has never yet been explainËd. In such a manner of fighting in the dark, a man loses his blows in the air, and often places them where the enemy is not presentËËHume, 1978: 464; from Cowie, 1999: 213Ë Furthermore, many of these responses available to Conceptualists are *ad hoc*Ë whether they can be based on a substantial and coherent conceptualist account of experience remains to be seen.

relations could match exactly the complex way in which these various relations make up the spatial structure of their visual field. In this respect, there is some pressure on Conceptualists to ensure that their view can be developed in a way that escapes the appearance of implausibility generated by these sorts of examples.

Hence, even if ËAIRËfails to falsify Conceptualism, the informational richness of experience ËREËË and the many ways in which experiences can be informationally repleteË seems to raise an explanatory challenge for advocates of Conceptualism.[24] In this respect, the *onus* is on Conceptualists to show how their account of the representational content of experience can plausibly and coherently accommodate examples like the above. In particular, Conceptualists must provide more details about what it means to deploy concepts in experienceË and how it is plausible to think that a subject might simultaneously deploy enough concepts to capture all the information conveyed in her experience.

Admittedly, there are many ways in which this could be doneË some more plausible than others. At the very least, meeting this explanatory challenge will require that Conceptualists explain what concepts are deployed in experience, and how they are deployed in experience. And the account will have to show that it is plausible that normal perceivers do indeed possess such concepts. In the next chapter, we will see how difficult it is for Conceptualists to answer this challenge *coherently*. The main problem is that developing a plausible account of how normal perceivers deploy enough concepts in experience to fit with ËREËappears to clash with commitments Conceptualists must take on board in response to other objections raised against their view.

## 10.3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to assess what sort of argument could be constructed on the basis of the informational richness of experience ËREË and how such an argument might fare against Conceptualism. Conceptualists, we have seen, appear to grant that the representational content of experiences can indeed be quite rich in information. On the other hand, the fact that experiences instantiate ËREËdoes not seem to offer a conclusive argument against Conceptualism. For there is little chance to find any consideration establishing that, *because* of its informational richness, the content of

[24] Thanks here to Kim Sterelny.

experience is not conceptual. This difficulty is accentuated by the fact that Conceptualists remain relatively silent on the details of their conception of conceptual content. Without such details, it is impossible to attribute any particular conception of the deployment of concepts in experience to the advocates of Conceptualism, and then to use it in the argument.

Nevertheless, we saw how ËRËmight present an important challenge to the way Conceptualists develop their account of experience. It is difficult to imagine how perceivers might plausibly deploy concepts for everything they see at any one time, given the rich information carried in experience. And so, discussion of ËRË ought to play a major part in the case against Conceptualism, at least insofar as it forces Conceptualists to substantiate their account of the representational content of experience. In the next chapter, I look at one particular way to exploit these sorts of problems to construct a more promising argument against Conceptualism.

CHAPTER 11

# *The Coherence of Conceptualism*

None of the arguments discussed in the previous chapters had any success in establishing that Conceptualism is false or that a notion of non-conceptual content is needed to account for at least, certain aspects of the representational content of perceptual experiences. In particular, both the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience (AFG) and the Argument from the Informational Richness of Experience (AIR) can be answered relatively easily by advocates of Conceptualism.

Thus, if perceptual experiences can represent specific properties in a fine-grained way, it seems as though normal subjects possess fine-grained demonstrative concepts to conceptualise such properties. And even though perceptual experiences can convey a large amount of information about the environment, there is no reason to think that such information outstrips what perceivers can conceptualise simultaneously and how many concepts they can deploy at the time. In other words, if the phenomena these two arguments take as their starting point are quite real, what is missing is some reason to think that what concepts normal subjects possess and deploy in experience cannot match what is represented in experience.

Taken separately, then, the fact that perceptual experiences have a fine-grained content and the fact that they convey a lot of information are quite harmless for Conceptualism. But what happens if these two facts are considered together? Even though Conceptualists can resist both arguments, can they resist considerations combining resources from both objections? I try to argue in this chapter that a negative answer is warranted.

Here the general line of thought. According to the Demonstrative Strategy, normal subjects deploy demonstrative concepts for the specific shades of colour they perceive. Conceptualists also insist, in response to (AIR), that normal perceivers can deploy many concepts for all the objects, properties, relations, etc. presented simultaneously in their experience. But recall the hardware shop example: a subject might find herself in an environment where her visual experience, not only conveys information about all the distinct shades she sees at the time, but also where that information is

fine-grained, representing all these specific shades in some detail. Can she simultaneously deploy distinct demonstrative concepts for all these distinct shades? Is it really plausible to think that she can?

This question forms the basis of the objection to be developed in this chapter. I suggest that such a situation undermines the coherence of Conceptualism and in particular, of the conceptualist responses to and . Here, I exploit one constraint Conceptualists like Brewer impose upon the deployment of demonstrative concepts: that the deployment of a demonstrative concept is in part determined by the direction of the perceiver's attention upon the object or property picked out by such a concept. Given this constraint, it seems unlikely that a perceiver could deploy very many demonstrative concepts at the same time. She would have to simultaneously attend to all the objects picked out by such concepts. And perceptual attention doesn't seem to work that way. Hence, it's unclear that she could deploy enough fine-grained concepts for the very many shades of colour simultaneously represented in her experience.

This chapter has two parts. I begin with a brief presentation of the objection (§11.1), followed by a more detailed discussion of the three theses at the source of the problem. In (§11.2), I develop the objection further by considering various possible responses on the Conceptualists' behalf and by showing why they don't help.

## 11.1. The Objection

In this section, I briefly present the broad outline of what I take to be a new objection to Conceptualism. The point of the objection is to suggest that Conceptualists are committed to an inconsistent view about the representational content of perceptual experiences and in particular about the perceptual representation of specific properties. The inconsistency arises from the combination of three propositions.

The first two are claims that Conceptualists explicitly make about the representational content of experience, and demonstrative concepts. Not only are Conceptualists explicitly committed to such claims, they ought to be, given that the claims in question represent the best escape route from certain objections raised against Conceptualism and the Demonstrative Strategy. The third claim is an intuitive but also empirically grounded description of certain phenomena relating to perceptual attention.

I will briefly describe the three claims in question— a more detailed presentation follows. The inconsistent triad I have in mind is:

**P1** if a normal perceiver *S* lacks fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts for highly specific properties $f_1$ and $f_2$, then *S* can experience $f_1$ and $f_2$ differently *only if S* deploys distinct *demonstrative* concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

**P2** a normal perceiver can deploy a distinct demonstrative concept *C* in experience for a specific property *f only if* her perceptual attention is directed onto *f* while deploying *C*.

**P3** it is possible that a normal perceiver experiences a specific property *f* without having her perceptual attention directed upon *f*.

The first claim P1 is familiar from chapter 9. It forms the basis of the Conceptualists' response to the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience (AFG). As we have seen, the AFG objection attempts to show that normal perceivers lack specific colour concepts for all the distinct specific shades of colour that can be represented differently in their experiences.[1] The Conceptualists' response (the Demonstrative Strategy) retorts that normal perceivers can form *demonstrative concepts* — on the spot, as it were — for such specific shades. Thus, if Conceptualism is true about normal subjects who lack non-demonstrative concepts for specific properties, proposition P1 has to be true too.

The second claim P2 gives voice to a particular constraint upon such demonstrative concepts. It specifies the kind of demonstration that is required for the deployment of a demonstrative concept. Thus, according to Bill Brewer (1999: ch. 6), *perceptual attention* plays a crucial role in determining the reference and content of such concepts.[2] As we shall see (§11,1.2), this constraint on demonstrative concepts constitutes the Conceptualists' most plausible solution to a problem about the content of demonstrative concepts — it also avoids

[1] This may not be true for all perceivers, of course — painters and expert phenomenologists, for instance, might possess a richer stock of non-demonstrative colour concepts. But it seems true for most of us.

[2] Note that Conceptualists aren't the only ones to the role of perceptual attention in determining the content and reference of demonstrative concepts: although he rejects Conceptualism, John Campbell (2002) offers an extensive refinement and defence of the idea that demonstrative concepts crucially depend on attention for their reference.

many of the difficulties encountered by other possible alternatives. If so, it seems as though Conceptualists had better endorse ÏP2Ë

The third proposition ÏP3ÏË unlike the other twoË isnÏt part of the commitments Conceptualists explicitly take on board. Intuitively, though, it seems possible that we do not always attend to every object or property we perceive in our visual field. Yet, it seems that some of these unattended objects and properties can be represented in experience. If so, it must be possible to experience some object Ïor propertyËwithout attentionË i.e., without having oneÏs attention directed upon that object Ïor propertyË

Given ÏP3Ë Conceptualists seem to be in trouble. Suppose that a subject *S* has an experience of two highly similar yet slightly distinct shades of redË $f_1$ and $f_2$Ë and that these two specific shades are represented differently in her experience, so that she can discriminate them on the basis of her experience. Suppose also that *S*, being a normal perceiver, lacks fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts for $f_1$ and $f_2$. The conceptualist supervenience thesis ÏCËrequires that S must possess distinct specific concepts for $f_1$ and $f_2$, if her experience is to represent these two specific shades differentlyË as we assume it does. This is the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience against Conceptualism.

With ÏP1Ë Conceptualists reply that *S can* experience distinct but highly similar shades like $f_1$ and $f_2$ by deploying distinct demonstrative conceptsË THIS and THATË for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively. This is the Demonstrative Strategy. By ÏP2Ë such demonstrative concepts pick out the shades $f_1$ and $f_2$ *only if S* has her visual attention directed upon such shades. However, it is possible that, in such conditions, *S* experiences either of these two shades without attentionË as ÏP3Ë suggests. If so, it follows from ÏP2Ëthat, in fact, *S* cannot be deploying distinct *demonstrative concepts* for the two shades $f_1$ and $f_2$ represented differently in her experience. But then, how can her experience represent these two distinct shades in a fine-grained way?

Thus, if Conceptualism is true and normal subjects can have fine-grained experiences of specific shades of colour Ïor which they lack specific non-demonstrative conceptsË propositions ÏP1Ë ÏP2Ë and ÏP3Ë cannot all be true. Given ÏP2Ë if ÏP3Ëis true of a subjectÏs particular experience, then ÏP1Ëmust be false about that experience: that subject cannot be deploying demonstrative conceptsË and so, cannot be deploying any specific conceptË for at least one the shades in question.

Conceptualists thus face a dilemma. On pain of inconsistency, they must reject or at least substantially modify one of the three propositions above: P1, P2, and P3.[3] But which one? I will argue that Conceptualists cannot really solve such a dilemma, mainly because rejection of any of these three propositions raises new difficulties Conceptualists had better avoid.

So much, then, for the overall structure of the objection. In the remainder of this section, I explain in a little more detail what motivates each of these three propositions. In the next (§11.2), I show why there is no good solution to this dilemma, except to reject Conceptualism.

### 11.1.1. *Demonstrative Concepts and the Fineness of Grain of Experience*

Explaining why Conceptualists endorse proposition P1 is relatively easy. In chapter 9, we saw that perceptual experiences are fine-grained and that this fact is supposed to cause trouble for Conceptualists. The best version of the argument went as follows:

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[3] Admittedly, Conceptualists have two other options at this point, neither of which seems particularly attractive. First, they could deny that the subject's experience represents the specific shades of colour under consideration in a fine-grained way. This comes down to denying that the subject's experience is fine-grained. But, so far, Conceptualists have been perfectly happy to grant that experiences are fine-grained: the Demonstrative Strategy was supposed to reconcile Conceptualism with that fact. Hence, without a good and independent reason to deny the fineness of grain of experience at this point in the dialectic, such a denial seems *ad hoc*.

Second, Conceptualists could suggest that, in this particular case, the subject might deploy some coarse-grained non-demonstrative concept for the shade she is not attending to. But this seems to undermine the conceptualist supervenience thesis C. The situation is this: *S*'s experience represents differently two specific shades of red $f_1$ and $f_2$. *S* does not possess fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts for these shades. *S* directs her attention on $f_1$ but not on $f_2$. And so, by P2, she cannot deploy a demonstrative concept for $f_2$. But, the response goes, she might deploy a fine-grained demonstrative concept for $f_1$ and a coarse-grained non-demonstrative concept for $f_2$. Hence, she deploys distinct concepts for these two shades.

This, however, doesn't get Conceptualists out of trouble: it's possible that *S* has another experience of $f_1$ with another specific shade $f_3$, which is represented differently in her experience, even though *S* does not attend to $f_3$. It's also possible that $f_3$ is represented differently from $f_2$, even though they aren't experienced simultaneously. Since $f_3$ falls under the very same determinable and coarse-grained concepts as $f_2$, we have a representational difference in *S*'s experiences without a conceptual difference. In which case, C is false. If *S* doesn't deploy the same coarse-grained concept for $f_2$ and $f_3$, we can introduce more experiences of distinct shades of red, where *S* fails to direct her attention on one of these shades, until *S* is led to deploy the same non-demonstrative coarse-grained concept for two distinct shades that are represented differently in experience. I consider more possible responses and reject them in §11.2.

ËËÌ it is possible that a subject *S*Ës experience *e* represents differently two distinct, yet closely similar, properties $f_1$ and $f_2$.

ËÌË it is possible that *S* cannot re-identify $f_1$ and $f_2$ across different perceptual encounters.

ÌËË if *S* possesses a concept *C*, *S* must be able to re-identify objects Ëor propertiesËfalling under *C* across different perceptual encounters.

ÌÍË it is possible that *S* does not possess distinct concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

**Therefore,**

ÌËË ¬ ËCË

We saw why such an argument fails. First, there is a problematic equivocation concerning the notion of Ëre-identificationËbetween premises ÌÌËand ÌËË More importantly, however, we saw that Conceptualists have a good response to such an argumentË the Demonstrative Strategy. According to McDowell Ë994: 56*ff*Ëand Brewer Ë999: 170-4Ë the problem with ËAFGËis that the argument focuses on a too narrow range of concepts. In particular, they point out, the argument ignores that perceivers can deploy demonstrative concepts for what they experience. As a result, ÌÍËis unwarranted.[4]

What matters for our purposes here is the fact that Conceptualists grant premise ËËË but insist on the following: when presented with two Ëor moreË specific shades of red $f_1$ and $f_2$, a normal subject *S* Ëwho lacks fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts for $f_1$ and $f_2$Ëmust be deploying distinct demonstrative conceptsË such as *THIS* and *THAT*Ë for these two shades. This explains why Conceptualists are committed to proposition ËP1Ë it constitutes their best response to the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience.[5]

In this respect, commitment to ËP1Ëis a crucial part of Conceptualism. Admittedly, this appeal to demonstrative concepts is quite plausible in itselfË in fact, even Non-conceptualists can accept that we conceptualise

[4] Attempts to motivate premise ÌËËas a constraint on the possession of demonstrative concepts fail too, as we have seen. The possession-conditions of demonstrative concepts for specific shades of colour do not seem to include any Re-identification Constraint.

[5] Note that answering ËAFGËis not the only reason Conceptualists have to embrace ËP1Ë see also the central epistemological significance Brewer Ë999: ch. 6Ëattaches to such concepts. As we saw in chapter 6, they constitute what he calls a subjectËs Ëepistemic opennessË to the external world Ë999: 204Ë

specific shades of colour demonstratively. More importantly, resorting to such concepts also presents the most plausible solution to the problem raised by the fineness of grain of experience for Conceptualism.

To see this, suppose one tried to block the objection in a different way, without resorting to demonstrative concepts. Perhaps, a subject *S* might possess some chromatic concepts like *RED* and *GREEN*, together with concepts of *ILLUMINATION*, *HUE*, *SATURATION*, etc. From this set of basic concepts, she may then be able to form enough *complex conceptsè* composed out of those simpler conceptsË to conceptualise the fine-grained differences between the shades she visually discriminates.[6]

The problem with this suggestion is that, in fact, the subject might very well lack even some basic chromatic concepts, not to mention concepts of *ILLUMINATION*, *HUE* and *SATURATION*. A young child, for instance, might not possess such concepts. Yet, it seems that she can experience the differences between specific shades of red. On the other hand, since the possession of demonstrative concepts like *THIS* and *THAT* doesnË seem to require possession of other concepts, the child might be able to deploy such concepts for the specific properties represented in her experience.

Thus, the Demonstrative Strategy has the advantage that it avoids difficulties encountered by other putative solutions to ËAFGË For this reason, Conceptualists cannot really do without demonstrative concepts. Renouncing the Demonstrative Strategy would incur great costsË at least in the sense that it would raise more difficulties for Conceptualism. This explains why Conceptualists are, quite rightly, committed to ËP1Ë

11.1.2. *Demonstrative Concepts and Selective Attention*

But why should Conceptualists endorse ËP2Ë

ËP2Ë a normal perceiver can deploy a distinct demonstrative concept *C* for a specific property *f* in experience *only if* her perceptual attention is directed onto *f* while deploying *C*.

The answer is less obvious. It has to do with some crucial questions arising about the Demonstrative Strategy and the nature of demonstrative concepts.

Consider the hardware shop case again. Suppose that, among all the different specific shades of colour on the walls of the colour room, there are two specific shades of red $f_1$ and $f_2$, which, despite their close similarity, are

[6] See NoËË2004: ch. 6Ëfor what seems like a more complex version of this response.

distinct. If visual experiences are fine-grained, itË possible for a subject to have an experience of $f_1$ and $f_2$ representing these two shades differently. Conceptualism then requires that the subject possesses and deploys concepts for both $f_1$ and $f_2$. In particular, thesis ËCËrequires that the subject deploy *distinct* concepts for such shades. Which concepts? The Demonstrative Strategy answers: fine-grained demonstrative concepts like *THIS* and *THAT*.

But now, the question is: how is it that *THIS* and *THAT* are distinct and fine-grained? The question concerns the content of these concepts: in virtue of what do *THIS* and *THAT* have different fine-grained contents, each representing a different specific shadeË respectively, $f_1$ and $f_2$? Call this the *Differentiation Problem*.[7]

The question seems particularly pressing for Conceptualists. According to the Demonstrative strategy, demonstrative concepts ought to be fine-grained enough so that they match the way in which experiences represent the very specific properties these concepts are supposed to pick out. Hence, if such a strategy is to help them answer ËAFGË, Conceptualists owe us an account of how *THIS* and *THAT* differ. Otherwise, it seems, the Demonstrative strategy is merely the promise of a solution.

The question can be made more precise. Presumably, the crucial difference between *THIS* and *THAT* in this context has to do with the fact that these concepts pick out different shades of colourË $f_1$ and $f_2$. But then, how is it that the demonstrative concept *THIS* picks out one of these two shades Ëather than some other shadeË And how is it that it picks out the particular shade that it doesË $f_1$Ë rather than the other oneË $f_2$? Likewise for *THAT*: why is it that it picks out $f_2$ and not $f_1$, or even $f_4$, say?

Note that questions of this kind not only concern the content and reference of demonstrative conceptsË how these concepts actually pick out the particular properties that they do? Such questions also concern what it takes for a subject to be able to *form*Ë or deployË such demonstrative concepts: which abilitiesË conceptual or otherwiseË are needed on the subjectËs part to deploy *THIS* and *THAT* for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively? In particular, what sort of abilities must she have to ensure that *THIS* and *THAT* are distinct conceptsË that they pick out different shades of colour?[8]

[7] See Raffman Ë995: 303Ëfor a discussion of that problem in a slightly different context.

[8] Thus, what is at stake here isnË just a *semantic* issue. ItË not to be confused with the question as to how demonstrative *expressions* have their reference fixed. The issue is essentially a *cognitive* one: how is it that perceivers are able to *form* demonstrative concepts on the spot Ëas it

This gives rise to another related problem: the *Supplementation Problem*. Presumably, the demonstrative concepts *THIS* and *THAT* are distinct in part because, in deploying them, the subject exercises abilities which *supplement* these two concepts so as to ensure that they have distinct contents and referents. But which abilities can do this supplementing work? According to Christopher Peacocke (2001b: 245-7), in order to pick out $f_1$ rather than $f_2$, the demonstrative concept *THIS* must be supplemented either (i) by some non-demonstrative concept (a conceptual capacity) or (ii) by something that's not a concept.

The first option is unsatisfactory. If *THIS* is to pick out the specific shape of an object, it could be supplemented by the non-demonstrative concept *SHAPE* to combine as in the complex demonstrative concept *THIS SHAPE*. This might help to explain why such a concept picks out the *shape* of the object, rather than its colour or texture, say. But it does *not* explain why *THIS SHAPE* picks out the shape of that particular *object*, rather than the shape of *another object* next to it (after all, the shape of the object next to it also satisfies the concept *SHAPE*.[9]

The second option, on the other hand, seems unavailable to Conceptualists, Peacocke argues. Suppose we say that the demonstrative concepts *THIS* and *THAT* are supplemented, not by other concepts, but by something perceptual. Indeed, this is Peacocke's own answer to the *Supplementation Problem*: 'The kind of property referred to (a shape property rather than a sound property) is fixed by the perceptual way that contributes to the individuation of the perceptual demonstrative in question' (Peacocke, 2001b: 247).[10] For Peacocke, the 'perceptual way' in which a property (or object) is 'given' in an experience is the *representational content* of that experience (2001b: 240; see also

were) in such a way that they pick out the particular objects or properties that they do? Also, keep in mind that this is a question for *Conceptualists*: the answer must be such that it can account for how the subject's deployment of such concepts makes her experience of fine-grained features properly conceptual.

[9] Furthermore, as Peacocke (2001b: 245) argues, it's possible that the subject does not possess the concept *SHAPE*. In which case, this first option will fail to account for the fact that perceivers who lack certain general non-demonstrative concepts can nevertheless form demonstrative concepts that pick out specific properties.

[10] Presumably, the thought is that different shape properties are associated with different perceptual ways (i.e., different ways in which such different shapes are presented to a perceiver. But perceptual ways also encode information about the location of the object having such a shape. This might help explain why a demonstrative concept associated with a certain perceptual way will pick out the shape of one object rather than that of another object next to it.

Peacocke, 1998aË In short, the thought is that a demonstrative concept is supplemented by the representational content of the experience on the basis of which the demonstrative concept is deployed, and which determines the content and reference of that demonstrative concept. But this means that the content of experience cannot itself be determined by such demonstrative concept.

Obviously, then, this solution isnË open to Conceptualists. On their view, the representational content of experience is determined by whatever concepts the perceiver deploys in having such an experienceË not the other way around. And since, given ËP1Ę such concepts are likely to be demonstrative, it cannot be that demonstrative concepts have their content and reference determined by the content of experience. Otherwise, the conceptualist solution to the Supplementation Problem would seem to be circularË and viciously so. Demonstrative concepts deployed in experience would ultimately serve to supplement their own content! Hence, Conceptualists cannot answer the *Supplementation Problem* by appealing to the representational content of experience.

There is, however, another possibility, which Peacocke seems to ignore. To see this, we need to backtrack a little. Earlier in chapter 9 Ë§9.2Ę we saw that, whatever demonstrative concepts really are, their being *demonstrative* seems to involve at least two properties: ËaË*context-dependence*, in the sense that the context in which a demonstrative concept is formed partly determines the content of that concept; and ËbËa so-called *demonstration* of some kind which, together with the context, serves to determine what the concept picks out. The latter is of interest, here.

First, we need to ask: what does such *demonstration* amount to? One natural proposal is that the kind of demonstration underlying the deployment of *demonstrative concepts* Ëto be contrasted here with demonstrative expressionsËis provided by *perceptual attention*. That is, in order to deploy a demonstrative concept for a certain property *f*, a subject must have her perceptual attention directed onto *f* Ëor an instance of *f* present in her near environmentË Indeed, this appears to be Bill BrewerË proposal to settle the Differentiation Problem.

For Brewer, demonstrative concepts like THIS and THAT pick out different things because they are associated with different Ëattentional relationsËto such things Ësee Brewer, 1999: 172, 186*ff*, 202Ë He writes:

> Very roughly, then, the concepts figuring in experiential contents do not simply pop up from nowhere; nor are they the product of the subjectË active reflection or directed

> reasoning about some matter or other. Rather, they are provided directly by his *attentional relations* with the particular things around him, by the way in which he is interrogating his environment in perception. (Brewer, 1999: 185, my emphasis)

> [...] perceptual demonstrative contents refer to the particular worldly things which they do in virtue of the subject's *perceptual-attentional relations* with precisely those things; and this in turn determines the subject matter of his subsequent beliefs derived from such experiences. (Brewer, 1999: 226, my emphasis again)

What Brewer means by 'attentional relation' is at least this (see Brewer, 1999: 189) it's the sort of relation that holds between a perceiving subject and an object (or property) in her perceptual field in virtue of the subject having her perceptual attention directed onto that object (or property). According to this account, then, *where* the subject's perceptual attention is directed and on *what* contributes to determining the content of a demonstrative concept deployed in experience: it determines *which* object or property in the subject's perceptual field is picked out by such a concept.[11]

This helps to answer the Differentiation Problem. If two distinct shades of red $f_1$ and $f_2$ (or their instances) have different locations in the subject's visual field, the subject's perceptual attention can be directed on $f_1$ separately from $f_2$ and *vice versa*. Since the direction of the subject's attention contributes to determining what object or property her demonstrative concept picks out, differences in the direction of attention give rise to distinct demonstrative concepts with different contents and referents. Thus, the demonstrative concepts THIS and THAT are distinct: that is, each concept picks out a different shade, $f_1$ or $f_2$, by being associated with different 'attentional relations' holding between the subject and the shades $f_1$ and $f_2$ (Brewer, 1999: 172-3; 187*ff*, 226).

Brewer's emphasis on the role of perceptual attention also helps to solve the Supplementation Problem (Brewer, 1999: 202). On such an account, a

[11] One rationale for such an account, I take it, is the idea that a demonstrative concept picks out a determinate thing *only if* the subject who deploys such a concept is able to locate that thing in her perceptual field (see Evans, 1982: 149, 170-5). On such a view, one of the necessary conditions a subject must satisfy in order to deploy a demonstrative concept is that she knows *which* thing her concept picks out. And knowing *which* thing falls under such a demonstrative concept essentially depends on the ability to locate that thing in one's perceptual field. In turn, such ability involves the subject's perceptual attention, by which she can identify and track the location of that thing in her perceptual field (Brewer, 2005: 224). See also Peacocke (1983: 139*ff*), and Campbell (2002: ch.1). And for a comparison between Peacocke and Evans, see Mc Dowell (1990) and Brewer (1999: § 6.3.1).

demonstrative concept is supplemented by the subjectЁs perceptual attention. *What*Ё and *where*Ё the subjectЁs attention is directed upon determines what her demonstrative concept picks out.[12] One clear advantage of this account is that no other concept is needed to solve the Supplementation Problem.

What about the threat of circularity outlined above? To repeat, the problem is that, for Conceptualists, demonstrative concepts cannot be supplemented by the representational content of perceptual experiences: if the content of experience is itself determined by demonstrative concepts, such concepts cannot, in turn, have their content determined by that of perceptual experiences. According to the proposal under consideration, perceptual attentionЁ not the content of experienceЁ supplements demonstrative concepts.

But how does this avoid circularity? After all, perceptual attention itself may depend on perceptual content, and in more ways than one. For instance, a subject might focus her attention on the shape of an object after having had a conscious experience representing such a property: here, the focus of perceptual attention causally depends on the content of a previous experience. The fact that the property in question was represented in the content of the subjectЁexperience is one of the factors that cause her to shift her attention towards that property.

Intuitively, there is also a sense in which perceptual attention and content are structurally enmeshed. When a subject directs her attention onto the shape of an object, it seems as though part of the content of her perceptual experience is thereby ЁhighlightedЁ as it were ЁCampbell, 2002: 10Ё Phenomenologically, itЁs as if the content of the resulting experience was structured around the representation of that particular shape: the shape focused upon occupies the foreground of experience. In this respect, then, perceptual attention is not entirely distinct from the content of experience: perceptual attention can be thought of as a function whose outputs are perceptual contents with some ЁhighlightedЁitem. Thus, whatever sort of

[12] As Brewer Ё*ibid.*; 2005: 222, 224Ёemphasises, it is important that such information isnЁ only spatial, but specifies a property at a certain locationЁ at least, insofar as demonstrative concepts picking out properties are concerned. Otherwise, appeal to perceptual attention wouldnЁ solve the Supplementation Problem for such concepts. In particular, the recourse to perceptual attention would leave it open whether a subjectЁs demonstrative concept picks out the shape, rather than the colour, of a particular object at a certain location. See also Campbell Ё2002: 31Ё

psychological mechanism perceptual attention amounts to, it seems that what such a mechanism delivers is constitutive of the representational content of conscious perceptual experiences: the fact that part of such content is ËhighlightedË

For these reasons, it might seem as though appeal to perceptual attention in response to the Supplementation Problem doesnËt avoid the threat of circularity at all.[13] But this is a mistake: the fact that ËËperceptual attention can be causally dependent on the content of experience, or that ËiËthe output of perceptual attention is itself a constitutive feature of perceptual content, need not entail that the only way for perceptual attention to determine the content and reference of demonstrative concepts goes *via* the representational content of experience.

There is, as Brewer suggests, another way in which to understand how perceptual attention determines the content of demonstrative concepts:

> [... ] determinacy of reference is secured by the supplementation of the bare demonstrative ËhatË by the subjectËs actual attention to the *color* of the objection in question, as opposed to its shape or movement, say, where this is a neurophysiologically enabled relation between the subject and *that property*, as opposed to any other, of the object which he is perceiving. ËBrewer, 2005: 224; see also, 2005: 222Ë

Presumably, the idea is this: the various neurophysiological mechanisms underlying perceptual attention must exploit Ëand have access toË some perceptual information or otherË information which is likely to include spatial information about the location of such objects and properties in the subjectËs visual field. ItËs by using such information that perceptual attention can be re-directed to focus on different objects and properties in the subjectËs visual field, for instance. But the mechanisms underlying perceptual attention are essentially sub-personal mechanisms; and they exploit informational inputs provided at the sub-personal level by the subjectËs visual system.[14]

[13] See, e.g., Campbell Ë002: 97Ë Eilan Ë001: 437Ë Brewer isnËt always cautious on this point: see Brewer Ë999: 189Ë and compare his Ë001: 456-8Ë

[14] How the details are filled in will obviously depend for an important part on empirical investigation of the various neurophysiological mechanisms underlying perceptual attention. For a particular suggestion, see Campbell Ë002: 31Ë And for a detailed survey of the empirical literature on different theoretical models developed to account for attention, see Pashler Ë998Ë A more succinctË but also more criticalË discussion can be found in Findlay and Gilchrist Ë003Ë

The suggestion, then, seems to be that these sub-personal mechanisms together with the information they process their inputs essentially contribute to determining the content and reference of demonstrative concepts. On this view, demonstrative concepts have a definite content and reference by being supplemented by sub-personal mechanisms underlying perceptual attention and not by what might be taken to be the output of such mechanisms: the highlighted content of conscious perceptual experiences. Hence, even if the direction of a subject's attention shifts because of a previous conscious experience representing the shape of an object, it is the sub-personal processing of visual information by the subject's visual system and not the content of her previous experience which determines the content of the demonstrative concept she deploys for such a shape.

This is why the threat of circularity doesn't arise. On this proposal, demonstrative concepts are not deployed in experience *on the basis of* how things are represented in conscious experience. Rather, how things are represented in experience is determined by the deployment of such demonstrative concepts in experience in accordance with the conceptualist supervenience thesis (C). In turn, the content and reference of such concepts is determined by various sub-personal mechanisms underlying perceptual attention.

Two additional remarks about this solution to the Supplementation Problem. First, there is a question about which notion of perceptual attention Brewer presupposes here.[15] Though Brewer says little about this, it's not too hard to guess what kind of perceptual process he has in mind. Indeed, the kind of attention under consideration seems to be *selective* attention: the process by which information about some particular element's in a scene is extracted (selected) from information about the whole scene.[16] Thus, on this proposal,

[15] There are many different technical notions of 'attention' as well as many different attentional mechanisms under consideration in the empirical literature (see, e.g., Pashler, 1998; Wolfe, 2000). Furthermore, how these technical notions map onto the more intuitive talk of 'perceptual attention' is a difficult question, especially since the intuitive notion itself might single out a multi-facetted phenomenon. Empirical work on attention focuses on cases of selective attention, divided attention, pop-out, etc, which can be fairly different. This sometimes gives the impression that psychologists are concerned with different kinds of 'attention' when studying these different phenomena. But it's possible that what such different phenomena reveal isn't that there are different kinds of attention, only that perceptual attention is a single mechanism that functions differently in different circumstances.

[16] For a survey, see, Pashler (1998: ch. 2).

the sub-personal processes underlying the *selection* of information about the shade of a particular object at a certain location contribute to how a demonstrative concept picks out that shade.

Second, it is important to see that, though Brewer's proposal is speculative to some extent, it can be grounded in more intuitive or empirically grounded notions of attention.[17] We have just seen that, in order to avoid the threat of circularity, the proposal exploits a particular facet of selective attention: not the highlighted content of conscious perceptual experience which *results* from the focus of perceptual attention, but the sub-personal mechanisms which select the relevant information. Although the information selected by perceptual attention can be made available at the conscious level, how such information is selected by attention isn't.

Provided that I have offered a correct (or, at least, charitable) reconstruction of Brewer's proposal, it is important to see that Brewer need not introduce here a new notion of 'perceptual attention' that has nothing to do with how we intuitively think of perceptual attention. Rather, Brewer is better interpreted as focusing on a particular aspect of the more familiar notion of attention, namely, the (presumably uncontroversial) fact that perceptual attention involves some sub-personal processing. Perceptual attention, on this view, can be seen as a complex process which (i) can be triggered by, among other things, the representation of particular features in conscious experience, (ii) whose inputs are various bits of information delivered by lower-level processes of the visual system (early vision) and then selected by sub-personal mechanisms, and (iii) whose outputs are, among other things, conscious perceptual experiences with highlighted content (i.e., the item focused upon). Such a picture of attention is not too controversial, I assume. Admittedly, Brewer's proposal is speculative about the role such mechanisms play in the deployment of demonstrative concepts. But it need not be speculative about attention itself.

We can now see why Conceptualists have good reasons to endorse proposition (P2) the deployment of a demonstrative concept for a property *f* requires that one's perceptual attention be directed onto *f*, in a way that essentially involves sub-personal selection and processing of visual information. One important merit of this account is that it solves the Differentiation

[17] Otherwise, the plausibility of Brewer's solution to the Supplementation Problem would seem to be undermined, if it relied on a made-up notion of attention with no link to the more familiar notions of attention, or to notions of attention studied in the empirical literature.

Problem, as well as the Supplementation Problem, without any apparent circularity.[18] Thus, if Conceptualists were to reject P2, they would have to face the *Differentiation* and *Supplementations problems* all over again. In particular, they would have to find an alternative account of how demonstrative concepts can have distinct fine-grained contents.

### 11.1.3. *Perception without Attention*

The last claim on the list isn't one Conceptualists are committed to: not that they are committed to its negation either. But it seems plausible, and there is empirical evidence suggesting that it is true. Proposition P3 says that:

> P3 it is possible that a normal perceiver experiences a specific property *f* without having her perceptual attention directed upon *f*.

Here, I will focus on three different examples, which confer an intuitive plausibility to P3. In this section, I will limit myself to describing these examples, and spelling out some of their consequences. A more thorough defence can be found in §11.2.[19]

The first case seems straightforward: I call it the 'simple case':

> THE SIMPLE CASE: You enter a room where, at its centre, stands a table with a striking shade of red. Straight away, your visual attention is attracted by the table: perhaps, you wonder what shade *that* is, or why should anyone have painted the table *that* red. Furthermore, it seems possible that your attention remains exclusively focused on the table.
>
> The background wall behind the table is of a very similar, yet slightly distinct, shade of red. Even though your attention is directed on the red shade of the table for the whole time, it seems as though you nevertheless perceive the distinct shade of the wall in the background. After all, the table is surely discriminated against its background: otherwise it wouldn't appear to you in any particular way. This means that you are able to perceive the difference between these two shades: and so, presumably, that you perceive *both* shades. But this means that you can perceive the shade of red in the background without attending to it.

[18] Note also that, in this respect, such an account may be attractive not just to Conceptualists, but is available to their opponents too. See, e.g., Campbell (2002), and also Evans (1982).

[19] I introduce *three* examples for a purpose: some may be more appealing than others. More importantly, though, the differences between such examples will help to undermine possible attempts to redescribe these examples on the Conceptualists' part. Though such re-descriptions seem to work for some of the examples, they do not work for all (see §11.2).

The next example of perception without attention is slightly more complexË though itŠs very much like the original example used to motivate the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience:

> THE HARDWARE STORE CASE: You are in the paint section of a hardware store. On the wall, there is a shelf with many colour charts, each representing a wide variety of different shades of beige. From a fairly close distance, you can look at all these shades of beige. You can discriminate each shade from its neighboursË they all look slightly different. You can direct your attention on any of them. When your visual attention is directed on a particular shade, however, you do not stop perceiving the other shades. And so, it seems, it is possible to perceive one of these shades, even if youŒre not attending to it.

The third case is different. It seems possible that, while your attention is focused on a particular object, another item in the periphery of your perceptual field becomes salient and ŒgrabsËyour attention. For instance, when driving on the highway, your attention might be focused on the car in front of you Ëor on the road aheadË Suddenly, your attention may be attracted by the flashing light of the police car about to overtake you, which has now become salient in the periphery of your visual field. What happens in such cases seems to be this: the item in the background of your experience, by becoming salient, causes your attention to shift from the item initially focused upon to the new salient one. The same phenomenon seems possible with the perception of specific shades of colour:[20]

> THE ATTENTION-SHIFT CASE: We are sitting at a table on the terrace of a restaurant in a busy street. I wear a bright green t-shirt, the colour of which has attracted your attention. You carefully observe the colour of my t-shirt Ëfor some reason of yoursË Many by-passers pass us by and you completely ignore them. Suddenly, though, a man walks past us and the colour of his suit attracts your attention away from my t-shirt: their respective shades are very much alike, though not quite.
>
> What happens in this case is that, first, the colour of that manŠs suit became salient and then caused your attention to be redirected onto the colour of the manËsuit. But you must have first perceived the colour of the manŠs suit while you were attending to

[20] It is worth noting that this sort of phenomenon usually occurs under the following conditions. First, such shifts of attention are often triggered by novel or unexpected objects, which appear in the subjectŠs perceptual field ËPashler, 1998: 243-5Ë Second, attention-shifts are triggered by items whose features Ësuch as their colourËare well contrasted against their background ËPashler, 1998: 243Ë Third, the items triggering such shifts must be located more or less in the same area of the perceptual field as the item currently attended toË *unless the presence of such a triggering item is unexpected* ËPashler, 1998: 244Ë Fourth, whether or not a feature in the subjectŠs perceptual field can cause such an attention-shift depends in part on the subjectŠs expectation, and whether she is engaged in a search ËPashler, 1998: 244-5Ë

my t-shirt: perceiving his suit caused the attention shift. In which case, there must have been an instant where you perceived the colour of the man's suit without attending to it.

I have described three fairly intuitive examples, which suggest that there can be perception without attention. Note, though, that the claim that there is perception without attention isn't based solely on intuition: there is also some empirical evidence supporting it.

In particular, there is evidence that unattended stimuli – stimuli which are not selected by attention – can nevertheless be processed by a subject – at least to a certain extent – to the effect that she can identify – and sometimes report – some of the properties – though not all – of the unattended stimuli. Often, such evidence is based on whether the presence of unattended stimuli has an effect on how – and at what speed – subjects are able to identify and report the *attended stimuli*. For instance, the presence of distractors – such as uncued letters – on each side of the stimulus – another letter – to be identified at the point of fixation can slow down the subject's identification of that letter. This so-called 'Flanker effect' suggests that the subject identifies the distractors, even if information about them is not selected by her attention.[21]

But there is also evidence that unattended features of the whole visual scene can contribute to the way objects, which *are* selected by attention, appear to the perceiver: chromatic – or luminance – contrasts between a figure and its background, even if unattended, can contribute to the way in which the shape of that figure appears to the perceiver.[22]

[21] See, for instance, Braun and Julesz (1998); Braun and Sagi (1990). Most of the research on this topic provides evidence that what is not selectively attended can influence perception of what is. On this Flanker effect, see Pashler (1998: 59, 61-5); but see also Pashler's critical survey of research on the Stroop effect (1998: 58, 63-4); and on cases of semantic priming (1998: 60-6) as well as negative priming (1998: 67-9), which have been taken to show that there can be some processing of unattended stimuli. For an overall summary of the significance of empirical evidence that there can be perception without attention' and on whether unselected stimuli are nevertheless processed' see Pashler (1998: 94-7) and Wolfe (2000). Some of the most important conclusions are: even if (it is controversial (a) to what extent there can be perception without attention and (b) how much information about unattended 'unselected' stimuli is processed, (c) it is not controversial that subjects can process – and sometimes report – information about some – but not all – features of unselected stimuli, although (d) such an ability is eroded when the number of unattended stimuli increases.

[22] See Moore and Egeth (1997). Note that even if information about luminance and colour contrast effects is processed at the sub-personal level and contributes to determining how the visual system represents the shape of an object, such information seems to be represented in the content of subject's conscious experience too.

The three examples above also suggest that it should be possible to perceive quite specific propertiesË like particular fine-grained shades of colourË without attending to them. More importantly, such examples suggest that what is perceived without attention can be phenomenologically salientË so that it contributes to the representational content of conscious perceptual experiences. For instance, in the first example, the specific shade of red of the wall in the background of the table is salientË even if it remains unattended. It is part of the representational content of your conscious visual experience when you enter the room: the colour against which the colour of the table is differentiated. Likewise for the unattended surrounding shades of beige on the colour chart in the second example. As for the perception of the manËs suit in the third example, it seems as though it becomes phenomenologically salient *before* you attend to it: its becoming salient seems to trigger your attention-shift. Thus, it seems that what is unattended can nevertheless contribute to the subjectËs conscious experience and figure in the content of her experience. This provides some reason to accept ËP3Ë

But is this enough to convince Conceptualists to endorse ËP3Ë Presumably, relying merely on the intuitive examples above is unlikely to sway Conceptualists towards ËP3Ë However, if there is empirical evidence that there can be perception without attention, then it seems that Conceptualists had better not reject ËP3ËË at least, not out of hand and not without good reason.[23] Otherwise, such denial of ËP3Ëmight seem both *ad hoc* and to run counter to what the empirical evidence suggests.

### 11.1.4. *Inconsistency*

The three examples above all involve specific shades of colour which, it seems plausible to think, can be represented in experience even though the subjectËs visual attention is not focused upon such shades. Further, it seems possible that such specific shades are represented in a fine-grained way, even if they are not attended to. Hence, the unattended shade $f_2$ may be discriminableË and so

[23] At this point, however, one might point out that empirical evidence that there can be ËËË perception without attention is not quite the same thing as evidence suggesting that there can be ËËË*conscious* experience of *fine-grained* properties without attention. It may be that the kind of unattended perception supported by the empirical evidence is irrelevant to the concerns of Conceptualists, if it is neither conscious Ëand thus has nothing to do with the representational content of *experience*Ë, nor involves the representation of fine-grained properties. These are some of the objections I will consider in ËS11.2Ë

represented differentlyË from the shade upon which the subjectËs attention is currently directedË $f_1$.

Such a possibility spells trouble for Conceptualism and the Demonstrative Strategy. Since, by hypothesis, the subject lacks specific non-demonstrative concepts for $f_1$ and $f_2$, proposition ËP1Ërequires that she deploy distinct *demonstrative* concepts for these two shades. But now, proposition ËP2Ëentails that the perceiver must direct her attention on both shades, so that she can form distinct demonstrative concepts for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively. However, the subjectËs attention is directed on *only one* of these two shadesË proposition ËP3Ë This means that, by ËP2Ë she cannot deploy a distinct demonstrative concept for the unattended shade $f_2$. In which case, proposition ËP1Ëis false. Hence, the combination of ËP1Ë ËP2Ë and ËP3Ë is inconsistent. In particular, if ËP3Ëis true, Conceptualists cannot both endorse ËP1Ëand ËP2Ë[24]

To avoid this inconsistency, Conceptualists had better reject one of these three propositions. But which one? This is no easy choice. As we have seen, rejecting ËP1Ëis unlikely to appeal to Conceptualists, given the crucial role the Demonstrative strategy plays in their response to the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience ËAFGË Similarly with ËP2Ë the role played by sub-personal mechanisms underlying selective attention in determining the content and reference of demonstrative concepts seems crucial, if Conceptualists are to have a non-circular account of how demonstrative concepts can be fine-grained and pick out specific shades of colour. Thus, ËP2Ë is at the heart of a plausible account of demonstrative concepts, which solves both the Differentiation Problem and the Supplementation Problem, while avoiding the threat of circularity.

Rejecting ËP3Ë is the third option. Admittedly, itËs the option Conceptualists are most likely to adopt. However, as I shall argue in the next section, rejecting ËP3Ëisn'Ë really a viable option either. Not only is there evidence that the examples presented in support of ËP3Ëare quite real, but I shall also show how unsuccessful putative re-descriptions of such examples are.

At this point, though, Conceptualists might insist that there is another way out, which does not consist in rejecting ËP1Ë ËP2Ë or ËP3Ë but focuses on a possible equivocation between ËP2Ëand ËP3Ë One might try to argue that the notion of ËattentionËin ËP3Ëisn'Ë identical to the notion of ËattentionËBrewer exploits in defending ËP2Ë While the former notion of ËattentionËis one which

[24] Obviously, this problem arises only for Conceptualists: opponents of Conceptualism are likely to reject proposition ËP1Ë And so, they don'Ë face such a difficulty.

is phenomenologically salient and with which normal perceivers have some familiarity,[25] the latter could be an entirely sub-personal affair— to which perceivers have no introspective access. If so, —should raise no problem for — and — even if there can be perception without attention in the sense of —presupposed in my description of the examples offered in support of —, the kind of attention needed for —might in fact be at play in these examples too. Hence, the subjects in those examples could still deploy demonstrative concepts for the shades they don't *consciously* attend to, since deployment of such concepts might be based on a different —entirely sub-personal—kind of attention.[26]

But, as I have tried to explain earlier —, Brewer's notion of —perceptual attention—in —seems familiar enough— not something that is completely sub-personal and to which perceivers lack access entirely. To repeat, the notion of —perceptual attention—in —has the following properties: —it is a kind of *selective attention*, where information about a property *f* at a particular location is selected from information about a whole visual scene, —the information in question is processed and selected by sub-personal mechanisms, —the output of such sub-personal mechanisms involves the —highlighting—of *f* in the representational content of the subject's conscious experience.

These three properties in no way distinguish the kind of perceptual attention required in —from the kind of attention at play in — First, the three examples described in — clearly involve a kind of attention that instantiates property — In all three examples, the fact that the subject has her visual attention directed onto a particular property *f* results in conscious experience, the representational content of which includes the —highlighting—of *f*. Second, all three examples involve selective attention— property — If the subject's attention is directed onto a property *f*, then information about *f* must be selected from information about the whole visual scene. Third, this

[25] Thus, the three examples described in support of —seem to presuppose a notion of —perceptual attention—according to which it must be possible for a perceiver to have some idea —at least in most cases—as to whether or not her attention is directed upon a particular object or property. Otherwise, it's unclear why these three examples should have the intuitive appeal that they do, or why they are even relevant.

[26] For instance, in the first example —the simple case—, a sub-personal kind of attention may be directed onto the shade of the background wall, even if the subject's conscious attention is focused solely on the shade of the table.

selection of information about *f* is likely to involve some sub-personal processing of that informationË property ËiË

Hence, there is no reason to think that the notion of ËttentionËin ËP2Ë differs from the notion at play in ËP3Ë And so, there is no reason to think that the subjects in the three examples described above could nevertheless deploy demonstrative concepts for the shades they donË consciously attend to, because deployment of such concepts requires a different kind of attention.[27]

Before I address other possible responses to the argument put forward in this chapter, it seems important to insist that such an argument differs from another familiar objection raised against the Demonstrative Strategy. As we saw with PeacockeËs Supplementation Problem, some theorists distinguish between three things:

ËËthe object *o* or property *f* represented in an experience *e*.

ËiËthe content *w* of the experience *e* representing *o* or *f*.

ËiiËthe demonstrative concept *C* which picks out *o* or *f* on the basis of *w*.

On the basis of such a distinction, they argue that, in order to have a determinate contentË indeed, in order to have a content at allË demonstrative concepts must be supplemented by the representational content of perceptual experience. In other words, ËiiËdepends on ËiË

But then, the objection goes, Conceptualists cannot solve the Supplementation Problem without circularity because they identify ËiËwith

[27] Alternatively, one might object that the sub-personal mechanisms underlying selective attention need not underlie perceptual attention *only*: similar mechanisms may also be at play with different perceptual functions. Hence, if such mechanisms determine the content of demonstrative concepts, it may be that a subject could deploy such a demonstrative concept simply in virtue of the fact that sub-personal mechanisms of information-selection kick in, even if the subject doesnË in fact attend to the property picked out by her demonstrative concept. In the above example, the subject might deploy a demonstrative concept for $f_2$ because some information about $f_2$ is selected sub-personally, even if her attention is not directed onto $f_2$.

But even though Brewer appeals to such sub-personal mechanisms to account for how the content of demonstrative concepts is determined, his point surely isnË that *any* such mechanism selecting some visual information about a property *f* is sufficient to determine the content of a demonstrative concept for *f*. Otherwise, we might end up with myriads of demonstrative concepts whenever a sub-personal mechanism selects some visual information at some sub-personal level. Rather, his point must be that *only* those sub-personal mechanisms, which *play a role in selective attention* and give rise to perceptual experiences with ËighlightedËcontents, determine the content of demonstrative concepts.

ËiiË Furthermore, appeal to perceptual attention wonË help either because, such theorists assume, attention itself depends on ËiËËilan, 2001: 437; Peacocke, 1998a; 2001: 240Ë

As we have seen, however, there are other ways to account for how perceptual attention determines the content of demonstrative conceptsË without relying on ËiËthe content of experience. Indeed, one such way is exploited in BrewerËs answer to the Supplementation Problem. In contrast, the new objection advanced in this chapter grants that Conceptualists can solve the Supplementation Problem without circularity.

The problem lies elsewhere. It has to do with the possibility of perceptual experience of a property *f* without attention to *f*. It has nothing to do with the alleged dependence of demonstrative concepts on the content of experienceË a claim which appears to beg the question against Conceptualists like Brewer. Rather, given ConceptualistsËcommitments about ËaËthe role of demonstrative concepts in experience and ËbË the dependence between demonstrative concepts and perceptual attention, the suggestion is that the possibility of experience without attentionË that is, without the kind of attention presupposed in ËbËËundermines the Coherence of Conceptualism.

## 11.2. Objections and Replies

I have claimed that Conceptualism is incoherent. In this section, I review various possible responses. By showing why such responses are unsatisfactory, I hope to defend propositions ËP1Ë, ËP2Ë and ËP3Ëa little more, and warrant the claim that Conceptualists must accept all threeË in a way that makes their position inconsistent.

The responses fall into two categories. The most interesting ones attack proposition ËP3ËË the claim that it is possible to have a conscious experience of a specific property without attending to it. The second class of responses attempts to modify one of the two claimsË ËP1Ëand ËP2ËË I have attributed to Conceptualists. IË start with three versions of the first response.

### 11.2.1. *Divided Attention*

Conceptualists might argue that I have mis-described the three cases above in support of proposition ËP3Ë Perhaps, my descriptions of these cases beg the question against the ConceptualistsËaccount of experience. They could insist, for instance, that the subjects in these examples might in fact direct their attention *both* on the shade at the centre of the visual field Ëthe one which was

described as being attended to: the red table, the first shade of beige on the colour chart, the green of my t-shirtË*and* on the other shades too Ëthe ones which were alleged to be unattended: the red wall in the background, other shades of beige on the colour chart, the green of the manËs suitË After all, Conceptualists might retort, if the shades which arenËt at the centre of the subjectËs visual field are represented in the subjectËs experience, that must be because information about such shades has been extracted by the subjectËs selective attention. In other words, the subjectsËattention may be directed at more than one item at the same time.

This response seems to exploit a well-documented phenomenon in the empirical literature on perceptual attention: *divided* attention. Divided attention covers in fact a wide variety of phenomena, where subjects seem able to process information simultaneously from different sources Ët.e. different sensory modalitiesËor from many different stimuli. In such cases, the subjectËs attention seems to be focusing in parallel on more than one target at the same time. Evidence for divided attention comes from the fact that, in some situations, the amount of stimuli processed by a subject doesnËt seem to affect the speed with which she processes such stimuli. This suggests that such stimuli are processed in parallelË that a subjectËs attention can be directed on more than one stimulus at the same time Ësee Pashler, 1998: ch. 3Ë

Thus, Conceptualists might argue that, in fact, in all three cases above, the perceiverËs attention divides: it is directed not just on one shade, but also on the other shades she is experiencing at the same time.[28] In which case, proposition Ë*P*3Ëis at best unmotivatedË at worst, false. There is no good reason to think that such examples are cases of perception without attention, rather than cases of divided attention.

[28] More precisely, Conceptualists might say that, in THE SIMPLE CASE, itËs not true that the perceiver doesnËt attend to the specific shade of red of the background wall. Rather, her attention is divided between the shade of the red table in the foreground and that of the red wall in the background. Likewise in THE HARDWARE STORE CASE: the subjectËs attention is divided between the shade in the centre and some Ëbut not allËother shades on the chart.

Finally, in THE ATTENTION-SHIFT CASE, Conceptualists might claim that a better description of the case goes as follows. Before the perceiver gets to fully focus her attention on the manËs suit, she is, on this account, already attending to it. Her attention is thus divided between the colour of my t-shirt and that of the manËs suit. What happens after this is not that the subject shifts her attention from my t-shirt to the man. Rather, she stops attending to the shade of my t-shirt, but keeps attending to that of the manËs suit.

However, it seems unlikely that the three examples offered in support of ÏP3Ëare cases of divided attention. Divided attention occurs only in certain conditions. Here, it is important to keep in mind that, according to the conceptualist response under consideration, a subjectÍs perceptual attention could be directed simultaneously onto many highly specific properties Ïfor instance, all the different shades of beige on the colour chartË According to this response, the subject can deploy distinct fine-grained demonstrative concepts for all such specific properties because her perceptual attention is divided between these different properties. Hence, she can simultaneously deploy many distinct demonstrative concepts for all the specific shades represented in a fine-grained way in her experience.

The problem with this, however, is that attention does not seem to *divide* in cases involving highly similar properties Ëwhere fine-grained discriminations may be requiredË On the contrary, the evidence suggests that, when perceivers are asked to make fine-grained visual discriminations of very similar features, they cannot process information in parallelË their processing speed slows down, indicating the absence of parallel processing ÏPashler, 1998: 218Ë Hence, it seems that when fine-grained discriminations are required on the subjectÍs part, her perceptual attention doesnÍt divide. This means that, since the three cases above involve chromatic properties that are highly similar but distinct Ïand which require fine-grained discriminations, if Conceptualism is trueË, an alternative explanation of these cases in terms of divided attention is unlikely.

Therefore, though divided attention provides a natural route for Conceptualists to resist ÏP3Ë, there is some evidence suggesting that this move is unwarranted. Divided attention doesnÍt occur when subjects perform fine-grained discriminatory tasksË as they would if Conceptualism were true in the three cases used to support ÏP3Ë[29]

[29] Another problem with this response is that Conceptualists thereby commit themselves to a rather strong claim: that it is *impossible* for objects and properties represented in the content of experience to be unattended. To repeat, there is some evidence that such a claim is false. Admittedly, at this point, the empirical evidence available is scant and unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to think, for instance, that some features of a whole perceptual scene *do* figure in the content of perceptual experience, even if subjectsËvisual attention is not usually directed onto such features. For instance, it seems as though one rarely *attends* to colour contrasts or luminance contrasts in oneÍs experience: such complex relational properties arenÍt usually Ïhighlighted, it seems, in the content of oneÍs experience Ïsee note 22Ë Nevertheless, such contrasts are almost always *represented* in experience. If so, Conceptualists

11.2.2. *Colour Discrimination at the Periphery*

Another way in which Conceptualists could reject my descriptions of the three examples in support of ËP3Ëgoes like this. I have assumed that, in all three cases, it is possible that what is not attended can nevertheless be represented in *a fine-grained way* in the subjectËs experience. But Conceptualists mighty insist that, in fact, unattended shades of colour figuring in the background of experience arenËt represented in any fine-grained wayË they might even argue that such shades arenËt represented at all.

The evidence behind this sort of response is mainly physiological. It has to do with the distribution of receptor cells on the retina. While the centre of the retina ËfoveaËcontains a high density of cones Ëcells sensitive mainly to colourË with very high acuity, the periphery of the retina Ëparafovea, in contrast, consists mainly of rods Ëreceptor cells sensitive to lower light-intensity, which are more dispersed, and thus give rise to a much lower resolution. Hence, it seems, only ËfoveatedËstimuli are perceived in any great detail and specificity.[30] On this ground, many have been tempted to claim that colours perceived in the periphery of the visual field arenËt represented in any detail in experience. They may perhaps be represented as shades of determinable red or greenË but not as the specific shades they are.[31]

On this ground, Conceptualists might argue that the three examples above raise no problem for their view. The shades of colour the subject perceives without attention arenËt represented in a fine-grained way. Since ËËthe subjectËs attention isnËt directed on the unattended shades but on something else, and since ËiËthe subject is likely to direct her gaze where her attention is focused Ëso that ËiiËwhat is attended to is also ËfoveatedË, it follows that ËvË unattended shades will be experienced around the periphery of the subjectËs visual fieldË if they are experienced at all. In which case, not being ËfoveatedË, they will be represented in a very coarse-grained manner in the subjectËs experience.

Therefore, there is no need for the subject to deploy fine-grained demonstrative concepts for such shades. Non-demonstrative concepts of

must either ËaËdeny that chromatic and luminance contrasts are experienced, or ËbËinsist that such contrasts are always attended by the perceiver. Neither ËaËnor ËbËseems very plausible.

[30] I simplify greatly: for a more complex account, see in particular Findlay and Gilchrist Ë2003: 11-18Ë see also Bruce and Green Ë1985: 25Ë

[31] See, e.g., NoËË2004: ch. 2Ë

determinable colours like *RED* and *GREEN* might as well do the job. Conceptualists avoid the inconsistency with propositions ËP1Ëand ËP2ËË where ËP1Ë is specifically about fine-grained perceptual experiences of specific properties, and so is ËP2Ëin this contextË by denying that specific properties can be perceived *in a fine-grained way* without attention.

There are two problems with this response. First, the response doesnËt seem to work so well in the second caseË THE HARDWARE STORE CASE. In the way I set up the example, the subject looks at a whole display of shades of beige on a colour chart from a relatively close distance. In this situation, itËs entirely possible that most of the display is projected onto the fovea. If so, the perceiver will experience all the shades on the display in a fine-grained way, even if she doesnËt attend to all of them.[32]

More interestingly, there is evidence that perceivers can in fact experience specific shades of colour in the periphery of their visual field, and experience them in a fine-grained way. Nagi, Sanchez, and Hughes Ë990Ëhave found that subjects are able to discriminate specific colours at the periphery of their visual field just as reliably as when such shades are in the centre of their visual field. This is so, insofar as the stimuli Ëthe coloured surfacesËincrease in retinal size.

Thus, if the coloured objects at the periphery of your visual field are big enough, there is evidence that you will still be able to discriminate their colour Ëfrom other ËnfoveatedËshades in the periphery, and from the ËoveatedË shades you are attending to at the centre of your visual fieldË On the other hand, if ËnfoveatedËstimuli have the same size as those in the centre of your visual field Ëor are even smallerË, your capacity for chromatic discrimination of the former is likely to decrease. Still, provided the stimuli in the periphery increase in size, your capacity for colour discrimination will be just as good with ËnfoveatedËstimuli as it is with ËoveatedËones. In such cases, then, there is no reason to think that shades of colour perceived without attention arenËt perceptually represented in a fine-grained way.[33]

[32] The conceptualist response under consideration seems to assume a more or less perfect match between ËËwhat is unattendedË and thus in the background of experienceË and ËiËwhat is in the periphery of the visual fieldË and thus isnËt ËoveatedË The HARDWARE SHOP CASE shows that such an assumption is misguided. To repeat, what figures at the periphery of the subjectËs visual field depends on the direction of the subjectËs gaze. However, direction of attention and direction of gaze arenËt the same thing Ësee, e.g., Pashler, 1998: 38Ë

[33] Recall that the assumption here is that what is unattended in experience figures in the background of the subjectËs conscious experience and at the periphery of her visual field Ësee the previous footnoteË Conceptualists must assume that ËiËunattended shades must figure in the

And indeed, two of the examples used to defend ÏP3Ëare such that, what seems to be perceived without attention is bigger Ëand so, presumably, occupies a larger retinal sizeËthan what the subject is attending to. This is the case with the red wall in the background in THE SIMPLE CASE, as well as with the green suit of the man in THE ATTENTION-SHIFT CASE.

Again, then, conceptualist attempts to resist ÏP3Ëappear to be misguided. The evidence shows that what coloured surfaces in the periphery of the visual field can be experienced in a fine-grained way. If such shades are unattended as in some of the examples above, the evidence is consistent with the claim that such specific shades of colour can be experienced in a fine-grained way, even if the subjectË attention is not directed onto them, provided that they are big enough.

11.2.3. *Sub-personal Processing*

A third response targeting ÏP3Ëexploits the idea that what is *not* perceptually attended does not figure in the content of a subjectË *conscious* experience. Rather, information about what is unattended is processed *only* sub-personally. According to this response, then, Conceptualists agree that the subject does not attend to the specific shades in the background of her experience Ëthe red wall, other shades of beige, the green shade of the manË suitË But since information about such shades isnË extracted by the subjectË selective attention, it never makes its way into the content of her conscious experienceË or so Conceptualists might argue. In which case, neither ÏP1Ënor ÏP2Ëneed apply.

This response raises many questionsË not least about the notion of Ësub-personalËprocessing of information, and what contrast it is supposed to mark with the notion of Ëconscious experienceË[34] I take it that this kind of response proceeds at least under the following assumption:

periphery of the subjectË visual field and that ËËshades of colour cannot be represented in a fine-grained way if they figure in the periphery of the subjectË visual field. My second response denies ÏbË while the first undermines ÏaË

[34] Does the notion of the Ësub-personalËstand for some psychological representation which ÏiËis in principle inaccessible to consciousness, or for one which ÏiËisnË accessed, but can be accessible to consciousness? I will not try to answer these rather difficult questions Ësee e.g. Davies 1989, 1995, 2000Ë There might of course be more than one kind of sub-personal processing, and the question then is which kind is supposed to be at play in these sorts of cases.

***Assumption 1***

if information about objects and properties in the background of experience is processed only sub-personally, then such information does not figure in the content of the subject's *conscious* experience.

This is part of what it means for a psychological process to be 'sub-personal', I suppose.

However, in each of the three cases used to motivate 'P3', it seems as though specific shades of colour in the background of experience nevertheless contributes to the *phenomenology* of the subject's *conscious* experience, and does so in a substantial way. Thus, consider THE SIMPLE CASE again: the perceiver consciously perceives the background wall and its colour, even if her attention isn't directed on the wall. In fact, the specific red shade of the wall in the background contributes essentially to how the table appears to her. Suppose that the wall was in fact the very same shade of red as the table. In such a case, the table would look exactly the same as its background, and wouldn't be perceptually differentiated from it.[35]

To see that, in general, the background of experience 'what isn't attended or noticed' essentially contributes to the *phenomenology* of conscious experience, consider again the following thought-experiment 'Dainton, 2000: 32'. Suppose a scientist gave you a pill with the surprising effect that it erases the background of your experience entirely from your phenomenal consciousness. Presumably, you would still be able to see the red table in front of you' or my green t-shirt' when your perceptual attention was focused on them. But that would be all: the periphery 'or boundary' of your visual field would exactly coincide with the silhouette of the table, or that of my t-shirt' or only with those parts of your visual field your attention is focused upon. This is how, supposedly, it would be like to have a conscious visual experience lacking a background.

Clearly, however, our experiences aren't like that. What isn't attended by the perceiver 'and thus figures in the background of her experience' nevertheless contributes to the phenomenology of her experience. This means that information about elements in the background nevertheless figures in the content of experience. This follows from another assumption granted by

[35] Assuming that, in this particular case, the table and the wall have exactly the same texture, and that no luminance contrast distinguishes them.

Conceptualists Ïsee §7.4Ë concerning the relation between the content of conscious experience and its phenomenology:

> ***Assumption 2***
> if perception of an object or property contributes to the phenomenology of oneÏs conscious experience, then it figures in the representational content of that experience Ïand vice versaË

In other words, phenomenology is determined by the content of conscious experience. Or as Brewer puts it Ïsee also McDowell, 1998: 441Ë

> [...] all phenomenology is a matter of the mode of presentation of certain states of affairs to a person, not anything distinct from and independent of such representations. ÏBrewer, 1999: 156Ë

Thus, if the background of experience makes a difference to its phenomenology, information about elements in that background must figure in the content of a subjectÏs conscious experience. In turn, the combination of assumptions 1 and 2 entails that information which is sub-personally processed ought to be phenomenologically inert: if it does not figure in the content of a conscious experience, it does not contribute to its phenomenology.

In all three examples of perception without attention, the subject appears to perceive specific colour shades, which she does not attend to. Nevertheless, perception of such shades seems to contribute to the phenomenology of her experience in some way. Given the two assumptions outlined above Ïand to which Conceptualists seem to subscribeË, I conclude that information about such shades cannot be processed merely sub-personally, but must figure in the content of the subjectÏs conscious experience.

Thus, another attempt to resist the examples used to motivate ÏP3Ëfails. Conceptualists might try to argue that if the subjectÏs attention isnÏt directed onto some feature of her visual field, then that feature simply cannot be represented in her conscious experience. But we have seen that, plausibly, what isnÏt attended contributes to the phenomenology of experienceË which means that it must be represented in conscious experience after all.

To recapitulate: as we have seen, there are at least three ways in which Conceptualists might try to resist ÏP3Ë They might argue that:

> ÏËthe examples allegedly supporting ÏP3ËarenÏt instances of perception without attention, because more than one specific shade can in fact be simultaneously attended in such cases Ïdivided attentionË

ËiiËunattended shadesË which are thus Ëunfoveated ËË cannot be represented in a fine-grained way in experienceË in which case ËP1Ëand ËP2Ëneed not apply to experiences of such shades.

ËiiiËunattended shades do not figure in the content of the subjectËs conscious experience, because information about them is processed only sub-personallyË and so, ËP1Ëand ËP2Ëdon Ë apply either.

All three attempts fail, however. With respect to ËË attention doesn Ë divide with highly similar shades requiring fine-grained discriminations.[36] As for ËiiË large enough Ëunfoveated Ëcoloured surfaces can be represented in a fine-grained way. *Contra* ËiiiË what figures in the background of experience is nevertheless phenomenologically salient, and soË *modulo* certain assumptions apparently endorsed by ConceptualistsË figures in the content of conscious experience.

I will now consider a different type of response to the threat of incoherence raised against Conceptualism by the combination of ËP1Ë ËP2Ëand ËP3Ë Such responses don Ë really attack my descriptions of the three cases in support of ËP3Ë Rather, they try to resist ËP1Ëor ËP2Ëby focusing on how subjects deploy concepts in experience Ë§11.2.4Ë and which concepts they deploy Ë§11.2.5Ë

### 11.2.4. *Passive Deployment of Concepts*

A first version of this kind of response might go like this: the three examples of perception without attention raise no problem for Conceptualism because concepts for objects and properties figuring in the background of experience are deployed in experience in a *passive* way. Thus, the response goes, whereas the subjectËs attention needs to be directed onto a particular shade if she deploys a demonstrative concept for such a shade, she can *passively* deploy another concept for the unattended shades in the background of her experience.[37]

[36] Here, the point is: ËaËif there is evidence that there can be perception without attention Ësee §11.1.3Ë ËbËthere is no evidence that attention can divide when the subjectËs attention is directed onto fine-grained features. Hence, there is no evidence suggesting that, in the examples advanced in support of ËP3Ë a perceiver could be simultaneously attending to all the relevant shades of colour which seem to be represented in her experience.

[37] Perhaps, it is part of the response Brewer Ë999: 240-1Ëmakes to the charge that the representational content of experience is richer in information than what the perceiver conceptualises demonstratively. However, it seems to me that, in this passage, Brewer is essentially conceding the point that the richer information figuring in the background of

This response is puzzling. It relies on a contrast between 'active' and 'passive' deployment of concepts, which is hard to get a clear handle upon (see §4.3.1, note 15). More importantly, it is unclear what the response does. Perhaps, it is meant to be a modification of (P2) though it is true that the *active* deployment of demonstrative concepts in experience requires perceptual attention, deployment of concepts can be *passive* as when one conceptualises some *unattended* object or property in the background of one's experience.

But why think that the active/passive distinction, whatever it exactly amounts to, captures the difference between (i) the deployment of demonstrative concepts for attended objects and properties, and (ii) the deployment of concepts without attention? In fact, whatever it means to deploy a concept 'passively', it seems as though the deployment of a demonstrative concept the content of which is determined by the direction of one's attention can be just as 'passive' as the deployment of a concept without attention. After all, to have one's attention directed upon an object or property in one's visual field need not require any reflective or voluntary control on the subject's part.

Another difficulty is one of coherence. As I pointed out earlier (§4.3.1, note 15), McDowell (1994: 10-1) and Brewer (1999: 185-6) initially claimed that deployment of concepts in experience is *passive* in order to mark a contrast between the deployment of concepts in experience ('passive deployment') and the deployment of concepts in thoughts and beliefs ('active deployment'). Brewer (1999: 185-6) himself insists that the deployment of demonstrative concepts in experience is passive in such a way.

If so, the very same distinction cannot be used again to mark another contrast between the active deployment of demonstrative concepts in the foreground of one's experience, and passive deployment of concepts in the background of experience. Irrespective of the obscurity of this notion of 'passive' conceptual deployment, this is surely one use too many of such a distinction.

### 11.2.5. *Alternative Concepts*

The previous response focused on the *way* in which concepts can be deployed in experience. But this response seems to miss the point. The main problem

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experience is not conceptualised (at least, not demonstratively). Brewer seems to suggest that he can bite the bullet, since he is mainly interested in the demonstrative conceptual content of experience, which, according to him, provides reasons for beliefs.

with the combination of ‘P1’, ‘P2’, and ‘P3’ has to do with *which* concepts are deployed in experience for specific properties represented in experience. In virtue of their commitment to ‘P1’and ‘P2’, Conceptualists cannot say that *demonstrative concepts* are deployed for such properties, when the subject’s attention isn’t directed upon them. Nor can they say that fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts are deployed in the background of experience. As we have seen, Conceptualists seemed to grant in their response to ‘AFG’that normal perceivers might not possess such concepts.[38]

Conceptualists might say that subjects conceptualise unattended specific shades in a different way. But how? What other sorts of concepts are there? One possible suggestion is that the subject conceptualises unattended shades in the following way: as *INTERESTING!*, or *SIMILAR BUT NOT QUITE THE SAME COLOUR AS THIS SHADE*’ or any variation on this theme. The point of the suggestion, I take it, is that the subject deploys neither a demonstrative colour concept, nor a non-demonstrative colour concept, for the shade in question. She must conceptualise it in an altogether different way.[39]

But this is precisely why the suggestion seems to fail. First, it doesn’t help much with THE SIMPLE CASE. The fact that the specific shade of the background wall is represented as *INTERESTING* or as *SIMILAR BUT DISTINCT* fails to explain how that shade is *chromatically* discriminable from the shade of the table in the foreground. More precisely, if the subject is able to discriminate these two shades, it seems that their difference ought to be represented in her experience. And for those difference to be perceptually represented, it seems that the two shades of red must themselves be represented’ not merely the

[38] Recently, Alva No’ 2004: 194’has argued that normal subjects might in fact have very fine-grained concepts for all the specific shades of colour there are. The thought is that colour concepts are ‘formulaic’ in the following sense: ‘’ normal subjects, according to No’, understand the three dimensions of colour space ‘hue, saturation, illumination’, so that, ‘i’ being able to grasp certain ‘colour formulae’, normal subject can exploit ‘structural uniformities’which allow them to locate any newly encountered shade on the colour solid, and ‘ii’, hence, to form a concept for such a shade. I’m not too sure how such a proposal is supposed to work exactly. For one thing, it’s unclear that normal subjects are really able to locate any newly encountered shade on the colour solid ‘that is, without also seeing the colour solid itself’ Indeed, it’s not even clear that normal perceivers are able to tell between shades of colour that differ in terms of saturation from shades seen under different illuminations. On this ground, it seems implausible that normal perceivers are able to accurately locate any specific colour on the colour solid. More importantly, it’s not terribly clear how this would help a subject to deploy a concept for a newly encountered shade.

[39] Thanks to Caspar Hare for this suggestion.

fact that they are different, or interesting. Hence, if Conceptualism is true, the subject ought to deploy distinct fine-grained colour concepts for such shades.[40]

The problem for Conceptualists is to explain how these differences are matched by different colour concepts deployed by the perceiver. ItЁs hard to see how Conceptualists could solve such a difficulty without appealing to fine-grained colour concepts, or to demonstrative colour concepts.

## 11.3. Conclusion

I have argued that Conceptualism is inconsistent. The inconsistency arises from the conjunction of three propositions:

ЁP1Ё if a normal perceiver *S* lacks fine-grained non-demonstrative concepts for highly specific properties $f_1$ and $f_2$, then *S* can experience $f_1$ and $f_2$ differently *only if S* deploys distinct *demonstrative* concepts $C_1$ and $C_2$ for $f_1$ and $f_2$ respectively.

ЁP2Ё a normal perceiver can deploy in experience a distinct demonstrative concept *C* for a specific property *f only if* her perceptual attention is directed onto *f* while deploying *C*.

ЁP3Ё it is possible that a normal perceiver experiences a specific property *f* without her perceptual attention being directed upon *f*.

Proposition ЁP3Ёis inconsistent with the combination of propositions ЁP1Ёand ЁP2Ё how can one have a conscious perceptual experience which represents a specific shade of colour, if one doesnЁt direct oneЁs attention upon that shade, and is thus unable to deploy a demonstrative concept for it?

I have tried to show that there is little hope for Conceptualists to resist such an objection. Given this inconsistent triad, Conceptualists are faced with the dilemma of deciding which proposition to reject. They cannot reject proposition ЁP1Ё, it seems, on pain of abandoning a very plausible responseЁ the Demonstrative StrategyЁ to the Argument from the Fineness

[40] Likewise with THE HARDWARE STORE EXAMPLE. In this case, the subject experiences a variety of different shades of beige in addition to the specific shade upon which her attention is directed. Presumably, she can discriminate such shades from one another Ёor most of them, at leastЁ This means that most of the shades, as well as the particular chromatic differences between them, are represented in her experience. But then, concepts such as *INTERESTING* or *SIMILAR BUT DISTINCT* wonЁt help to represent the different ways in which all these shades of beige differ from one anotherЁ they fail to capture the particular *chromatic* differences between such shades.

of Grain of Experience ËAFGË They canË reject proposition ËP2Ëeither: as we have seen, Conceptualists have to have a good account of how the demonstrative concepts mentioned in ËP1Ë can have distinct fine-grained contents and pick out the specific shades of colour that they do. Without ËP2Ë, Conceptualists have no good answer to this question. In which case, the Demonstrative Strategy doesnË fare any better.

I have argued that denying ËP3Ëdoesnë work either. For it is not so easy to dismiss the examples advanced in support of ËP3Ë Even if these three examples could be described differently, there is good evidence that our visual experiences can represent properties that are not selected by the subjectËs perceptual attention. And there is no evidence suggesting that unattended properties cannot be represented in a fine-grained way. If so, either Conceptualism is false, or its proponents had better start looking for a new solution to ËAFGË Neither option, I take it, should seem very appealing to advocates of Conceptualism.

The objection developed in this chapter reveals a certain tension in the conceptualist account of experienceË and in particular, in the various responses Conceptualists advance to the objections discussed in chapter 9 and 10. The tension owes to the fact that Conceptualists grant that experiences are both fine-grained and rich in information. To account for the fineness of grain of experience, they appeal to demonstrative concepts. In order to explain how such concepts can have fine-grained contents, Conceptualists like Brewer resort to perceptual attention. But experiences are rich in information too: and given such rich information, it doesnË seem plausible that oneËs perceptual attention can be directed upon all the objects, properties, relations, which are represented in oneËs experience.

This fact, together with the ConceptualistsËcommitment to ËP1Ëand ËP2Ë, provides a counter-example to the conceptualist supervenience thesis ËCË Hence, when many specific shades are experienced at the same time, the perceiverËs attention cannot be directed onto all such shades at the same time. This means that the perceiver is unable to deploy enough distinct demonstrative concepts simultaneously. So, there is more fine-grained chromatic information contained in experience than the subject is able to demonstratively conceptualise. In other words, there can be representational differences in experience without corresponding conceptual differences. In which case, Conceptualism is false.

CHAPTER 12

# *Concluding Remarks*

So, if one is to have an experience representing Skippy the kangaroo, is it really necessary to possess and deploy some concept applicable to that kangaroo? And does deployment of such a concept really determine how the kangaroo is represented in oneËs experience? We now have at least some reasons, I think, to suspect that the answer is no. No silver bullet against Conceptualism, admittedly; but some considerations suggesting, not only that there is no good argument supporting Conceptualism, but also that such a doctrine is likely to get into serious trouble.

After a brief summary of the material discussed in previous chapters, IËl outline some of the main lessons which, I think, can be drawn from the discussion, and explain why the balance is not tilting in favour of Conceptualism.

## 12.1. Summary

The point of this thesis was threefold. First, to clarify the terms of the dispute between Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists, by identifying a minimal set of claims that ËËcapture exactly how Conceptualists think of the representational content of perceptual experiences, and ËiËserve to make sense of the disagreement between Conceptualists and their opponents over the nature of perceptual content Ëchapters 1 to 5Ë

I have suggested that Conceptualism is best characterised in terms of a supervenience or determination thesisË thesis ËCË the representational content of experience is determined by Ësupervenes uponËthe conceptual capacities a subject exercises in experience Ën particular, capacities to identify and discriminate the objects and properties thus experiencedË One of the many advantages of thesis ËCËis its relative neutrality regarding different theories of content and conceptsË hence, its ability to answer the various sceptical worries raised in chapter 2. It also provides a clearË though still incompleteË specification of Conceptualism, and helps to explain the two different ways in which Non-conceptualists reject ËCË

The second point was to compare and evaluate the various arguments Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists throw at one another, and to keep track of the score. I have outlined three different ways in which Brewer's Epistemic Argument fails to motivate Conceptualism (chapter 6); and highlighted a variety of problems with some minor arguments sometimes advanced in favour of Conceptualism (chapter 7). In this respect, there seems to be no good argument supporting Conceptualism. This is not to say, though, that the traditional arguments advanced against Conceptualism fare any better (chapters 8 to 10).

As I tried to show, a certain type of argument, Consequence Arguments, are far from compelling. As for the two main Phenomenological Arguments raised against Conceptualism (the FG and the IR), both fail for very similar reasons: both arguments rely on a crucial but unmotivated premise. Thus, claims to the effect that the possession of demonstrative concepts is governed by some Re-identification Constraint, not only seem to be false, but conflate different notions of re-identification (chapter 9). And the thought that there are limitations on how many concepts a normal subject can deploy in experience, the Bridging Thesis, remains unmotivated (chapter 10). Despite the failure of such arguments, some of the phenomena these arguments exploit nevertheless contain the seeds of a more powerful objection against Conceptualism.

The third point of the thesis was to present a new (and hopefully more successful) argument against Conceptualism, one that cannot be resisted so easily as the other objections reviewed in earlier chapters (chapter 11). I suggested that conceptualist responses to arguments like the FG and the IR are in fact inconsistent. In particular, I argued that such responses clash with the plausible claim that there can be perception without attention, and then proceeded to defend such a claim against various possible conceptualist responses. Though this may not provide us with a definite refutation of Conceptualism, it puts some pressure on its proponents, either to (re)vise their response to the Argument from the Fineness of Grain of Experience, to

[1] Here, I haven't considered further attempts to turn the fineness of grain of experience into a more successful argument. Two particularly noteworthy developments include Sean Kelly's (2001a) appeal to the phenomenon of colour constancy, as well as Dokic and Pacherie's (2001) suggestion that the demonstrative strategy is undermined by the non-transitivity of indiscriminability. I show why the latter doesn't work in my (2005), and an apparently good response to Kelly can be found in Noë (2004: §6.8).

ËiË modify their account of demonstrative concepts, or to ËiiË provide a detailed and empirically plausible account of perceptual attention. Either way, there is some substantial work to be done by advocates of Conceptualism if they are to neutralise the threat of incoherence outlined in the previous chapter.

### 12.2. Score Keeping

A careful look at the various arguments and counter-arguments that constitute the dispute between Conceptualists and their opponents might give the impression that such a dispute is in a dire situation. Most arguments advanced on both sides seem to fail in a rather bad way: either some of the premises of these arguments are unmotivated, or they appear to simply beg the question. Thus, if it certainly seems as though Conceptualists and Non-conceptualists are talking past one another, one might even start to suspect the worst: that the dispute is on the verge of collapse, since no substantive argument for either view seems available. And so, even if the terms of the dispute can be made clearer *via* thesis ËCË this may not suffice to make such a disagreement over the nature of the representational content of experience a substantial philosophical disagreement.

Such an impression is not entirely warranted, however, if the argument introduced in chapter 11 is along the right lines. Irrespective of whether such an argument ultimately works, it has one crucial advantage. The argument relies only on ËaËclaims explicitly endorsed by Conceptualists, and on ËbËthe claim that there can be perception without attention. The latter is not only empirically plausible, but it is also neutral, at least in principle, between Conceptualists and their critics. If it werenË for the complex way in which Conceptualists must develop the Demonstrative Strategy to resolve some of the questions raised by such a strategy, Conceptualists would be unlikely to have any qualms with ËbË Indeed, the possibility that there is perception without attention seems entirely compatible with thesis ËCË

The dilemma presented in the last chapter questions the overall coherence of the conceptualist view. As I have tried to argue, Conceptualists rightly make use of demonstrative concepts to answer ËAFGË this is by far the best answer available against the worry that experiences are more fine-grained than our concepts. But itË also true that Brewer is essentially correct in focusing on the role perceptual attention plays in determining the reference of such demonstrative concepts. Again, this seems to present the best resolution of the

Differentiation and Supplementation Problems in a non-circular way. On the other hand, the possibility that there is perception without attention is not easily dismissed: while there is empirical evidence supporting such a possibility, there is also evidence undermining various putative attempts to do away with the relevant examples of perception without attention on the ConceptualistsË behalf.

Hence, all things considered, this constitutes an apparently serious challenge for advocates of Conceptualism. Either way, something will have to give: ËËthe Demonstrative Strategy, ËËthe very plausible conceptualist account of demonstrative concepts in terms of perceptual attention, or ËËthe possibility of perception without attention. The main problem for Conceptualists is to find a way out that still addresses the other objections raised by their opponents, but also remains coherent and plausible.[2]

It remains an open question whether Conceptualists can ultimately answer such a challenge. But I doubt it. Conceptualism, as I pointed out at the beginning, is a rather strong view. Not only does it ËËidentify perceptual experiences with some kind of thought Ëadmittedly, not beliefs or judgementsË but it also entails that ËiËperceivers must deploy concepts for absolutely everything thatË represented in their experiences, and ËiiËin such a way that matches the specific ways in which things appear in particular experiences. Hence, Conceptualism is a strong view at least in the sense it ascribes to perceptual experiences Ëand their contentsËmany of the properties typically associated with thoughts Ëand their contentsËË but also in the modal sense captured in ËiË

On the other hand, Conceptualists agree that perceptual experiences differ from thoughts in a variety of ways.[3] This creates a certain tension within Conceptualism: Conceptualists must draw a fine line between those properties which perceptual experiences have in common with other kinds of thoughts,

[2] By which I mean at least that it should not be overtly committed to empirically falsified claims.

[3] For instance, perceptual experiences differ phenomenologically from conscious thoughts and judgements, as we have seen. Experiences have distinctive phenomenal properties, associated with each of the sensory modalitiesË the way it is like to have a visual experience of a table is very different from the way it is like to have a tactile experience of the same table. Typical instances of conscious mental states with conceptual content Ëlike conscious judgements and thoughtsË on the other hand, seem to have hardly any distinctive phenomenology: and if they do, it is quite different from the phenomenology of perceptual experiences. Perceptual experiences and conscious thoughts and judgements also have distinct functional roles.

and properties which differentiate them from thoughts. But they must also ensure that the instantiation of these two kinds of properties in experience is relatively independent. Otherwise, itÏs unclear how experiences can differ from thoughts in respect of one set of properties but be identical with thoughts in respect of another set of properties, if one set of properties determines the other.[4]

Non-conceptualists, in contrast, have it easy. The reason is simple. Non-conceptualism is essentially a negative view: the denial of thesis ÏCË In this respect, Non-conceptualists arenÏt committed to so strong a set of claims as Conceptualists are. Hence, they are less likely to face the sort of challenge outlined above. This is so, not just because Non-conceptualism is mainly a negative thesis, but because the denial of ÏCËis in fact compatible with a wider variety of possible accounts of the content and phenomenology of experience, of the relationship between perceptual content and perceptual attention, etc.[5] In this respect, a commitment to Non-conceptualism carries definite advantage.

A similar point holds about whatever initial motivations may underlie the intuitive appeal of such views.[6] Again, being an essentially negative thesis,

[4] For instance, if the phenomenology of conscious mental states is determined by their contents. As we have seen at various points, Conceptualists like McDowell and Brewer seem to endorse this kind of intentionalist thesis. ÏBut, in fact, the tension would still arise, even if Conceptualists endorsed instead the converse view that phenomenology determines contentÏ

[5] Of course, this means that Non-conceptualists have their own explanatory tasks to meet. If they reject the claim that perceptual content is determined by concepts, they owe us some positive account of such content. Similarly, if they reject the ConceptualistsÏaccount of perceptual reasons, Non-conceptualists need to have a positive account of the epistemic role of experiences and how they perform that role. But if Non-conceptualists do indeed have to meet such explanatory tasks, there is no indication that doing so will be particularly problematic. See, for instance, Dretske Ï995ÏOr Tye Ï995, 2000Ïfor positive accounts of perceptual content along non-conceptualist lines. Or see Burge Ï003Ïand Peacocke Ï004a: ch. 3Ïfor attempts to explain how perceptual experiences justify beliefs. Admittedly, such accounts do face some difficulties and objections, but nothing of the magnitude of the challenges that seem to threaten Conceptualism. In particular, there is no indication that the internal coherence of such accounts is in any way unstable.

[6] Here I mean the sort of intuitive considerations which might motivate one to endorse Conceptualism or Non-conceptualism in a pre-theoretical way, as opposed to more developed arguments designed to establish the truth of such views. For instance, BrewerÏs epistemic argument Ïchapter 6Ïcan hardly count as a pre-theoretical motivation for Conceptualism, given that it relies so heavily on rather complex and controversial claims about reasons. Furthermore, since such an argument seems to be preaching only to the converted, as we have seen, there must

Non-conceptualism is primarily motivated by the sorts of difficulties apparently facing Conceptualism, and by the various phenomenological considerations outlined above Ëthe fineness of grain of experience, its rich information, the phenomenological differences between perceptual experiences and other conscious states with conceptual contentË Of course, these considerations do not entail the truth of Non-conceptualism. But they strongly suggest that, unlike advocates of Conceptualism, Non-conceptualists can easily account for the representational content of perceptual experiences in a way that is entirely compatible with other distinctive properties of such experiences.

As for Conceptualism, itË not entirely clear what makes such a view intuitively appealing. To repeat, Conceptualism is a strong view. And many considerations that might seem to count in its favour are in fact too weak. For instance, it often seems as though what motivates proponents of Conceptualism is the impression Ëbased on introspection of oneË own thoughts and experiencesËthat the sort of conceptual identification typically at play in conscious thought and judgementË as in the judgement that there is a computer in the room, which identifies the object of the thought as falling under the concept *COMPUTER*Ë is also manifest in perceptual experience Ësuch as an experience of that same computerË

However, given that conceptual thoughts obviously accompany many of our perceptual experiences, introspective considerations of this kind at best show that there is some conceptual identification *usually* going on when we experience objects and properties.[7] They do not show ËËthat *perceptual experiences*Ë as opposed to the thoughts accompanying themË are the *loci* of

be something else which can serve to make Conceptualism appear as an intuitively plausible conception of experience. I have largely ignored such considerations in previous chapters. The main reason for this omission is that there is hardly any textual evidence in support of the considerations outlined here, which are pure speculation on my part, except for one or two remarks appearing here and there.

[7] However, Non-conceptualists might also insist that introspection is misleading: when we introspect our own experiences, we inevitably form thoughts about the properties of the experience introspected, including its content and the objects and properties figuring in that content. Hence, any experience we try to introspect seems to come with conceptual identification of the objects and properties represented by that experience. In other words, the impression that perceptual experiences involve conceptual identification is simply a by-product of how we introspect experiences, not something we actually introspect.

such conceptual identification, nor ËiË that experiences *necessarily* require conceptual identification of this kind.[8]

In this respect, then, itËs hard to see what pre-theoretical considerations would be strong enough to support the modal claims Conceptualists are committed to. The main lesson of this thesis, however, is that Conceptualists must further develop their account of experience in more detail, not just for the sake of having a complete account of experience Ëas seems to be the case for Non-conceptualistsË, but in order to avoid ending up with an unstable account of experience.

[8] Another more theoretically-loaded consideration in favour of Conceptualism Ësee §7.4Ëis the view that perceptual experiences are propositional attitudes, not only in the sense that we typically report experiences in terms of propositional attitudes reports such as ËS sees that *p*Ë, but also in the sense that, if experiences really have contents, itËs hard not to think of such contents as propositionsË the very same kind of contents that conceptual thoughts have. One problem with this is that even if all mental content is propositional, the fact that the propositional content of conscious thoughts and judgements is also conceptual need not entail that all propositional content is conceptual.

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