

Conceptualism and the Myth of the Given

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Content Conceptualism is the view that all representational content, including the content of perceptual experiences, is conceptual content. The main motivation for this view is that it alone intelligibly explains how perceptual experiences justify beliefs. Underlying this position is what I will call ‘Epistemic Conceptualism’, according to which only conceptual contents can provide reasons for, and thus justify, beliefs. McDowell’s commitment to some such position comes out quite clearly in his discussion of the ‘Myth of the Given’, which he characterizes as ‘the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justification or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere’ (McDowell 1994: 7). In order to disabuse of this idea, he assures us that ‘We cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities’ (McDowell 1994: 7). Bill Brewer has also argued for Content Conceptualism on this basis—though his position has changed in important ways since. (See Brewer, 2006)

In what follows, I will argue that Epistemic Conceptualism is flawed. In particular, I will argue that we cannot account entirely for the reason-giving role of experiences in terms of their conceptual content, or the conceptual content of other mental states to which they are related in reason-giving ways. We must, rather, credit them with something besides or in addition to conceptual content if we are to explain the distinctive contribution they make to the epistemic status of beliefs.

I.

One of the most important motivations for Content Conceptualism is that it alone intelligibly accounts for the fact that perceptual experiences justify beliefs. One of the most lucid arguments for Content Conceptualism is due to Brewer (2005: 218), and runs as follows:

- (1) Sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs.
 - (2) Sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs only if they have conceptual content.
- (CC) Therefore, sense experiential states have conceptual content.

Before explaining exactly how and whether this argument supports Content Conceptualism, let me examine each of the premises in turn.

The first thing to note about Brewer's first premise is that it is incompatible with a purely externalist account of the relation between experience and belief, according to which experiences provide warrant for beliefs, but that such warrant stems solely from the fact that experiences reliably cause true beliefs, that one's perceptual mechanisms function properly, or some other property of the experience which is inaccessible to the subject himself. (See Brewer 1999: section 4.1) This stems from Brewer's conception of what it is to be a reason. Reasons 'must be the subject's *own* reasons, which figure as such *from his point of view*' (Brewer 1999: 151). A proposition that a subject cannot even think, for lack of the appropriate conceptual skills, or a fact of which the subject is completely unaware, might be *a* reason for him to believe what he does, but it cannot be *his reason for* believing what he does.

This strong internalist constraint on the sorts of candidates that are relevant for the assessment of a subject's rationality is compatible with the thesis that things besides internally

available contents can positively affect the epistemic status of a belief, provided we can distinguish an assessment of a subject's rationality—her internal epistemic situation—from an assessment of her overall epistemic situation. Some externalists themselves would likely acknowledge such a distinction: since acting in accordance with one's epistemic duties or believing rationally is not sufficient for warrant, on some externalist accounts, then whatever further external conditions are required for warrant cannot be necessary for fulfilling one's epistemic duties or believing rationally. But even on the stronger reading of the first premise engendered by Brewer's conception of reasons, it is quite plausible. Conscious perceptual experiences do not merely reliably produce true beliefs—though they may do that too, and their doing so (or not) might make a drastic contribution to a subject's overall epistemic situation—but typically also make it rational for a subject to believe certain things that would not be rational to believe in their absence.

The first premise might be also, however, be challenged from an internalist perspective. First, and most obviously, it is incompatible with the view that no experiences provide reasons for any beliefs. Though such a view appears to have been endorsed by some (Davidson, 1983), being incompatible with a view like that is hardly a strike against a theory.

A more interesting challenge is that not all sense experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs. More specifically, there are various forms of *isolation* that might prevent an experience from performing any valuable epistemic role.¹ One such form of isolation is isolation from other experiences which present the same object, such as when one merely gets a passing glance at an object. Such isolation very often does compromise the epistemic value of an experience. However, experimental data suggest that subjects are able to discern the character of objects even when their perceptual contact with them is very fleeting. In the Sperling

experiment, for instance, subjects routinely get four or five letters on a 3x4 grid right, despite only seeing the grid for around 50 msec. Such experiences may not impart much justification to empirical beliefs, but they do seem to impart some.

A second sort of isolation is that in which an experience does not cohere with those experiences that precede and follow it. For instance, if I am perceptually attending to the layout of a chess board in front of me, and then, despite no movement on my part, have a brief visual experience as of a lion leaping towards me, and then resume my perception of the chessboard, the isolated experience of the lion would not seem to provide any reason for supposing that what it presents exists. This sort of isolation is more radical than the first, since it is not only isolated from other experiences which present the same object, but, in virtue of the disparity between its content and that of the experiences before and after it, is isolated from the experiences which present me with a coherent *world*. Arguably the contents of such sense experiences fail to provide one with reasons for belief.² And one could even imagine the entire flow of conscious experience becoming incoherent and mutually isolated in this way, in which case arguably none of those sense experiences' contents would provide reasons for empirical beliefs.

A third form of isolation that might undermine the epistemic worth of experience, or at least of an individual's token experiences, is isolation from the relevant conceptual capacities required to form beliefs about the objects and properties that an experience presents. If someone lacks the concept 'monkey', for instance, then there is a class of beliefs—all of those whose contents contain the concept 'monkey'—which that person cannot have supported by experiences, including experiences of monkeys. A token experience can only provide reasons for beliefs when the individual whose experiences they are has the ability to form the beliefs that that experience supports. If, therefore, a creature completely lacked concepts, but did have sense

experiences, those sense experiences could not provide it with reasons for beliefs. Needless to say, the possibility of there being such creatures is not at all obvious, and it would beg all the main questions against the conceptualist to assume such a possibility.

A fourth sort of isolation is isolation from a relevant set of background beliefs. Someone might, to borrow an example from Sellars, have the same sense experience I do when seeing a blue necktie under a certain sort of lighting, but fail to have a reason for believing that it is blue, because he does not know, as I do, that blue surfaces under these lighting conditions look the way green things do in sunlight. (See Sellars, 1963: 142 ff.) Indeed, it might be argued along such lines that he would also not have any reason for believing that it's green in the absence of background beliefs concerning the nature of colors and the conditions that are conducive to viewing them, and that similar points hold for every attribution of a physical property to an object. On such a view, experiences by themselves can never provide epistemic justification.

A defense of premise (1) might take a variety of forms. One might concede that a particular form of isolation does strip experience of its epistemic value. One might concede that such forms of isolation have at least some impact on the epistemic value of experience, but never completely remove it. One might simply dismiss the possibility of any one of the proposed forms of isolation. One might argue that any of the forms of isolation discussed above disqualify something from being a sense experience, and so don't constitute counterexamples to (1). Discussing all of these issues falls far beyond the scope of the present paper. What is clear is that the notion of a sensory experience requires substantial clarification if (1) is to be adequately assessed. In what follows, I will confine my attention primarily to the familiar sorts of sensory experiences that we enjoy, which rarely suffer from the first form of isolation, and virtually never suffer from the other three. That is, I will consider a variation on premise (1), according to

which most, and perhaps all, sense experiences which by and large cohere with other sense experiences, and are enjoyed by creatures with a suitably robust body of concepts and background beliefs, and who are capable of relating those experiences to that body of concepts and beliefs, provide reasons for empirical beliefs.

The second premise of Brewer's argument is much more difficult to evaluate. In the first place, it is not obvious what it means, since the term 'content' is one that hardly seems to have a standard meaning. Sometimes the term 'content' seems to be used interchangeably with the term 'object'. Jesse Prinz, for instance, says that 'those things to which [concepts] refer, I call their intentional contents' (2002: 4). Gendler and Hawthorne write, 'Some contents, it seems, we perceive *directly* (say, that such and such is red)' (2006:11).³

This terminological redundancy is harmless, however, compared to the straightforwardly equivocal uses of the term elsewhere in the literature. Christopher Peacocke, for instance, writes,

Henceforth I use the phrase 'the content of experience' to cover not only which objects, properties and relations are perceived, but also the ways in which they are perceived. (Peacocke 2001: 241)

And this despite the fact that, first, the things perceived and the ways in which they are perceived are categorially different things, and, secondly, they are differently related to the perceiving mind. A thing such as a tree is an individual, has bark, and might be blowin' in the wind, whereas the way a tree looks is a property, is shareable by many other things, including non-trees, doesn't have bark, and isn't even the kind of thing that can blow in the wind. And when one perceives a tree, the object is typically the tree, not the way the tree is perceived.

Even McDowell seems to use the term 'content' to designate fundamentally different sorts of entities.

That things are thus and so is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement... So it is conceptual content. But *that things are thus and so* is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of that layout of the world: it is how things are. (McDowell 1994: 26)

Here it seems that the content of a true or veridical thought—that things are thus and so—is identical with the object of the thought, namely a certain state of affairs. McDowell also, however, claims that ‘[C]onceptual contents that are passively received in experience bear on, or are about ... the world’ (McDowell 1994: 39). Here contents are depicted as bearers of aboutness, something which could not be said of just any object or state of affairs that a mental state is about. Neither a cat, nor a mat, nor the state of affairs consisting of a cat’s being on a mat, is about anything, while the contents of mental states intentionally directed upon them are.

Despite these equivocations, it seems fairly clear that the majority of those who make use of the notion of content, particularly those taking their bearings from Frege (or, in a different tradition, Brentano, Twardowski, and Husserl), intend something distinct from both (a) the object of a thought and (b) the individual mental state whose content it is. The content of a mental state, unlike its object, is something that essentially represents, or is about, something else, and which represents its object in some determinate manner. Such things as (Fregean) propositions or Thoughts, senses (*Sinne*), and (non-Fregean) concepts are among the most conspicuous entities making up the content zoo. Such things as non-mental states of affairs, Russellian propositions, individual physical objects, and non-intentional properties are not, since they do not essentially possess the property of being about anything. And though little in what follows hangs on just how contents are related to the mental acts whose contents they are, it seems obvious, despite Frege’s talk of ‘grasping’ senses, that intentionality is not it. When I believe that

Socrates is wise, what I am thinking about is Socrates's being wise, not the Fregean proposition, or its constituent concepts, by whose means I think it.⁴ We think, directly, about more than senses and thoughts.

Brewer defines a *conceptual* content as one that 'is characterizable 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 (e.g. inductive or abductive)' (Brewer 2001: 218; see also Brewer 1999: 149). If one holds, as Peacocke does and as we ought, that 'Concepts are *constituents* of those intentional contents which can be the complete, truth-evaluable, contents of judgments and belief' (Peacocke, 2001, 243, my italics), then the first condition must be correct, for attributing a content to someone without attributing to her the concepts that are its constituents has as much likelihood of being true as saying that a person has one hundred dollars and denying that she has twenty.

There are important consequences in drawing the distinction between contents and objects in the (fairly standard) way that I have done. For one, we can distinguish the properties of being conceptual and being conceptualized. Contents, mental states, and other bearers of intentionality can be conceptual, but such things as trees (a conceptual tree?), a tree's being forty feet tall, and other non-intentional entities cannot. More importantly, it opens up a potential gap between the conclusion of Brewer's argument and Content Conceptualism. For while it seems obvious (to me) that if the objects of an experience are conceptualized, then the experience itself has conceptual content, it does not follow that it has *only* conceptual content. In order to get from (CC) to Content Conceptualism, we would require the additional premise that if an experience has conceptual content, then it does not also have any other sort of content. But that

is far from evident, and the view that experiences contain both kinds of content has notable adherents. (Peacocke, 1992: 90-1)

Still, one could reject Content Conceptualism and hold that, even if experiences do have nonconceptual content, such content cannot play any reason-giving role. Such contents would be, from the epistemologist's point of view, epiphenomenal. Rather, one might maintain, the only kinds of reason-giving contents are conceptual contents; one might, that is, endorse Epistemic Conceptualism. While Epistemic Conceptualism doesn't entail Content Conceptualism, it certainly does motivate such a position, and is what underlies the all-important second premise of the argument. Thus Brewer writes, 'sense experiential states provide reasons for empirical beliefs *only in virtue of* their appropriate relations with propositions suitably inferentially related to the contents of the belief in question'.⁵ The 'appropriate relations' in question are broadly logical relations. And it is *only* in virtue of a mental state's propositional content that it stands in such relations. 'Giving reasons', he writes, 'involves identifying certain relevant propositions—those contents which figure as premise and conclusions of inferences explicitly articulating the reasoning involved' (Brewer 2005, 219). And presumably *being* a reason consists in being something that could be a premise or conclusion of an inference.⁶ McDowell appears to share this commitment. It is a hopeless, albeit seductive, mistake to 'extend the scope of justificatory relations outside the conceptual sphere' (McDowell, 1994, 7). If this is right, then whatever further properties an experience might have, above and beyond its possession of its conceptual content, must be strictly irrelevant from a purely epistemic point of view.

Something appreciably like this thesis has been recognized and criticized by a variety of philosophers.⁷ Pollock calls it the 'doxastic assumption', which he characterizes as 'the

assumption that justifiability of a cognizer's belief is a function of what beliefs she holds. Nothing but beliefs can enter into the determination of justification' (Pollock 2005: 310-1). Insofar as Brewer, McDowell, and other conceptualists insist that perceptual states contribute to the epistemic status of beliefs, they would surely bristle at being saddled with the view that only *beliefs* can make a positive contribution to the epistemic status of a given belief. But if we replace the term 'belief' with 'mental state with propositional (conceptual) content' in Pollock's characterization, so as to include perceptual states (and possibly others, including rational intuition), then it does seem, more or less, to capture their view.

Although Pollock and others more or less capture the principle underlying both coherentism and conceptualism, a more precise formulation is in order. I will refer to it as the 'Conceptualist Principle', according to which:

CP: The (egocentric or internal) epistemic status of a subject S's mental state M is determined by (i) M's propositional content and (ii) the propositional contents of those mental states M', M'', et al., if any, that are epistemically prior to M, where a mental state M' is epistemically prior to M if and only if S justifies, or is disposed to justify, the content of M on the basis of the content of M'.⁸

Note that the first condition alone is obviously not sufficient, since the propositional content of a (non-foundational) mental state is in many cases insufficient to determine its epistemic status. My belief that quarks have charm does not have the same epistemic status as a typical physicist's, despite having the same propositional content. The most plausible way, it seems to me, of accounting for this difference in a way that is consistent with the conceptualist demand that only conceptual contents occupy the space of reasons is in terms of other propositionally contentful mental states on whose basis the physicist justifies his belief. Instead, then, of

absurdly construing the egocentric epistemic status of a mental state as supervening upon its content's place within the space of reasons, construed as the subject-independent logical space of propositions, CP regards it as supervening upon those portions of that space that the subject in question grasps.

One final word is in order about this principle, and that is that it is intended to apply only to mental states with mind-to-world direction of fit—states, that is, which have the responsibility of depicting how the world is. (See Searle, 1983: 7-8) This excludes such states as hopes and desires.⁹ It also excludes imagination. Unlike judgment, belief, memory, and perception, imagination does not represent its objects as existing in one spatio-temporal, *actual* world. This is why, in the case of any two believed or perceived events, it makes sense to ask which occurred first, or how distant from one another they were. But it does not make sense in the case of any two imagined events; it's no one's place to wonder whether Frodo left Rivendell before or after Luke blew up the Death Star.

II.

An important and obvious consequence of CP is this: if two mental states M_1 and M_2 differ in their egocentric epistemic status, then either (i) they differ in their propositional content, or (ii) there is some mental state M' that is epistemically prior to one but not the other. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case. My argument will consist in showing that differences in perceptual experience can generate differences in the epistemic status of a subject's belief, even though those differences are not reducible to differences in either the propositional content of those experiences, or the propositional contents of any of the subject's epistemically prior mental states.

To motivate this claim, let's begin with McDowell's assertion 'In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge' (McDowell, 1994: 9). An important addendum to this is that one can also, in many cases, judge that things are thus and so without actually perceptually taking in that they are. I can judge that my table is messy without actually perceiving it to be so. Granted, one may require some perceptual contact with an object or property in order to acquire the ability to think about it in the first place. But once one acquires that ability, in many cases, perceptual contact is no longer necessary. That concepts make thinking-in-absence possible partially explains the long-standing distinction between concepts and intuitions; the latter have a presentational character that the former do not. Moreover, this ability is closely, perhaps constitutively, tied to another recognizably conceptual ability, the ability to understand many sorts of linguistic expressions that we do understand. Understanding the sentence 'snow is white', for instance, does not require that one be in the presence of any snow, or anything white. McDowell himself suggests that this sort of distance from immediate experience is at least a sufficient condition for something's counting as a conceptual capacity. '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'.¹⁰

McDowell and Brewer both suggest that this sort of distance from perceptual experience is a necessary condition of something's counting as a conceptual content as well. Speaking of demonstrative concepts like 'that shade', McDowell writes,

We need to be careful about what sort of conceptual capacity this is. We had better not think it can be exercised only when the instance that it is supposed to enable its possessor to embrace in thought is available for

use as a sample in giving linguistic expression to it. That would cast doubt

on its being recognizable as a conceptual capacity at all. (McDowell, 1994: 57)

On McDowell's view, then, a conceptual capacity must be such that, even if it must be acquired by means of experience, it can be exercised in the perceptual absence of the object that it bears upon. Conceptual capacities, and the contents that are in play when they are exercised, must in some way be detachable from perceptual experiences of the objects that they are about. Let us refer to this as the 'Detachability Thesis':

DT: C is a conceptual content if and only if it can serve as the content of a mental state M in which the relevant objects, properties, and/or states of affairs that C is about are not perceptually given or present in M.

Brewer seems to endorse something similar when, speaking of a demonstrative content 'that_A shade', writes that 'this must be a concept which can be employed to some extent, and however briefly, in the absence of the sample A itself...' (Brewer, 1999: 175).

That conceptual contents are the sorts of contents that can be 'grasped' even in the intuitive absence of the objects they are about is one very helpful way of thinking about them. It certainly meshes with the historical contrast between 'concepts' and 'intuitions'. At the very least, it's a very helpful characterization of *some* kind of content which, in virtue of this remarkable property, deserves rather special consideration. But given this principle, Content Conceptualism may seem hopeless. For if perceiving the objects of C (in a certain way) is not necessary to be in a mental state with C as its content, then being in a mental state with C as its content is not sufficient to be in mental state in which one perceives the objects of C, in which case Content Conceptualism surely fails to provide an adequate assay of the contents of

experience. For how could one claim to have distilled the essence of experiential content by appealing to contents that may or may not be experiential?

This argument only works, however, on the assumption that differences in mental states must be accounted for in terms of their *contents*. But there is a ready and historically prominent alternative, often neglected by those arguing for the existence of nonconceptual content, and that is to explain the character of perceptual states not in terms of content at all, but in terms of their *objects*. This, as it happens, is Brewer's current position, and in light of his arguments for it, positing nonconceptual content is hardly a move of first resort.¹¹

I don't wish to pursue the plausibility of that theory here, however. What matters for present purposes is that this move does not provide any help for Epistemic Conceptualism. For even if we can account for some of the obvious phenomenological differences between merely thinking about and experiencing something along these lines, we cannot account for the undeniable fact that perceptual states frequently contribute to the epistemic status of a subject's beliefs in a way that a mere thought with the same conceptual content does not. If, for instance, we take a given noetic structure, zap some of the experiential states, and replace them with non-experiential states with the same conceptual content, we will alter it in radical, and often damning, ways. For instance, suppose that Jones believes that it has recently rained on the basis of his perception that Oak Street is wet, and his belief that if Oak Street is wet, then it has recently rained. Now suppose we zap his perception and replace it with a mere belief with the same conceptual content. In doing so, we also effectively annihilate his justification for believing that it has recently rained.

What is it about Jones's being in a *perceptual* state that explains this difference between his epistemic condition pre- and post-zap? Whatever explains the special role played by

perception, it must, if Epistemic Conceptualism is correct, be some feature of the perceptual state's *content*. And this means that the bare fact that it is a perceptual state cannot explain it, since, for all we know, the difference between perceptual experiences and non-perceptual thoughts might be a difference in psychological mode rather than intentional content. (See Searle, 1983: 6) Similarly, the fact that Jones is passive with respect to his perceptual experience cannot explain it, since passivity, while a feature of a perceptual state, is not part of its content. Nor is the fact that there exists a reliable causal connection between perceptual states of the type Jones enjoys and states of affairs of the type he perceives a suitable candidate, since that fact is not part of the content of the state, nor is it something of which the subject need be aware.

Another way of bringing out this challenge to the conceptualist position is to ask: why does basing one's belief that *p* upon a perception that *p* count as a sound epistemic policy, while basing one's belief that *p* upon another belief that *p* does not? Merely thinking the same thought twice does not lead one closer to knowledge. But how is that not what we're doing if the version of Conceptualism we're now considering is true? The challenge here is not just for the conceptualist to explain the rather obvious phenomenal and phenomenological differences between perception and belief, but to explain which of those differences is epistemically relevant and why.

The conceptualist, especially one with direct-realist tendencies, might claim that what makes the difference here is that in perception, the perceived state of affairs *itself* enters into the (subject's) space of reasons. McDowell seems, at times, to hold a position like this; consider, for instance, his claim that 'that things are thus and so' can be both a content *and* a layout of the world. (McDowell, 1994: 26) But, again, many layouts of the world just cannot be contents at all. A wet street, or a street's being wet, can certainly be the *object* of thought and perception,

and can be what concepts are *about*, but it isn't itself a Fregean Thought, nor is it composed of senses or (non-Fregean) concepts, nor is it about anything, as all concepts and wholes composed of them are, nor, finally, is it something that can function as a premise or conclusion of an argument. But if isn't a content, it can't, at least by Epistemic Conceptualism's lights, be a reason.

III.

What the epistemic conceptualist must do, then, is close the distance between conceptual content and perceptual experience by holding that there are certain conceptual contents that can only be had in perceptual experiences; that is, he must abandon DT. Brewer's account in *Perception and Reason* comes close to doing that.¹² According to Brewer's position, what distinguishes perceptual consciousness from other sorts is the presence of 'essentially experiential' object- and instantiation-dependent demonstrative contents, contents that manage to pick out some unique object in a region of space that is perceptually present to the perceiver and is identified by him relative to himself.¹³ Such perceptual demonstrative contents are only expressible, initially at least, as 'That thing (there) is thus' (Brewer 1999: 186). Later, through habituation, a thinker will be able to move from such exclusively demonstrative knowledge to 'increasingly detached, non-demonstrative, linguistically articulated and categorized perceptual knowledge', for instance that *a* is *F*. (Brewer 1999: 244)

On pain of endorsing DT, we cannot, as Brewer seems to suggest (1999: 244-5), construe the move from perceptual-demonstrative contents to detached, non-demonstrative contents as a *replacement* of the former with the latter. Rather, we must treat the perceptual-demonstratives as not only essentially experiential, but also regard experiences, or at least the sort of experiences

capable of providing reasons for belief, as essentially containing perceptual-demonstrative contents. This is plausible anyway. I look out a window and, on the basis of what I see, judge that Oak Street is wet. Unbeknownst to me, I'm looking at some other street, Maple Street, say. What is the object of my perceptual state? Surely not Oak Street; I don't perceive that at all. But I do perceive something, and I perceive that it is wet. And that means that there must be some content of my perceptual state that successfully picks out the wet object that I do in fact perceive. Now the conceptual content (or 'Idea', in Evans's terminology) 'Maple Street' cannot be it, since, first, I may not even possess the concept 'Maple Street' and yet still see it, and, secondly, the statement 'that = Maple Street' is informative, as is plain from the fact that it is something that I would, in my deluded but coherent state, deny. The content in question is the content of the perceptual-demonstrative 'that'. And my mistake consists in identifying the perceptually given referent of 'that' with the referent of 'Oak Street'. This sort of mistake is one to which almost all perceptual verifications of propositions whose constituent contents are detachable from perceptual experience are liable; for almost any perceptual-demonstrative content 'that', and for any detachable conceptual content 'a', an identity statement 'that = a' will be an informative one, provided it is not, as perhaps in an initial baptism, stipulated to be true. Verifying something like 'Oak Street is wet' perceptually involves, minimally, two thoughts: 'that is wet' and 'that = Oak Street', where 'that' is a perceptual-demonstrative content.

One problem for this account is that if it is successful, it can only explain the epistemic relevance of non-hallucinatory sense experiences. The reason is that the perceptual demonstrative contents in question are object- and instantiation-dependent, and so cannot serve as the contents of states in which the objects and property-instances which seem to be perceived do not exist. For anyone who thinks that for any veridical perceptual experience, there is an

introspectively indiscriminable hallucinatory counterpart, and who also thinks that a unified account must be given of a veridical experience and its nonveridical counterpart, the present account will not do. On such a non-disjunctive account, whatever explains the epistemic force of hallucinations must also be what explains the epistemic force of veridical perceptions, and obviously object- and instantiation-dependent demonstrative content cannot be it. Naturally Brewer and McDowell would not admit that a unified account of either the nature or the epistemic force of perceptual and hallucinatory states must or can be given. Rather, both endorse some brand of disjunctivism, according to which hallucinatory states do not belong to a common specific natural kind. (See Martin, 2006: 361) But this cannot be the end of the matter, since even if hallucinatory states don't share a common nature with perceptions, the epistemic contribution they make to beliefs is not nothing, and is potentially far greater than the epistemic contribution made by a mere non-perceptual belief. A vivid and convincing hallucination that one's book is on the table gives one more of a reason for thinking it's on the table than merely believing that it is on the table, and so there must be some feature of the hallucination over and above the conceptual content that it shares with a belief that explains this.

I suspect that the account we're considering could proceed along the following lines: just as the nature of hallucinatory states consists in their being subjectively indiscriminable from perceptual states, without actually sharing the same nature as them, so what explains their reason-giving force is that they are indiscriminable from states with object- and instantiation-dependent demonstrative contents, without actually possessing such contents. Hallucinatory states derive whatever epistemic force they possess in virtue of being indistinguishable from states with object- and instantiation-dependent demonstrative content, but there is no positive

feature that they possess, such as having a distinctive sort of (nonconceptual) content, that makes them play whatever reason-giving part they do.

To my mind, that account has all of the virtues of disjunctivism itself, which are considerable. It also possesses all the flaws of disjunctivism, which also appear considerable. (See A.D. Smith, 2002: Chapter 8 for a good discussion.) But let us suppose, charitably, that any such problems can be met. Then, the account goes, we can readily explain the difference between Smith's pre- and post-zap epistemic condition. For Jones's perceptual state essentially involves identifying a publicly specified object, Oak Street, with a perspectively specified object, *that* (street), and a publicly specified property, being wet, with a perspectively specified property, being *thus*.¹⁴ Jones's act of perceptually taking in that Oak Street is wet, then, also involves thinking that *that* = Oak Street and *being thus* = being wet. Now since the demonstratives occurring in these thoughts are essentially experiential, Jones post-zap is not in a position even to entertain such thoughts. Nor is he in a mental state that is indiscriminable from one with such contents. And so this case does not present a counterexample to CP after all, since we have found essentially experiential conceptual contents that Jones entertains in his pre-zap state that could not possibly be entertained in his post-zap state.

And yet I don't think this solution works either. For one thing, in characterizing such contents as essentially experiential, we are in effect helping ourselves to an antecedent notion of experience, not characterizing experience itself in terms of an antecedent notion of conceptual content. One reason for thinking so is that there is an explanatory asymmetry between having an experience and having demonstrative thoughts like 'that is thus'. As Heck (2000) points out, what *explains* the fact that my mental state has the content 'that is thus' is the fact that I perceive that object. But my being in a state whose content is 'that is thus' does not seem to explain why

I perceive it. I could perceive that object and fail to think ‘that is thus’. Think, for a moment, of all the objects and properties and relations you currently perceive, and how few ‘that is thus’ (or ‘that and that are related thus and so’) style thoughts you are currently entertaining. Perhaps all *attentive* perceptual experiences give rise to such thoughts. But perceptually attending to x itself presupposes the perceptual givenness of x. McDowell himself surely suggests that such an asymmetry exists. ‘In the throes of an experience of the kind that putatively transcends one’s conceptual powers... one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience, by uttering a phrase like ‘that shade’, in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample’ (McDowell, 1994: 56-7). McDowell does not say, and rightly so, that the demonstrative *is* the presence of the sample, or that it exploits itself, or that the presence of the sample exploits the demonstrative. The presence of the sample and the demonstrative reference to it seem, plainly, two different things.

Even if this challenge were met, there is a powerful objection to the position very much like the argument from the previous section: perceptual states themselves can vary in their reason-giving force despite having the same perceptual-demonstrative content. Perceptual-demonstrative reference to objective spatial particulars, which we undoubtedly do achieve in normal attentive experiences, depends on much more than the fact that the object is located within the field of a subject’s perceptual consciousness, or that it is causally responsible for the sense-experiences that a subject enjoys. Rather, it involves at least some understanding on the subject’s part that the object could be or could have been perceived from other perspectives. This understanding may take the form of knowing-that, but may also take the form of knowing-how, and manifest itself, not in the form of verbalizable beliefs, but in such things as the ability to keep track of an object over time, and to recognize it as the same thing through varying

perspectives on it. Every experience of a spatial object discloses its object partially, and this partiality is normally, and perhaps must be, experienced as such.¹⁵ But for a thing to be capable of being seen from various perspectives just is for there to be other possible perceptual experiences of that object which differ from one another qualitatively, which reveal more or fewer parts or sides of the thing in question, or reveal the object more or less clearly and distinctly. In the case of paradigmatically material entities and their properties, different perceptions can differ from one another along any of these dimensions. Even experiential conceptual contents rich enough to pick out determinate properties can vary in phenomenologically transparent ways; for any given shade S, there is more than just one way that S can appear. And so it is false that a demonstrative like ‘that shade’, which is fine-grained enough to single out a determinate shade, is as determinate as the *experience of* that shade. *Experiences of* are, in the case of all objects which can be perceived from more than a single point of view—i.e. everything physical—always more fine-grained than can possibly be captured merely by specifying *that* they are of what they are of.

Perceptual-demonstratives can serve as the conceptual contents of mental states that differ in phenomenologically obvious ways. And in at least some cases, these ways of differing account for differences in the contribution such acts make to an agent’s internal epistemic situation. As I move around a typical basketball, for instance, I get different perspectives on the very same thing. In doing so, I discover with increasing certainty that *that* = a basketball, and that *being thus* = being orange, and so become increasingly certain that the basketball is orange. The epistemic status of my belief that the basketball is orange increases without any change in the propositional content of the perceptual acts that are epistemically prior to it. Moreover, this increase in warrant is not explained by the fact that I am thinking ‘that is thus’, ‘that = a

basketball’, and ‘being thus = being orange’ repeatedly, since I could do that without increasing the epistemic status of my belief that the basketball is orange. I can, for instance, think ‘that is thus’ and so forth repeatedly without taking up different vantage points on the ball. But the reason-giving content of this pointless series of mental acts does not have the same reason-giving content as the series in which I take up different points of view on the same ball. Whatever it is that explains the epistemic force of the first series of perceptual experiences, then, cannot be the propositional contents of its constituent acts alone, since they share that with the constituent acts of the second, pointless series. And if that is right—if, that is, the reason-giving force of individual perceptual states or series of perceptual states can differ despite having the same conceptual content—then CP must be false.

One might object that the previous example merely establishes is that the reference (to an object) of the object-demonstrative ‘that’ can remain identical across experiences that differ. This does not, however, entail that those experiences must have the same conceptual content, since it does not follow from this that the predicational demonstrative ‘thus’ also remains identical in content. Brewer has made just this objection.¹⁶ Suppose that some portion of the basketball is partially obscured by a baseball bat, and then, moments later, someone removes the bat to expose the previously occluded portion of the ball’s surface. The two propositional contents, ‘That₁ is thus₁’ and ‘That₂ is thus₂’, on my view, are, or at least could be, identical. Brewer readily admits that the object-demonstratives ‘that₁’ and ‘that₂’ are identical; each refers to the ball, rather than the strictly perceived portion of it, much less an appearance of it. The predicational demonstratives ‘thus₁’ and ‘thus₂’, however, are distinct, since the latter attributes a property to the bat-shaped region of the ball while the former does not.

There are two problems with Brewer's response. The first is that if a property, such as the color orange, is perceptually present to one and referred to by means of the predicational demonstrative 'thus', one should be able to ascribe that property by means of that predicational demonstrative to any object about which one can think. For instance, in the presence of the orange basketball, one should be able not only to think 'that (the basketball) is thus', but also such things as 'oranges are thus', 'Smith's hair is thus', 'the other ball I saw was also thus', and so forth. This follows from the plausible thesis that conceptual contents obey Evans's Generality Constraint, according to which a thinker capable of thinking both *Fa* and *Gb* is also, perhaps provided that doing so does not involve any category mistakes, capable of thinking *Fb* and *Ga*.¹⁷ Ascribing the property that is perceptually present to the whole ball, including the occluded and hidden portions, should, then, pose no problem.

Secondly, even if we grant Brewer's point, we can devise examples that illustrate the same point but are not subject to this objection. For instance, we can compare single experiences of an object rather than series of experiences of an object. I may see an orange basketball in abnormal lighting from a considerable distance and think 'that is thus', 'that = a basketball', and 'being thus = being orange'. I may also see that same basketball in sunlight from a distance of a few feet, and have precisely the same thoughts. In the latter case, my belief that that is an orange basketball has more warrant than in the former case, despite the fact that it has the same propositional content, and is grounded on epistemically prior mental states with the same propositional content, as in the former case. We can also imagine two experiences of a circular shadow, all of whose parts are plainly in view, being such that in one case it is more evident that being thus = being circular than it is in the other. Here there are no parts manifest in one

experience that are not manifest in the other since, unlike a basketball, the shadow has no parts hidden from view.

IV.

A more promising response to the above argument is to grant that the *references* of both the object- and predicational-demonstratives remain identical across different perceptual experiences, but that their *senses* do not. So, for instance, when one sees an orange basketball from some distance, and then sees it from up close, the demonstrative thoughts associated with the sentences ‘That₁ is thus₁’ and ‘That₂ is thus₂’ may not be the same Thoughts, since their constituents senses may differ. Senses are, after all, individuated on the basis of what Evans calls the ‘Intuitive Criterion of Difference’, according to which ‘the thought associated with one sentence S as its sense must be different from the thought associated with another sentence S’ as its sense, if it is possible for someone to understand both sentences at a given time while coherently taking different attitudes towards them...’ (Evans, 1982, 18-19). Given this way of individuating senses, we can be sure that the thoughts associated with ‘That₁ is thus₁’ and ‘That₂ is thus₂’ differ if those thoughts differ in their epistemic status, or if otherwise identical Thoughts involving those constituents differ from one another in their epistemic status. Now according to my argument, this must be the case. For I am supposing that the epistemic status of ‘That basketball is orange’ differs when it is seen from up close than from when it is seen from far off. So the thoughts associated with at least one of the pairs of sentences

- (a) ‘That₁ is thus₁’ and ‘That₂ is thus₂’,
- (b) ‘That₁ = a basketball’ and ‘That₂ = a basketball’, or
- (c) ‘Being thus₁ = being orange’ and ‘Being thus₂ = being orange’

differ in their epistemic status. Insofar as the senses of the detachable contents ‘a basketball’ and ‘being orange’ remain constant, at least one of these pairs of statements must be such that the demonstrative contained in the first element has a different sense than the corresponding demonstrative contained in the second. But if this is true in either of cases (b) or (c), then it must also be true in case (a), since the sense of a thought is a function of the sense of its parts. And if, finally, two thoughts have the same conceptual content if and only if they have the same sense, then we can be sure that the two thoughts expressed in (a) differ in their conceptual content.

This response depends on two controversial claims. The first, with which I will not and do not take issue, is that perceptual demonstratives have senses at all. The second, which is not at all obvious, is that conceptual contents are individuated as finely as senses. First, if sense is *just whatever* accounts for a thought’s cognitive value, it will turn out trivially true that all differences in cognitive value entail differences in sense. But without an independent notion of conceptual content, it remains an open question whether senses are conceptual contents, or whether they, in at least some cases, are intuitive or nonconceptual contents—a possibility which we are surely invited to consider in light of Frege’s characterization of senses as ‘modes of givenness’, notwithstanding his own animosity towards such ‘psychological’ beasts like intuitions.

Secondly, the identification of senses, thus construed, with conceptual contents is certainly wrong if we suppose that conceptual contents are identical with linguistic meanings. For material objects, just like oneself, are typically given to one via modes of presentation in ways that differ from those in which they are, at a time, given to others. And so if we individuate senses so finely that a different sense corresponds to each way in which a material object is presented, then, when you and I view the same object at the same time, our perceptual-

demonstrative thoughts ‘that is thus’ must, in many cases, differ in sense. But does an utterance of ‘that is thus’ *mean* something different for each of us? If so, then we do not understand the same thing, which seems plainly wrong. But if not, then we cannot identify sense and linguistic meaning, and so cannot identify conceptual content with both.

I am not at all sure exactly what to say about the relationship between sense, conceptual content, and linguistic meaning, and so don’t have any decisive argument against (or for) the premise in question. McDowell and Evans have argued that linguistic communication does not, as is commonly assumed, require the interlocutors to share the very same thoughts. (McDowell, 1984: 290; Evans, 1982: 315-6) This may be right, but the foregoing considerations do bring out how the notion of conceptual content hovers uneasily between the evidential property of sense and the semantic property of meaning. Furthermore, while linguistic communication may not require the interlocutors to share anything as fine-grained as Fregean thoughts, entering into a common ‘space of reasons’ does. In order for you to evaluate my reasons for believing what I do, it is not sufficient that you find your way, willy-nilly, to the same referents that I speak about. That might be sufficient for communication, but does not enable you to adopt my epistemic point of view, or to appreciate how things hang together from my perspective. But if a significant portion of every subject’s reasons are private, then the space of reasons can hardly be construed along Sellars’s lines, that is, as the space of ‘justifying and being able to justify what one says’ (Sellars, 1963: 169). To the extent that each person attaches a private, incommunicable sense to demonstratives like ‘that’ and ‘thus’, each occupies his own space of reasons. The admission of such contents as justifiers of beliefs constitutes, I think, a rather long stride in the direction of that position occupied by advocates of ‘the given’.

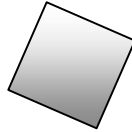
Perhaps the most serious problem with the argument above, however, is that it does not follow that two thoughts differ simply because their epistemic status, for an agent, differs. Rather, according to the Intuitive Criterion, their status must differ for an agent at the same time. Someone can easily and coherently believe something at t_1 and reject it at t_2 —the disposition to do that, under the appropriate conditions, is a necessary condition of someone's thinking qualifying as coherent at all. Insofar as each of the pairs of thoughts expressed in (a)—(c) are supposed to correspond with a single agent's seeing of the ball from different points of view, they cannot occur at the same time. But then their differing in their epistemic status does not entail that they are different thoughts.

On the contrary, there is reason to think that the first member of each pair of thoughts expressed in (a)—(c) does have the same sense as the second. One argument that they do comes from Evans's discussion of dynamic Fregean thoughts. On the atomistic view Evans opposes, it is impossible for someone to associate the same thoughts with sentences containing temporal indexicals at different times. On this view, the thought expressed by 'Today is rainy', uttered yesterday, necessarily differs from the thought 'Yesterday was rainy', uttered today. A subject who assents to both sentences does not, on this view, have a persisting belief, but a succession of related beliefs. But, Evans argues, if this is right, then each of the beliefs must be a coherent unit of thought unto itself. But this seems plainly wrong: 'No one can be ascribed at t a belief with the content 'It is now ϕ '... who does not have the propensity, as time goes on, to form beliefs with the content 'It was ϕ just a moment ago', 'It was ϕ earlier this morning'... etc.' (Evans, 1982: 194). So, according to Evans, we ought to treat the thoughts associated with yesterday's utterance of 'Today is rainy' and today's utterance of 'Yesterday was rainy' as cross-sections of one persisting, dynamic thought—and this, notably, despite the fact that 'Today is rainy' might

have been more evident yesterday than ‘Yesterday was rainy’ is today, and that one can have coherently affirmed the former while denying the latter.

A related point holds in the case of thoughts concerning individuals that are given through a continuous series of perceptual experiences. On the atomistic conception, each momentary thought about an object in such a series must be a full-fledged thought unto itself, independently of any capacity on the part of the subject to perform other mental acts directed upon that object. However, argues Evans, this is not the case; the ability to think about a perceptually given object depends upon one’s ability to ‘keep track of an object in a visual array over time’ (Evans, 1982: 195). More generally, to have a thought about a perceptually given, enduring physical object at a time depends upon having a set of dispositions to treat other experiences, at different times and with different phenomenal characters, as revelatory of the same thing. In order to think ‘That basketball is orange’ or even ‘That is thus’ at a time, where ‘that’ designates a physical object, one must possess an ability that manifests itself, when it does, only over time. (Evans, 1982: 195) And while the way in which the object presents itself will often differ at each moment of a continuous perceptual experience of it, we can treat these as abstract moments of a single dynamic mode of presentation. As Evans puts it, ‘the *way of thinking of an object* to which the general Fregean conception of sense directs us is, in the case of a dynamic Fregean thought, a *way of keeping track of an object*’ (Evans, 1982: 196). And the same point, if it holds of physical objects, also holds of many physical properties: to be credited with having thoughts about a particular instance of a color or shape, for instance, one must have the capacity to keep track of that property instance over time, and despite variations in the phenomenal character of one’s experience of it.

To illustrate this, suppose a subject perceives a square tile at t_1 , and forms the belief that it is square. Underwriting this belief are the following thoughts, expressible as: (a) 'That₁ is thus₁', (b) 'That₁ = a tile', and (c) 'Being thus₁ = being square'. His perspective on the object is such that it appears like this:



Keeping the object in view and as the object of his attentive regard, he moves himself, in a span of just a couple of seconds, into position so that the tile looks like this:



He is more confident in his belief that the tile is square than he was before, on the basis of beliefs expressible as (a) 'That₂ is thus₂', (b) 'That₂ = a tile', and (c) 'Being thus₂ = being square'. Now are the thoughts that underwrite his belief that the tile is square at t_2 different from those that underwrote it at t_1 ? If so, then at least some of the constituent sense of the beliefs expressed as 'That₁ is thus₁' and 'That₂ is thus₂' must differ. But how, exactly, do they differ? The subject must, if he is to be credited with thinking of that tile and that spatial property, realize that he is viewing the same object and the same property at t_2 as he did at t_1 . It is, we might say, part of the very sense of the latter phase of the perceptual experience that it is a presentation of the very same thing that was presented at an earlier phase. Or again, manifesting itself in various ways, from various points of view at different times, just as it does, is *the* mode of presentation of the square tile.

It seems to me that one could object to the foregoing account along the following lines: thinking about a perceptually given physical object or property cannot require keeping track of it

by means of dynamic Fregean thoughts. For sense just is, on one helpful understanding of it, something the difference in which is necessary and sufficient to render statements or thoughts asserting the identity of one thing with another informative. (See Campbell, 2002: 84) Therefore, anyone who keeps track of an object from t_1 to t_2 by means of a dynamic Fregean thought ought to find it *evident* that the object presented at t_2 is the same as the one presented at t_1 . But there are plainly cases in which someone is aware of an object A at t_1 , and again at t_2 , without finding it evident that the object he was aware of at t_1 is the same as the one he is aware of at t_2 . Even in the case above, surely someone ought to be credited with having thought about the property of being thus_1 , even if it were not evident to him that it is the same property as thus_2 —even if, say, it were an open question to him whether the tile had changed shape. Therefore, while thinking about a perceptually given object might require having the ability to keep track of it, this cannot, in all cases, require that one do so by means of dynamic Fregean thoughts.

I think this objection is a sound one. What it doesn't show, however, is that there are not cases in which a subject is capable of keeping track of an object or property by means of dynamic Fregean thoughts. But this does seem perfectly possible. A subject may very well, and subjects like us probably will, find it evident that the property of being thus_1 is identical with the property of being thus_2 . In doing so, the sense of his thought will of course differ from those of someone who does not find it evident, but this merely provides one of countless examples in which the same thing can be referred to by means of different senses. And yet the example is a case in which two demonstrative thoughts with the same sense differ in the contribution they make to a subject's beliefs, and so provides a counterexample to CP. Having the capacity to keep track of an object by means of dynamic Fregean thoughts might not be a necessary condition for having

thoughts about it, but it does constitute one possible way of having thoughts about it. And that possibility is sufficient for our purposes.

V.

There is one final move for the epistemic conceptualist to make, and that is to claim that there is, contrary to the argument above, some propositionally contentful mental state that underlies the subject's belief at t2 but not at t1. In particular, the subject will, at t2, believe that that thing *looks thus₂*, and that things that look thus₂ are (probably) square. And this is more evident than the thought he would entertain at t1, namely that the object looks thus₁, and that things that look thus₁ are (probably) square. And so this doesn't constitute a counterexample to CP: his belief that the tile is square does have a different epistemic status at t1 and t2, despite the fact that the demonstrative thoughts entertained at both times have the same sense, because he believes some other proposition at t2 which he does not, and could not, believe at t1.

I certainly think that in order to explain why the subject is in a better epistemic position at t2 than at t1, appealing to how the square tile looks to him is mandatory. It is easier to tell that something is square when it presents itself in some ways rather than others. And what explains and justifies the fact that the subject is more confident of the tile's squareness is the fact that it looks the way it does. What I don't think is that we can capture what it is for something to look a certain way in terms of conceptual content. In the first place, a thing's looking thus is what *explains* the fact that a subject can even think that it does. Just as the appearing of a thing and its categorical properties explains the fact that they can be referred to demonstratively, so the appearing of the look of a thing explains how it can be referred to demonstratively. But just like the former case, the appearing of the look is not the same thing as the demonstrative reference

towards it. Again, think of all of the ways in which the objects you currently perceive look, and how few thoughts of the form ‘That looks thus’ you are currently entertaining. And yet, while not the same thing as the conceptual content, it plainly does have a role to play in an epistemologist’s story—one, to borrow Brewer’s phrase, told ‘from the point of view of rationality’ (Brewer, 1999: 154)—about why a subject is justified in believing what he does. A thing’s looking the way it does to a subject at a time does not merely cause a subject to think ‘That looks thus’, but is frequently among the factors that *justify* him in thinking that. There is a reason-giving relationship between the conceptual content ‘That looks thus’ and the fact of its looking thus to a subject at a time. (See Pollock and Cruz, 1999: 195) We have, therefore, found something that plays an essential role in knowledge, and, in particular, in justification, yet is not a conceptual content, contrary to Epistemic Conceptualism.

Secondly, even if the epistemic conceptualist were to insist, implausibly, that a thing’s looking a certain way to a subject is the very same thing as his entertaining the thought expressible as ‘that looks thus’, the proposed solution represents the final stage of a slide towards intuition—a slide that began with the introduction of essentially experiential conceptual contents—that, in an attempt at preserving what the epistemic conceptualist wants, does so at the cost of watering his position down to something hardly distinguishable from the ‘Myth of the Given’ to which he is self-consciously opposed. What fundamental philosophical gains have been secured by saying that perceptual experiences involve very special kinds of conceptual contents which (i) are not detachable from present experience, (ii) possess a sense that, often, can only be ‘grasped’ by the individual entertaining them, (iii) are consequently often incommunicable by means of a conventional language, and (iv) predicate such things as *looking thus* to the objects they refer to? Such a solution strikes me as barely preserving the letter, and

utterly abandoning the spirit, of Kant's remark, which McDowell approvingly cites, that intuitions without concepts are blind. 'When we reject the Myth of the Given', McDowell writes, 'we reject the idea that tracing back the ground for a judgement can terminate in pointing to a bare presence' (McDowell 1994: 39) But it's hardly obvious that by invoking essentially experiential contents like 'That is thus', much less contents like 'That *looks* thus', as the grounds of our empirical judgments, we have rejected what McDowell says we must reject.

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Notes

¹ I owe this point to an anonymous referee.

² Though the *occurrence* of such experiences might provide one with reasons for some empirical beliefs, for instance beliefs about the reliability of one's own perceptual processes. Brewer's premise, however, is clearly intended to mean that the *contents* of experience provide reasons, not (just) that the *occurrences* of experience do. It is the experiences themselves, not just mental states *about* those experiences, which provide reasons.

³ In his 1913 manuscript *Theory of Knowledge*, Russell realizes this, and instead of endorsing a theory of content, argues that all differences among mental states reduce to differences in their objects. (Russell 1984: 41-44) In these passages, Russell does not argue for a particular theory of content, but argues against all theories of content. 'At first sight, it seems obvious that my mind is in different 'states' when I am thinking of one thing and when I am thinking of another. But in fact the difference of object supplies all the difference required' (43). Tim Crane (2006: 140) also recognizes that relational theories of perception, according to which perceptual consciousness essentially involves a relation to an existing object, are not best depicted as holding that perceptual states involve a 'special kind of relational (or object-dependent) "representational content"'. Rather, he continues, 'the key idea is this: the phenomenal character of a genuine perception is determined by how the perceived world is'.

⁴ '...[W]e should distinguish the propositional content of an experience—the way it represents the world as being—from its intentional object... If I see a rabbit, the rabbit is the intentional object of my experience. My experience may also have the propositional content that there is a rabbit running through the field. But I do not see such propositional contents or propositions; I see rabbits and fields' (Crane 2006: 136). And when I believe Socrates is wise, my belief is about the very same thing that the proposition is about. But the proposition is not about itself or any other proposition.

⁵ Brewer 2005: 219, my italics. See also Brewer, 1999: 167: '...a person has a reason to believe that *p*, say, only in virtue of his being in some mental state suitably related to a proposition which serves as a premise in a valid inference to some other proposition suitably related to *p*, most likely the proposition that *p* itself'.

⁶ Byrne (2005: 238) also, I think rightly, reads Brewer this way.

⁷ Sosa (1980: 344-5) calls it the 'Intellectualist Model of Justification', according to which 'the justification of belief (and psychological states generally) is parasitical on certain logical relations among propositions'. Pollock and Cruz (1999: 22-3) and Pollock (2005: 310-1) call it the 'doxastic assumption' which is discussed above. And Pryor (2005: 189) calls it the 'Premise Principle', according to which '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*'.

⁸ In a commentary on a previous version of this paper, Brewer acknowledged that he endorsed this principle in *Perception and Reason*.

⁹ An anonymous referee points out that it might not exclude fear, as I had initially thought. Fears might, that is, have mind-to-world direction of fit, and the fact that I fear something, together with the belief that this fear is rational, might give me reason to believe that the feared state of affairs will obtain. It seems to me, however, that if my fear that *p* is rational, that is because (but

not *only* because) I have an independent basis for believing that p will obtain. My belief that p, that is, does not derive its rationality from the fact that I fear that p, but rather the reverse. And if my fear that p does provide me with a reason to believe that q, the epistemic status of my belief that q does not owe itself to the fear that p, but to the underlying belief that p. If, for instance, I rationally fear drowning, and also believe that I will sink to the bottom of the sea, the latter belief derives its justification from my belief that I will drown, and would not be affected if, while ceasing to *fear* that I will drown, I continue rationally to believe it.

¹⁰ McDowell, 1994: 57. For a good discussion of this claim, see Kelly, 2001, esp. section 2.

¹¹ On Brewer's view, 'perception acquaints us with a domain of entities whose basic natures themselves constitute the subjective character of perceptual experience'. (Brewer, 2004: 68)

¹² This move was considered by Sellars (1975: 307) himself who, in attempting to account for the difference between merely thinking of something and actually seeing it, suggested that 'Perhaps what we should do is recognize that the propositional act, the thinking, is of a unique kind, a 'visual' thinking'. He continues with a remark that, as we shall see, is prescient: 'But even if we grant that the thoughts involved in perception have a distinctive content...it is difficult to see how the addition of another conceptual item can account for the difference between seeing and merely thinking of'.

¹³ See Brewer (1999: 186-7): '...[R]eference to spatial particulars is, in the most basic cases, essentially experiential: the subject's actually standing in certain perceptual-attentional relations with the particular object is a necessary condition upon his grasping this very Idea of that thing'.

¹⁴ For more on the distinction between public and perspectival cross-identification, see Hintikka, (1975: chapters 3-4) and (1989), and Hintikka and Symons (2007).

¹⁵ For more on this, see Husserl (1970: Investigation VI, section 14b) and (1960: section 42), Gurwitsch (1964: 202-8), A.D. Smith (2002: 134-5), and Millar (1991: 44).

¹⁶ In a commentary on a previous version of this paper.

¹⁷ For more on the Generality Constraint, see Evans (1982: 100-105) and Peacocke (1992: 42 ff.).

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