

Does Perception have a Nonconceptual Content?¹

1. *The Claims of Nonconceptual Content*

The question posed in my title is one that has been vigorously debated in philosophy for almost twenty years now. In one form or another, the idea that perceptual experience has a content which is nonconceptual is found in the writings of, amongst others, José Bermúdez, Tim Crane, Fred Dretske, Gareth Evans, Susan Hurley, myself, and Michael Tye.² The idea has been strongly opposed by John McDowell, Sonia Sedivy and, most recently, by Bill Brewer.³ The question has generated so much discussion because the

¹ The present paper was delivered at the Certosa di Pontignano (Siena) in May 1999, under the auspices of the Università degli Studi di Siena. I am grateful to participants at the meeting for discussion, and to later audiences at the Universities of Bonn and Essen. I have retained the largely informal style of a conference talk. Special thanks to Bill Brewer for many acute comments on an earlier draft, some of which I have been able to take into account, and others of which will have to wait for a later paper which addresses more of the issues left open in this outline of a position. Work on the present text was carried out whilst I held a Leverhulme Research Professorship; once again I thank the Leverhulme Trust for this invaluable support.

² J. Bermúdez, *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), esp. chapter 3; T. Crane, 'The nonconceptual content of experience', in the collection *The Contents of Experience: Essays on Perception* ed. T. Crane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); F. Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), esp. Ch. 1, p.19ff; and earlier in *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981); G. Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), see index entry for 'Conceptual and non-conceptual content'; S. Hurley, *Consciousness in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), esp. chapter 4; C. Peacocke, "Analogue Content", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume LX* (1986) 1-17, and *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), Ch. 3; M. Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), esp. p.137ff. A rather different but related use of the notion of nonconceptual content is found in the work of Adrian Cussins: see his paper 'The Connectionist Construction of Concepts', in *The Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence*, ed. M. Boden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), esp. Lecture III and Afterword, Part II; S. Sedivy, 'Must Conceptually Informed Perceptual Experience Involve Non-Conceptual Content?', *Canadian Journal of*

possibility - or otherwise - of nonconceptual content is inseparable from some fundamental issues. Issues about the individuation of conceptual content; about the nature of concept possession; about the nature of rationality; about the relation between animal and human perception; and even about our conception of objectivity all turn in part on the possibility of nonconceptual content in perception. That our question is inseparable from these wider issues I will try to make plausible as we proceed. My specific aim in this paper is to argue further for the thesis that perception does indeed have nonconceptual content.⁴

The nonconceptual content of perception that is the topic of this paper is meant to be one species of representational content. It is content which is evaluable as correct or as incorrect. So we are not concerned here with whether there are nonrepresentational conscious properties of perceptions, what are sometimes called sensational properties. The question I am now addressing concerns solely the class of representational contents of perception. It is the issue of whether some of the representational content of perception is nonconceptual.

The discussions of recent years have focussed on the fine-grained representational content of experience. When you look at the new Art Museum in Bilbao, or see a new abstract sculpture, or the face of a person, you see each of these objects as having a quite specific shape and size. Similarly, you see them as having quite specific shades of colours, surface textures and contours. Equally, when you hear a musical tone, there is a sense in which you perceive its pitch. You may not recognize the tone - you may not have absolute pitch - but you can discriminate that pitch from many, many others if you are asked to compare it with another. This discrimination is based on the way the tone sounds to you. All parties to these discussions have acknowledged the fine-grained character of this representational content. What has been at issue is not its existence, but its character.

Philosophy **26** (1996) 413-431; B. Brewer, *Perception and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp.Ch.5.

⁴ I will confine myself in this paper to the fundamental philosophical motivations for acknowledging nonconceptual content in perception, and the philosophical challenges such acknowledgement must address. There are many further important issues about the nature and role of nonconceptual content that arise in the light of psychological experiments on perception, and on action: discussion of them will have to be left to another occasion.

We will not do justice to the fine-grained phenomenology of experience if we restrict ourselves to those contents which can be built up by referring to the properties and relations which the perceived objects are represented by the experience as possessing. We must, in describing the fine-grained phenomenology, make use of the notion of the *way* in which some property or relation is given in the experience. The same shape can be perceived in two different ways, and the same holds for the shape-properties, if we regard them as within the representational content of experience. Mach's example of one and the same shape that can be perceived either as a square or as a regular diamond is a familiar example. These are not different shapes. The shape of an object need not alter when it moves; and an object can be perceived either as a square, or as a diamond, in either of the standard orientations relative to the perceiver.

The need to use the notion of the way in which something is perceived is by no means special to the perception of spatial properties and relations. Suppose middle C and the F-sharp just above it are played simultaneously on a piano. The interval thus sounded may be heard either as an augmented fourth, or as a diminished fifth. In the former case, the higher tone of the interval is heard as the seventh of the presumed tonic scale.⁵ In the latter case, it is heard as the fourth of that scale. In neither case need these music-theoretic descriptions be ones known to the perceiver, as part of his personal-level conceptual repertoire. We use them in plausible theory about the nature of the two ways in which the interval can be perceived. It is the way itself, and not the materials of music theory, which enter the description of the subject's experience. Even one and the same time-interval may be perceived in two different ways. It is perceived in one way, when it is perceived as the familiar time interval between your switching on your computer and its emitting the start-up sound. It may be perceived in another way when the same interval is exactly that of the silence in a complete, but empty bar (measure) of a Haydn string quartet, in which case it may be heard as composed of two beats.

So, in characterizing the fine-grained content of experience, we need the notion of the experience representing things or events or places or times, given in a certain way, as

⁵ On the musical case, see the fine contribution of M. DeBellis, *Music and Conceptualization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. Ch.2.

having certain properties or as standing in certain relations, also as given in a certain way. 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.

The ways I have mentioned all contribute to the representational content of the experience. That is, when something is perceived in one of these ways, the claim that the object really is the way it is experienced as being is one which has a correctness condition. Indeed, the way contributes to the determination of which shape, or shade, or interval, is perceived as present or occurring. An entirely generic notion of a way does not necessarily contribute to the determination of which objects or properties or relations a mental state represents as being thus-and-so. For example, an acceptable answer to the question ‘How are you thinking of next Thursday?’ might be ‘With trepidation’, or ‘With eager anticipation’. In some intuitive sense, these are ways of thinking of next Thursday: but they do not contribute to the determination of which day it is you are thinking about. The ways in which the properties of things are perceived, which I am talking about, are very different. They contribute to the determination of which interval, which shape, which relation is perceived as instantiated. Thereby, they contribute to the correctness condition for the perceptual experience. This will be important later, because it has the consequence that when, for instance, an object’s shape is perceived in way W, the proposition that the object is that way W itself has a correctness condition.

Here now are five at least moderately intuitive claims about nonconceptual content that one might expect a believer in nonconceptual content to defend. Some of these claims are, *prima facie*, incompatible with the position that the representational content of experience is exclusively conceptual. Before we start discussing them, here is a brief, wholly dogmatic, statement of each of the claims.

(1) The nonconceptual content of perceptual experience contributes to making available to a thinker various perceptually-based concepts. Only a thinker who has a perceptual experience with a certain kind of nonconceptual representational content can employ such perceptual-demonstrative concepts as *that shape*, *that texture*, *that interval of time*. The nonconceptual content of experience also helps to make available such general, non-demonstrative recognitional concepts as the concept *regular-diamond*

shaped and the concept *red*. It also makes available more specific, but still general, recognitional concepts such as the concept *Cambridge blue* and the concept *yellow ochre*. Perceptual states with nonconceptual content make these general concepts available to a thinker by providing the canonical, non-inferential basis for the application of these concepts to things given in experience. The nonconceptual contents that make available these various perceptually-based conceptual contents cannot, however, be identified with any of the conceptual contents which they make available.

These claims are all to be construed as constitutive. What it is to have the perceptually-based concepts is to be elucidated, philosophically, in terms of the relations of those concepts to the nonconceptual content of experience.

(2) Experiences with finer-grained nonconceptual contents can also provide an empirical basis for the acquisition, and so enter the causal explanation of the learning, of such general concepts as *regular-diamond shaped*.

(3) An experience with a certain nonconceptual content can make rational a judgement of a conceptual content suitably related to the nonconceptual content that the experience represents as correct.

(4) Some of the nonconceptual content of our experience can be identical with the representational content of the experience of creatures that either possess no concepts, or possess only a set of concepts far more rudimentary than our own.

(5) The nonconceptual content of experience can enter the explanation of features of intentional action. There is an important discussion in psychology of whether this content, or its precursors, enter the explanation of action only via memory, rather than controlling concurrent action on-line.⁶ But all agree that it has an explanatory role in some cases.

The formulation of these five claims should make clear some of the wider ramifications of the otherwise apparently rather local issue of whether perception has a nonconceptual representational content.

We need to be very clear what we mean by ‘conceptual’. I will be taking it that conceptual content is content of a kind that can be the content of judgement and belief.

⁶ For an illuminating overview, see A.D. Milner and M. Goodale, *The Visual Brain in Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Concepts are constituents of those intentional contents that can be the complete, truth-evaluable, contents of judgement and belief. Conceptual content and concepts I take to have identities conforming to, indeed answerable to, Frege's criterion of identity for senses. Complete contents p and q are distinct iff it is possible for someone for whom the question arises rationally to judge that p without judging that q . So the content 'This country is Italy' is distinct from the content 'This country is this country'; the content 'The floor-plan is square' is distinct from 'The floor-plan is a regular diamond'; the content 'Your lost pen is *there*' (pointing under a pile of papers) is distinct from 'Your lost pen is where you last used it'. Concepts C and D are distinct iff there is some completing content Σ such that the complete content $\Sigma(C)$ is distinct from the complete content $\Sigma(D)$; or, in other words, iff there is some content $\Sigma(C)$ such that someone for whom the question arises can rationally judge $\Sigma(C)$ without judging $\Sigma(D)$. So the pairs

<i>this country</i>	<i>Italy</i>
<i>square</i>	<i>regular diamond</i>
<i>there</i> (pointing appropriately)	<i>where you last used the pen</i>

are all pairs of distinct concepts by this criterion. As these examples show, concepts as intended here may be demonstrative or indexical.

On this approach, any further connections between concepts and, for instance, language have to be earned by further argument. If someone holds that a concept-user must have a language in which he can express at least some of his concepts, that is a substantive, non-definitional thesis that needs to be established. The same applies to the thesis that concepts, so characterized, conform to Evans's Generality Constraint.⁷

It should, however, be uncontroversial that any content that can be expressed in language by the use of an indicative sentence, including sentences containing indexicals and demonstratives, will be a conceptual content. That follows in the presence of the less controversial premise that any utterance of an indicative sentence, in a given context,

⁷ *The Varieties of Reference*.

expresses a content that is of a kind that could also be the content of a belief or judgement.

So much for minimal stage-setting. I turn now to argue in support of at least the claims (1) – (4), and, if it is agreed that they are true, to consider why they are true.⁸

2. *Distinct from Conceptual Content, but Making it Available*

We can label as ‘conceptualists’ those who claim that the representational content of experience is always conceptual. Conceptualists are committed to the falsity of the first claim (1), with its consequence that there is a level of representational content that cannot be elucidated in terms of conceptual content. Conceptualists have been tempted to say that the phenomena for whose description nonconceptual content has been invoked are better described by invoking conceptual contents containing perceptual-demonstrative concepts, or certain recognitional concepts. I take these two kinds of concepts in turn, and ask whether they can really meet the conceptualist’s needs.

(a) *Perceptual demonstratives*. A perceptual-demonstrative concept *that shape* is a concept made available by an experience as of a particular shape. This perceptual-demonstrative concept will, in the context of its use in thought, refer to a shape, and the shape may be finely individuated. Similarly for the perceptual-demonstrative concepts *that shade, that sound, that taste*. Can the conceptualist say that it is these concepts that enter the representational content of experience, and thereby fully capture the content that I have been claiming is nonconceptual?

An initial problem with this version of the perceptual-demonstrative route is the presence of the general concept in the perceptual demonstrative, as the concept *shape* features in *that shape*. No one can enjoy perceptual states, or indeed any other conscious mental states, with the conceptual content *that shape* in their representational content unless he possesses the general concept *shape*. It is, though, quite implausible that one must have that general concept in order to perceive objects as having various specific

shapes. Nor is it at all clear that two perceivers must have some more or less general predicative concept in order for them both to see some object as having the same specific shape. One perceiver may think of a presented shape as *that rectangle*, the other perceiver may think of it as *that straight-sided figure*. This difference in their thoughts need not prevent them seeing it in exactly the same way.

It is in any case not always required that a good, successfully referring perceptual-demonstrative contain some general concept. For those who think it must, a useful intermediate case which forces the softening of such a hard position is provided by the demonstrative *there*. One difference between *there* and *that* is that the former must refer to a location, rather than anything present at that location. But the demonstrative *there* does not do this by having the general concept of place as one of its constituents. In fact, it is not at all obvious that a thinker, in order to have the rather unsophisticated capacity to think of a perceived location as *there*, must also have the general concept *place* or *location* in his conceptual repertoire. Perhaps he must have the resources for introducing it, on the basis of concepts he already has: but that is different from already deploying it.

If this intermediate case is granted, it could hardly be denied that we could conceive of a family of demonstratives, modelled on *there*: maybe *that-C* for the colour apparently at a location; *that-T* for the surface texture there; and so forth. But I do not think this would be a stable stopping point as a limit on the possibility of perceptual-demonstratives unsupplemented with general concepts, nor as a suitable limit for the conceptualist position. This is so, first, because we do not actually have such devices in our conceptual repertoire. Our experience nevertheless still has the determinate, fine-grained character concerning textures, shades and the rest all the same. The fact that we could introduce such conceptual devices just serves to emphasize that what makes such devices available, viz. the rich representational content of experience, exists in advance of the conceptual apparatus it makes possible. That makes it implausible that it can be identified with anything in that conceptual apparatus.

⁸ The discussion of (5) would involve more delving into the psychological literature than is feasible here. It is also significant that the case for the existence of nonconceptual content in perception can be made without reliance on any particular thesis relating it to action.

Second, there seem to be cases in which a wholly unsupplemented perceptual-demonstrative ‘that’ still secures reference in a suitable perceptual context. You may think, when viewing a vase in a museum, ‘That is beautiful’, and be referring in thought to the colour, not to the shape or the surface texture. You may think, watching a Balinese dancer, ‘That’s beautiful’, and be referring to the movement or the gesture rather than anything else. Perhaps sophisticated thinkers can serve up general concepts if asked ‘What kind of thing or event are you thinking of?’. But it would be a stretch to insist that some general concept must have been entering the singular demonstrative component of their perception or their thought all along. It seems, for instance, that someone could be introduced to the general concept *timbre*, applicable to sounds, by his first having an experience leading him to judge ‘That’s beautiful’, referring specifically to the timbre of (say) a clarinet. It may be that our listener only later applies the concept *timbre* to the instance he had already perceived and thought about. (‘That sound’ could be too unspecific to capture what he experienced as beautiful.)

The natural treatment of such cases is that the type of the perceptual demonstrative involved is individuated by a demonstrative element (which would be expressed in an utterance by ‘that’) - an element to which we I will return - together with some particular way which enters the representational content of the perceptual experience which makes the whole perceptual demonstrative available. The way in question is the way in which the shade, or movement, or shape, or whatever is referred to by the demonstrative, is perceived.

For any given way in which a particular quality may be perceived, there is a specific kind such that that way is intrinsically a way for something of that kind to be perceived. The way in which a shape is presented, e.g. as a regular-diamond, is intrinsically a way for a shape to be perceived, and not anything else. The same applies to the way in which a texture, or a musical interval, is perceived. It does not make any sense to suggest that a shape might be perceived in the way a musical interval is perceived. In synaesthesia, the subject does not literally perceive a vowel-sound in the way in which a colour can be perceived.

This point is important because it helps to contribute to an explanation of why a general concept is not always needed to supplement the ‘that’ in a perceptual demonstrative to secure manifest reference to one kind of quality of the perceived object or event, rather than another. The kind of property referred to - a shape property rather than a sound property, say - is fixed by the perceptual *way* which contributes to the individuation of the perceptual-demonstrative in question. Provided that the demonstrative ‘that’ is linked to a given way, there will be a general kind such that the reference of the demonstrative must be of that general kind.

Ways of being perceived are inherently general. For instance, the shapes of two different objects may be perceived in exactly the same way, either on one occasion or on different occasions. By contrast, perceptual-demonstrative reference to shapes (to continue with that example) proceeds fundamentally via the shape of particular presented individuals. When a thinker thinks ‘That would make a good logo’, referring to a shape, he is characteristically thinking of the shape as given in the perception of some particular object in his experience; and the truth conditions of his thought concern the perceived shape of that particular object. Maybe one can refer perceptually-demonstratively to the shape common to several objects, each of whose shape one perceives, and perceives to be the same for all of them - thus ‘That shape, instantiated equally in all of those objects, would make a good logo’. But this still involves a tie to particulars, several rather than just one. This particularity, which seems distinctive of, and essential to, perceptual demonstratives, is one reason that one cannot simply identify the perceptual-demonstrative sense with the relevant way of being perceived. The way, which is general, lacks the tie to particulars that is characteristic of the perceptual-demonstrative.

The link to a particular perceived individual that has the property demonstratively thought about is a characteristic of the demonstrative element in the perceptual-demonstrative concept. It would not be right to regard a perceptual-demonstrative concept *that shape* as thought on a particular occasion as built up from a way in which a shape may be perceived plus some entirely generic constituent. The link to a particular, given in perception or experience, must be captured if we are to characterize fully the perceptual-demonstrative concept used on this occasion.

It is important to distinguish between ways of being perceived and ways of having a certain generic quality. A way in which a shape property may be perceived is to be sharply distinguished from a way of being shaped. A way of being shaped has to do with shapes themselves – it is a way of occupying space - and does not have to do with the way in which shapes are perceived. On the natural, unforced way of understanding the notion of a way of being shaped, the property of being a square and the property of being a regular-diamond are actually the *same* way of being shaped. This means that one could not individuate perceptual concepts, whether fine-grained or rough-grained, in terms of which way of being shaped they are concepts of. If one uses ‘way’ in this territory for ‘way of being shaped’, or ‘way of being coloured’, or more generally ‘way of having some generic kind of perceptible property or relation’, one will need additionally something else to capture the different ways in which these ways of being shaped may be perceived.

A philosophical theory in this area also has to address the question of how the demonstrative links up with one *way* rather than another. This is not, or not merely, a matter of attention. You can be attending to one light in a display, if you are a nuclear safety engineer, in case it comes on, whilst also thinking, of the colour displayed on the small adjacent VDU, “That colour indicates the reactor is beginning to get hot”. What makes the thought contain a perceptual-demonstrative which is linked to something given in one particular way must rather involve such facts as that the truth conditions for the thought fundamentally involve the colour which is presented in one particular item in the thinker’s experience, rather than another. It is, constitutively, the colour presented there on the adjacent VDU that must have a certain property for the thinker’s thought to be true. This will correspondingly be reflected in what is required for verifying or refuting the content. It will also be reflected in the content’s normative properties - what are reasons for or against accepting it.

These remarks against treating fine-grained perceptual content as explicable in terms of perceptual-demonstrative concepts should not be taken to disparage the very idea of a fine-grained perceptual demonstrative. It seems to me there are perceptual-demonstrative ways of thinking of presented shapes, colours, sounds and the rest. It can well be that in some cases the way of thinking is available to the thinker only as long as the experience

continues. John McDowell suggests that such a dependence on the occurrence of the experience “would cast doubt on its being recognizable as a conceptual capacity at all”.⁹ This may be one of the reasons he moves to endorse recognitional concepts as the correct treatment of perceptual content. Of experience-dependent demonstratives, he says that they look “like Wittgenstein’s case of the person who says “I know how tall I am”, putting his hand on top of his head to prove it”.¹⁰ But the person in Wittgenstein’s example does not, by saying or thinking ‘*this tall*’ come to know of a height in metres or any other unit, which is what knowing how tall one is requires on the usual understanding. It is not even clear that such a person thereby (I emphasize thereby) comes to know how tall he is, in the sense that he could indicate which of the markings on a wall on the opposite side of the room is roughly his height. By contrast, a perceptual-demonstrative thought latches on to a magnitude, or shade, or colour, only if that magnitude, or shade, or colour, is itself given in the experience which makes the perceptual-demonstrative concept available. There is no possibility of making perceptual-demonstrative reference to a magnitude, or shade, or colour, and not knowing what magnitude, or shade, or colour it is one is thinking about. Such perceptual-demonstrative reference is the most fundamental way of knowing what magnitude, or shade, or colour is in question.

We should also distinguish here the conditions for making demonstrative reference in language from the conditions for employing a perceptual-demonstrative concept. The person who utters “that table”, pointing behind himself to a table he is not seeing certainly refers to a table; but he has no perceptual-demonstrative concept of it. A similar point could be made for an utterance of “that shade”, pointing to the wall behind oneself, without looking at it. There are also important background conditions which must be met for perceptual-demonstrative reference in thought to succeed. Stroboscopic lighting, undetected movement, and much else, can undermine the holding of these background conditions. Perceptual-demonstrative reference can fail even when it seems to the thinker to succeed. (These background conditions will be all the more important to one, like myself, who thinks that perceptual-demonstratives and observational concepts can be

⁹ *Mind and World*, p. 57.

individuated in terms of the conditions under which contents containing them can be not merely rationally judged, but *known*.¹¹) But there are plenty of cases in which the required background conditions are fulfilled, and there can be perceptual-demonstrative reference to finely-individuated properties and relations. My point has not at all been that such perceptual-demonstratives are nonexistent. My point is rather that they are themselves individuated in part in terms of ways in which properties, magnitudes and relations are given in experience; and so cannot be used to elucidate the nature of such ways of being experienced.

(b) *Recognitional Concepts*. The other position tempting to some Conceptualists is that the fine-grained representational content of experience is to be captured not by perceptual-demonstrative concepts, but by fine-grained recognitional concepts. This is McDowell's view in *Mind and World*, and it squares with his most explicit recent discussion of the issues.¹² McDowell writes in *Mind and World*: "Why not say that one is...equipped to embrace shades of colour within one's conceptual thinking with the very same determinateness with which they are presented in one's visual experience, so that one's concepts can capture colours no less sharply than one's experience presents them?" (p.56). Soon after in the same book he makes clear: "What is in play here is a recognitional capacity..." (p.57). The recognitional capacity associated with the recognitional concept persists, if only briefly, after an experience which is of the kind recognized (p.57). McDowell seeks to capture part of the fine-grained spatial content of experience with a conceptual content of the following sort, which he would say is represented as correct by the experience:

¹⁰ *Mind and World*, p.57; his reference is to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, section 279.

¹¹ See *Being Known* ch. 2.

¹² 'Replies to Commentators' in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998) 403-31. In the part of these 'Replies' which deals with me, McDowell writes always of demonstratives, rather than recognitional concepts. But it is important that for McDowell in his Reply, "that way" in "It looks that way" is predicative, not substantival...Expressions at this place in this construction express, rather than refer to, ways things can look" (418). On McDowell's theory, expressions in that place express recognitional concepts. This is fully in accord with his position in *Mind and World*: see p.57.

This is shaped R.

Here R expresses, for McDowell, a recognitional concept of a way of being shaped.

Similarly for colour, on McDowell's view we have the conceptual content

This is coloured S

in the representational content of the experience, where S is a recognitional concept of a fine-sliced shade.

If it was wrong to have the general concept *shape* in the demonstrative attempts to capture the fine-grained content of experience, it seems equally wrong to have the general relational concept *shaped* _____ in the representational content under this conceptualist treatment. The same applies to the concept *coloured* _____. I will not, however, trade on this point and will take it that McDowell could use precisely the points I made earlier about the absence of a need for supplementation by a general concept. He could move simply to propose the conceptual contents 'This is R', 'This is S' as the fine-grained representational content of experience. The recognitional capacities underlying these recognitional concepts persist, "possibly for quite a short period", according to McDowell in *Mind and World*.¹³ In *Mind and World*, McDowell holds that they can be employed in the absence of perception of the finely-sliced properties to which they refer.

As Diana Raffman observes, it is well-known that perceptually-based discrimination of properties far outreaches memory and identification of those properties.¹⁴ Recognitional capacities are by their very nature constrained by memory capacities. I would add to Raffman's point only two observations. First, even if memory were as finely discriminating as perception, that still would not make it right to regard recognitional concepts as entering the representational content of experience. There cannot be recognition when the perceptual property is encountered for the first time in a given way. A first-time experience of a property nevertheless still has a specific, fine-grained representational content. And second, in those counterfactual circumstances in which memory were as discriminating as perception, the experience would still have a specific content which could exist even if the recognitional capacity did not. The memory structures required for

¹³ *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1994), p.172.

the recognitional concept and its corresponding recognitional capacity, and their subpersonal underpinnings, could all be absent, and yet the experience still have a fine-grained representational content. The specific fine-grained content would show up in matching tests that do not need to rely on memory, as opposed to current perception. This modal point applies however short the period for which the recognitional capacity is said to exist.

It seems to me, then, that neither perceptual-demonstratives nor recognitional concepts can capture the representational content of perception. But however convincing it may be, candidate concept by candidate concept, that each candidate concept cannot capture perceptual content, it is reasonable to ask here for more theoretical explanation. Is there some deeper, and more general, reason why perceptual content cannot be captured by any kind of conceptual content? I will return to this, when we are in a better position to characterize more fully the nature of the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual content.

3. *Learning Observational Concepts*

Now let us take the phenomenon of learning a new observational concept from instances of it that are perceived when one is taught, or otherwise acquires, the concept. Consider the representational content of the subject's experience when she is learning the concept *pyramid*, considered as an observational shape concept.

On the one hand, the representational content of this experience, in the case of learning from a positive instance, must be rationally sufficient for someone to apply the concept, when experience is being taken at face value. If that were not so, it would not be an observational concept after all. Yet on the other hand, this representational content cannot include the concept *pyramid*, for that would require the learner already to possess the concept. The learner could have such experiences only if the lesson were unnecessary.

¹⁴ 'On the Persistence of Phenomenology', in *Conscious Experience* ed. T. Metzinger (Paderborn: Schoeninger, 1995), 293-308, p.294ff.

The natural solution to this last quandary is to acknowledge that there is such a thing as having an experience of something as being pyramid-shaped that does not involve already having the concept of being pyramid-shaped. What such an experience will have is a nonconceptual content which, if correct, is sufficient for something's falling under the observational concept *pyramid*.

In fact, that is to understate the case. Not merely is the holding of the nonconceptual content represented as correct in the positive cases involved in learning sufficient for the object in question to be a pyramid. The experiences from which, as presenting positive instances, one can rationally learn the concept, are those which have nonconceptual representational contents of the sort mentioned in the very condition for possessing the observational concept which is being learned. There is a specific kind of nonconceptual content of experience to which one's judgements 'That's a regular-diamond' must be rationally sensitive if one is to possess the observational concept *regular-diamond*. There is a different specific kind of nonconceptual content of experience to which one's judgement 'That's a square' must be rationally sensitive if one is to possess the observational concept *square*. There is a specific kind of nonconceptual content of experience to which one must be sensitive if one is to acquire a recognitional concept for the musical interval of an augmented fourth. It is a different kind than that to which sensitivity is required in possessing a recognitional concept for a diminished fifth; and so forth.¹⁵

This rational sensitivity is not a matter of inference, even though the occurrence of an experience with a certain nonconceptual content does make rational a perceptual judgement with a conceptualized content. It is intuitively wrong to classify the case as one of inference. It also could not be correct, if the perceptual content is nonconceptual: inferential relations can hold only between (states with) conceptual contents. We can, as reflective thinkers, indeed introduce ways of thinking about the nonconceptual ways in which things are given. But this is built on a more primitive level of rational sensitivity to

¹⁵ For some observational concepts, the kind may be amodal, and so instantiated in experiences in more than one modality. This is plausible for *straight* and *right-angled*, construed as observational concepts.

the experience's nonconceptual content itself. Such reflective thought is not necessary for having the capacity to make perceptual judgements about one's environment.

4. Making Rational Transitions to Perceptual Judgements

I have emphasized that the way in which some thing, or property, or relation is given in the nonconceptual content of an experience is something which contributes to what it is like to have that experience. These ways which feature in nonconceptual content are then at the conscious, personal level, and are not merely subpersonal. As features of the subjective experience, their presence can entitle a thinker to make a particular judgement, or to form a certain belief.

A thinker can be rational in making a transition from an experience with a certain nonconceptual representational content to a judgement with a certain conceptual content, in particular in making a transition to judging a content in which an observational concept is predicated of presented objects or events. Such a transition is rational when the thinker is entitled to take her experience at face value, and when the observational concept is individuated in part at least as one which the thinker must be willing to judge when experience has a certain kind of nonconceptual representational content (and is being taken at face value). When a closed figure formed from four straight lines is perceived as symmetrical about the bisectors of its angles, and as right-angled, such an experience can make rational the judgement *That's a regular diamond*. It does not make rational the judgement *That's a square*. That latter judgement is made rational rather by a different nonconceptual content, in which the perceived symmetry of the closed figure is a symmetry about the bisectors of its sides.

The nonconceptual content in question throughout this paper is nonconceptual representational content, with a correctness condition. Consider any case in which an observational concept *F* is plausibly individuated partly by its relations to a particular sort of nonconceptual content. It is then a philosophical task to show that the holding of the correctness condition for the nonconceptual content in question ensures the holding of the correctness condition for the conceptual content *That's F*. In our simple spatial cases, one

could show this by showing that the shape something must be when it is presented (veridically) in an experience with a certain nonconceptual content is a shape which is sufficient for the observational concept *is square* to apply to it.

This is an instance of a task which exists for any rational transition which involves a concept or concepts at some point or other. The task exists equally for the case of logical transitions. If a premise gives a good reason for accepting a certain conclusion, because of the logical form of the inference, there must be some explanation, in the semantics of the logical constants involved in the transition, of why this is a valid transition. That is why we need a semantics, and not merely a proof-theory, for a logic. (Even in the special case in which the semantics is itself proof-theoretic, the need for a semantical theory is still being granted.) The ordinary thinker does not need to know what the explanation of the validity of a particular transition is, in either the logical or the perceptual case. But the explanation must exist if the transition is to be valid. Only so do we have an explanation of why it is truth-preserving, and thereby how it can lead to new knowledge.

My own view is that it is always a task of philosophy to explain why a transition is a good one. This requirement, in my view, applies to the conceptual-to-conceptual case of logic; to the nonconceptual (but still representational) -to-conceptual case of perceptual judgement; and to the arguably wholly nonrepresentational-to-conceptual transition from the occurrence of a pain in a subject to his conceptualized self-ascription of pain.¹⁶

The general position on nonconceptual content that I have outlined so far may seem intuitive, but it has been subjected to a philosophical critique by John McDowell. His most fundamental objection is that experiences can have a rational bearing on thought only if their content is conceptual: “The point of the claim that experience involves conceptual capacities is that it enables us to credit experiences with a rational bearing on empirical thinking”.¹⁷ This claim needs an argument, and McDowell’s argument for it in *Mind and World* is that rational thinking involves the possibility of scrutinizing the relations between

¹⁶ I hope this and the preceding paragraphs clarify my intentions at around p.80 of *A Study of Concepts*, about which McDowell expresses some puzzlement: “it is hard to see much in the way of a further issue about how the reason [supplied by an experience with an allegedly nonconceptual content - CP] can be a *good* one” (‘Replies’, p.418).

¹⁷ *Mind and World* p. 52.

experience and judgement. Nothing is outside the limits of rational self-scrutiny (p.52), even if, after scrutinizing the case in question, we decide to endorse it. McDowell's view is that it is hard to see how this scrutiny would be possible unless experience has only conceptual content (pp.52-3).

That last step seems to me a non-sequitur. I accept that we can rationally scrutinize any instance of any putative reason-giving relation, including the relation between experience and judgement. McDowell's concern is that on a theory like mine, the subject cannot gain the required 'comprehensive view of the two contents' - that of the experience and that of the judgement (p.166). However, on my treatment a thinker can ask 'Is something's looking that way a reason for judging that it's square?', for instance. On the approach I advocate, 'that way', in this particular occurrence, refers demonstratively to a way in which something can be perceived. The reference itself is made *by* something conceptual: demonstrative concepts can enter conceptual contents. There is no requirement that the reference *of* the demonstrative be conceptualized. (I will return to such uses of 'that way' in a few paragraphs.) So thought can scrutinize and evaluate the relations between nonconceptual and conceptual contents, and obtain a comprehensive view of both. On McDowell's theory, of course, the demonstrative 'that way' expresses a sense (a recognitional concept), which does on his view enter the representational content of experience. I have rejected that treatment on other grounds - the required recognitional capacities do not exist, and do not need to exist for the experience to have a fine-grained content. But quite apart from that, the mere possibility of the treatment I have offered shows that it is a nonsequitur to move from an agreed premise of the required scrutinizability in conceptual thought of the rational relations between experience and judgement to the conclusion of that experience itself must have only conceptual representational content. As long as we can think about the nonconceptual representational content, as we certainly can, we can have the required scrutinizability.

McDowell also holds that there is a requirement of articulability of reasons, including perceptual reasons, and that this too supports his view that the representational content of experience must be wholly conceptual. "[Peacocke] has to sever the tie between reasons for which a subject thinks as she does and reason she can give for

thinking that way. Reasons that the subject can give, in so far as they are articulable, must be within the space of concepts".¹⁸ I am not at all sure myself that there is such a requirement of articulability. But if there is, it seems to me that the use of the demonstrative 'that way', construed in the way it is on my approach, would allow the friend of nonconceptual content to meet any such demand. 'I believe it's square because it looks that way' is an articulation of the subject's reasons. Once again, the conceptual character of the conceptual constituent 'that way' must be sharply distinguished from the nonconceptual character of its reference, a nonconceptual way in which something is perceived.

I would invoke demonstrative ways of thinking of ways in addressing a closely related objection of Bill Brewer's.¹⁹ Brewer argues that a thinker must be capable of recognizing her reasons as such, that is, as reasons. This demand does not, Brewer argues, intrinsically raise difficulties of principle in the case of a mental state which gives reasons, provided that the state has conceptual content. But in the case of a mental state with an allegedly nonconceptual content, "mere possession of the state involved in having such a 'reason' is explicitly insufficient for the subject's understanding of the proposition whose association with this state grounds its putative status as his reason for doing what he does. [...] The only alternative seems to be that he must have some second-order knowledge of the relation between mental states of the type in question and the truth of the belief [...] for which he thereby, and only instrumentally, recognizes his having a reason" (pp.167-8).²⁰ Brewer says that the nonconceptualist is "condemned to follow the discredited classical foundationalists and coherentists" (p.166). In short, his position is that the nonconceptualist can provide for the recognition of his own reasons only by arguing as follows:

¹⁸ *Mind and World* p.165.

¹⁹ *Perception and Reason* pp.166-9. Page references in discussing Brewer are references to this book.

²⁰ The earlier paragraphs of this section should, incidentally, make it clear that I am committed to disagreeing with the idea that it is a conceptual proposition's "association with" a nonconceptual representational state which grounds its putative status as a thinker's reason for doing what he does. One can associate conceptual propositions with

- (i) This state is F;
- (ii) Anything which is F is a reason for believing that p ;
- (iii) Hence I have reason to believe that p .²¹

Brewer adds that “what stands in place of ‘F’ will have, at best, to be hideously complex” (p.168).

I agree with Brewer that if the nonconceptualist could account for the recognition of the reason that his experience gives him for making a perceptual judgement only in this second-order, instrumental fashion, the position would be unacceptable. But I maintain that the nonconceptualist’s position does not have the consequence Brewer claims. Here is a way that a thinker can come to recognize a state with nonconceptual representational content as giving reasons, without taking the second-order, instrumentalist route. The perceptual experience represents some presented object or event as having some property, given in a certain way W . So the experience has a content (if we put it, conveniently but inessentially for the present point, in object-dependent form):

- (iv) x , given in way s , has property P , given in way W .

Now suppose this way W is, for example, one of the nonconceptual ways in which a shape can be given, and is mentioned as sufficient for being square in the possession condition for the concept *square*. On my account, the subject is then entitled to move from (iv) to the conceptualized content

- (v) That object [given in way s] is square.

Similarly for any other way whose presence in an experience gives good reason for applying an observational concept.

states that have nonconceptual content; but for me, the reason-giving powers of the state are explained without reference to any such association.

Now what would be involved in a subject's reflecting on these transitions, and in coming to appreciate his reasons as reasons? (iv) and (v) do not seem to be hideously complex; complexity is not the heart of the issue. But there are two interesting capacities a thinker must have if she is to be capable of appreciating both the occurrence, and the rationality, of her transition from (iv) to (v).

First, our reflective subject must have a special way of thinking of the way W. There seems to be a phenomenon here that is a partial analogue, for the relations between nonconceptual contents and demonstrative concepts of them, of the relations which hold between concepts and canonical concepts of those concepts - 'conceptual redeployment', as I called it.²² When some property is given to a thinker in perception in way W, then, if that thinker is sufficiently reflective, there seems to be a conceptual way C_w of thinking of that way W, where this conceptual way C_w seems to be made available to the thinker precisely by her enjoying an experience whose nonconceptual content includes that way W. Presumably this relation of 'being made available by' consists at least in part in a certain canonical sensitivity of judgements involving the concept C_w to evidence about the way W which the subject has precisely because she is experiencing some property as given in way W.

Second, in appreciating that the occurrence of an experience with the representational content (iv) entitles her to judge the content (v), our thinker will be displaying a sensitivity to a particular boundary. This is the boundary between those states which are, and those states which are not, mentioned in the possession condition for a given concept such as *square*. Our thinker will have moved from the ground level of satisfying a possession condition to the level of thinking about it. One, perhaps the basic, way to make this transition is to ask questions which are in the first instance not about concepts, but about the world. Such a question might be 'Would something's looking that way W give reason to think it is square?' One can answer such questions by drawing on one's ordinary, ground-level abilities to react rationally to one's perceptual states in coming to make judgements about the world. Someone who satisfies a possession

²¹ See Brewer, p.168.

²² See my *Being Known* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), sections 5.5-5.6.

condition can clamber her way up to reach some understanding of what that possession condition is.

This description of the transition from perception to judgement, and of the subject's appreciation thereof, is not second-order. Nor is it or of the highly problematic kinds in the sorts of classical foundationalist and coherentist writings Brewer rightly criticizes. (iv) and (v) are not themselves about mental states at all. It is true that (iv) becomes pertinent because of its relation to the content of a mental state. But that will equally hold on a conceptualist's account of the reason relation and of appreciation of it as a relation of reason-giving. The content is conceptual, according to that theorist, and stands in various reason-giving relations appreciable by the thinker. But that content is relevant only because it is the representational content, on the conceptualist's view, of the perceptual experience in question. That it is relevant only because of that relation does not make the conceptualist's view second-order, or instrumentalist. Equally the corresponding feature of (iv) and (v) cannot make the nonconceptualist's account second-order or instrumentalist either. It is the relation between (iv) and (v) which is crucial in the account of the reason-giving relation, and appreciation of it as such; and that does not involve anything second-order.

A full theoretical, philosophical account of why the transition from (iv) to (v) is valid would of course involve some philosophical theory. The theory would be part of a general theory of content. A full theoretical account would equally be required in the case of logical transitions between purely conceptual contents. The philosophical theory does not need to be known to the ordinary thinker in either of these rather different cases. In both cases, there is a willingness to make transitions between certain contents, which is constitutive of possession of the observational concept or the logical concept respectively. According to me, in the former case the content of the entitling or reason-giving state is nonconceptual, and in the latter it is conceptual. The ordinary thinker can appreciate his reasons as reasons in either case; in either case he may or may not go further in reflecting on the nature of the good reasons involved.

5. Kinds of Content, Animal Perception and Objectivity

Cats, dogs, and animals of many other species, as well as human infants, perceive the world, even though their conceptual repertoire is limited, and perhaps even nonexistent. In the higher species, these perceptions are subserved by perceptual organs, and in the case of higher species, subserved by brain structures similar in significant respects to those which subserve mature human perception. By the ‘hard line’ on animal perception I mean the thesis that none of the conscious perceptual states with representational content enjoyed by mature humans can be enjoyed by nonlinguistic animals without concepts, or with only minimal conceptual capacities. By the ‘soft line’, I mean simply the denial of the hard line. So the soft line says that some of the conscious perceptual states with representational content enjoyed by mature humans can be enjoyed by nonlinguistic animals without concepts, or with only minimal conceptual capacities.

For what it is worth, pre-theoretical intuition seems to find the hard line too hard to accept. The hard line entails that the following cannot be literally true: that the animal has a visual experience as of a surface at a certain orientation, and at a certain distance and direction from itself, in exactly the same sense in which an adult human can have a visual experience with that as part of its content. Abandoning all pretence at unbiased terminology, I will call the conclusion that that cannot be literally true ‘the unintuitive conclusion’. The soft line, which prima facie at least is not committed to the unintuitive conclusion, is naturally developed hand-in-hand with a theory of nonconceptual representational content. According to the soft line, it is nonconceptual representational content which can be common to visual experiences which both you and a mere animal may enjoy.

Those who take the hard line need not deny that animals have some perceptual sensitivity to their environment, a sensitivity which explains their actions. McDowell, who takes the hard line, insists that animals have such a perceptual sensitivity: “It is a plain fact that we share perception with mere animals”.²³ Nor does McDowell have in mind, for instance, only some kind of informational sensitivity that would make animals automatons of the sort which Descartes apparently believed them to be. In *Mind and World*,

²³ *Mind and World*, p.114; see also pp.50, 64-5, and Lecture VI, section 4-7.

McDowell speaks of ‘proto-subjectivity’ (p.117). He says that there is a legitimate kind of talk of what the features of the environment are for an animal, which “expresses an analogue to the notion of subjectivity, close enough to ensure that there is no Cartesian automatism in our picture” (p.116). All the same, it must be only an analogue on McDowell’s view. It is, on McDowell’s account, not literally true that the mere animal has a visual experience as of a surface at a certain distance and direction in exactly the same sense that mature concept-using humans do.

It is certainly a necessary condition of being reasonable in rejecting the unintuitive conclusion that one address the arguments that in perceptual experience, there is only conceptual, and not nonconceptual, content. But if we can develop a theory of nonconceptual representational content, and answer the Conceptualist’s objections to it, as I have been trying to do, then much of the pressure to adopt the unintuitive conclusion is substantially relieved.

However, though I think that the unintuitive conclusion is indeed to be rejected, and the soft line is right, the truth in this area seems to me much more interesting than those somewhat flat conclusions suggest. It seems to me that there is a good, Kantian point in McDowell which should not get lost in the endorsement of the soft line. There is something very plausible in McDowell’s Kantian position that “the objective world is present only to a self-conscious subject, a subject who can ascribe experiences to herself...[....]. It is ... the power of conceptual thinking that brings both the world and the self into view. Creatures without conceptual capacities lack self-consciousness and - this is part of the same package - experience of objective reality”.²⁴ Though of course a creature with perceptions with nonconceptual representational contents has states whose correctness conditions concern the objective world, it is a question whether a creature without the specific conceptual apparatus McDowell mentions would be conceiving - would even have the resources for conceiving - this world *as* objective. So the question arises: is there some way we can consistently acknowledge this point whilst also maintaining the soft line? I will be arguing that there is - but to do so we need some

²⁴ *Mind and World*, p.114.

deeper theory of the nature of the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual content.

I first draw a distinction within the possible grounds, or reason-giving states, which lead, in a given subject's psychological economy, to acceptance of a given kind of content. We can distinguish those grounds being *exhaustive*, for a given content, and their being *canonical*. Consider the minimal possible ways a creature capable of perceptual states with nonconceptual content may come to accept of three perceived objects *a*, *b*, and *c* that they are in a straight line, or may come to reject that same content. The content may be accepted on the basis of a perception with a nonconceptual representational content to that effect. Such a creature may also store this information, with or without memory images of the original perception. The content may come to be rejected if, in moving or being moved around, the subject does not have perceptions of the sort which, from other angles, should be produced by *a*, *b*, and *c* if they are in a straight line. Now suppose such perceptual and cognitive-map based ways of coming to accept or reject exhaust the subject's ways of coming to accept or reject such contents (or at least, exhaust those which are distinctive of those contents, if this subject is capable of engaging in more general modes of reasoning). Such exhaustiveness of the perceptual-cum-cognitive-map based ways of coming to accept or reject those contents contrasts sharply with the case of possession of the concept of being in a straight line. For a thinker with the concept *collinear*, any grounds for thinking that three things stand in the same relation as is perceptibly instantiated when the thinker sees three things to be collinear are equally grounds for judging those first three things to be collinear. There are no restrictions on what those kinds of grounds may be. What those grounds may be is something to be discovered. The grounds are in no way restricted to what can be attained through perception and the use of a cognitive map. These additional grounds need not be anything particularly sophisticated. Even the child who moves some straight-edged physical object to check whether three objects are in a straight line, when he cannot tell this, for one reason or another, just by looking, is manifesting a sensitivity to this open-endedness of grounds.

The presence in the thinker's thought of possible additional grounds is entirely consistent with perception having some canonical status in the individuation of the concept *collinear*, considered as an observational concept. Some grounds can have a privileged status, consistently with there being no restrictions in principle in a thinker's thought on the range of possible grounds. The fact that certain ground are canonical does not mean that they are exhaustive. We must distinguish the exhaustive from the (merely) canonical.

It is important to notice two points about the distinction between the exhaustive and the canonical. First, when a certain body of grounds is not exhaustive in principle in a thinker's thought, the thinker is tacitly operating with the notion of the same property, or same relation, in the world. It is the same relation which can be detected on the one hand by perception with the use of cognitive maps, and on the other by the additional means - the ruler, or whatever else the ingenious thinker may come up with. The thinker for whom grounds involving perception-cum-cognitive maps are not exhaustive for acceptance or rejection of a given kind of content must be capable of kinds of reasoning which involve grasp of the notion of sameness of property and sameness of relation. The same holds for the case of sameness of objects, if we apply these points to the distinction between genuine concepts of objects, and the ways objects are given in the nonconceptual content of perception.

The second point to notice about this distinction is that it has to do with the nature of objectivity. It is a consequence of the idea of things being objectively thus-and-so, of its being objectively the case that these objects stand in this relation, that their doing so is something that can be known about in many different ways. It is not restricted in principle to any one mode of access. We do not have fully objective thought unless a thinker manifests some grasp of a conception of objectivity with this character.

It is here that my discussion connects up somewhat more closely with McDowell, despite our major differences. For he insists that only with conceptual contents does one have a certain kind of objectivity - and I have recently been asserting just that. The reasons are not, of course, precisely the same. I have not, for instance, committed myself to the view that there is properly objective thought, thought about something conceived as objective, only if the subject actually has the concept of perceptual experience. All the

same, I am in agreement with McDowell that the minimal requirements for thought about an objective world which is in some way conceived as objective are not met simply by the possession of perceptual states with nonconceptual representational content.

A similar point holds also for a subject's conception of himself, herself (or perhaps, in the case of some mere animals, itself). The reasoning is essentially the same: it relies again on the distinction between the exhaustive and the canonical. Suppose a thinker's only way of establishing contents about himself is by the use of the following:

- (a) by perception - 'I am in front of a lake', 'I am under a tree';
- (b) by memory - 'I was in front of a lake', 'I was under a tree';
- (c) by integrating the deliverances of perception into a cognitive map and extracting the consequences thereof: 'There's a wood behind me', 'There's a lake an afternoon's walk from the wood in that direction'.

That is, for this thinker perception, memory and the operation of his cognitive map in the ways illustrated above exhaust his ways of establishing things about himself.²⁵ This is not yet to have a full conception of himself, as an object in the objective order of things. In particular, it involves no conception of what it would be for something to be true of himself that is not establishable as true by the above methods. Contents not so establishable include 'When I was asleep, I rolled over four times', 'There are times I existed of which I know nothing'. Full objective thought about oneself must, as in the case of conceptual thought about properties and relations, involve some conception of oneself as an object truths about which are not exhausted by those which can be established in a certain restricted set of ways. The subject who is oneself may exist in times, places and circumstances to which one's current means of establishing first-person contents cannot reach.

I conjecture that this distinction, in point of grasp of objectivity, between the minimal requirements for having states with nonconceptual contents, and what is involved in conceptual content, is a deeper reason why perceptual content cannot be explained in

²⁵ On non-conceptual self-consciousness, see Hurley, *Consciousness in Action*, ch.4.

terms of conceptual content. The most primitive aspects of representational content in perception, which our subjective experience shares with the mere animals, do not involve the grasp of objectivity required for conceptual content. This is one of the reasons that trying to treat all perceptual content as conceptual involves an overascription. We should always distinguish between content which is objective, and content which is not only objective, but is also conceived of as objective.

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