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Minds: Contents without vehicles

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ABSTRACT *This paper explores a new understanding of mind or mental representation by arguing that contents at the personal level are not carried by vehicles. Contentful mental states at the personal level are distinctive by virtue of their vehicle-less nature: the subpersonal physiological or functional states that are associated with and enable personal level contents cannot be understood as their vehicles, neither can the sensations or the sensory conditions associated with perceptual contents. This result is obtained by first extending the interpretationist ideas of Davidson and Dennett to show that subpersonal physiological or functional states cannot be construed as the vehicles of personal level contents. Then the anti-foundationalist arguments of Sellars are extended to show that sensory states cannot stand as vehicles to perceptual contents. The line of argumentation extended from Sellars also provides a critique of the current trend to posit non-conceptual contents.*

1. Introduction

This paper explores a new understanding of mind or mental representation by arguing that contents at the personal level are not carried by vehicles. What distinguishes our minds or mental lives at the personal level is that they consist of "pure" contents that differ from non-mental contents—such as the contents of linguistic utterances or inscriptions, pictures and subpersonal representational states—in their vehicle-less nature. Neither the subpersonal physiological conditions that are associated with and enable personal level contents nor the sensory aspects of perceptual contents can be construed as vehicles of personal level contents.

To see what is at issue, let us start with a preliminary clarification of the notion of a representational vehicle. A vehicle is a bearer or carrier of something. Typically, a vehicle or carrier such as a car is a discrete item. It might be illuminating to point out that to understand how a car can perform its function we need to consider not only the properties of the vehicle itself, but of a wide car-world system including available fuel, traffic regulations and weather conditions. The importance of the broader car-world system notwithstanding, the notion of a vehicle is of a discrete item that carries something—albeit by virtue of a variety of far-flung conditions. The idea of a representational vehicle is similar. It is the idea that there are discrete physical carriers of contents. Representations such as pictures or linguistic expressions consist of representational contents carried by representational vehicles. For

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example, in the case of photographs, paintings and drawings, pictorial contents are carried by pictorial vehicles that are arrangements of pigment on two-dimensional plane surfaces. In the case of written, electronic or spoken linguistic text, linguistic contents are carried by vehicles such as ink marks, pixels across computer monitors or compressions of air. Far-flung conditions may be required for pictorial or linguistic vehicles to carry their contents. But there is always a discrete vehicle associated with and carrying a content by virtue of such further conditions. There may be more than one content per vehicle (as some theorists argue in the case of pictures), but there is always a vehicle per content.

I am proposing that, in contrast to the contents of familiar non-mental representations such as texts and pictures, mental contents at the level of an experiencing person are not carried by vehicles. At the first person viewpoint, we experience contents or contentful episodes without experiencing any vehicles carrying those contents. From the third person viewpoint, we make sense of one another by attributing contents or contentful episodes to each other without attributing any vehicles carrying those contents. These facts distinguish personal contents not only from extra mental representational contents (such as those of pictures and texts), but also from the contents that may be ascribed to our subpersonal functional or physical states. Such subpersonal contents are ascribed to and carried by physical vehicles: the functional or physical states to which subpersonal contents are ascribed are the vehicles that carry those contents.

We need theoretical reasons explaining these facts—because what is at issue is nothing less than opening a new approach in theories of mind or of mental representation. Understanding personal contents as vehicle-less gives us a new way to understand the distinctiveness of the mental at the personal level as well as providing a new perspective on extant theories. It gives us a new way to think about the so-called mind/body problem, the problem of explaining the relation of personal contents to bodily conditions. The fact that *real* representations in the world such as pictures or texts consist of contents carried by vehicles helps us understand the motivations behind much work on this problem. On one hand, we can appreciate that attempts to show that there are specifiable, explanatory relations or mappings between contentful mental states and their associated discrete bodily conditions try to establish that mental states are *bona fide* representations by showing that despite their apparent purity, personal contents are carried by vehicles nonetheless. On the other hand, a variety of critical positions try to show that contentful mental states are not associated in specifiable, explanatory relations with discrete bodily conditions. In effect, such critical approaches deny that personal contents are carried by vehicles. In arguing that we need to understand personal contents in terms of widely far-flung conditions that do not include specifiable, discrete bodily conditions per content such approaches move beyond the quest for vehicles. Having moved beyond the notion of vehicles, some approaches often use that term loosely nonetheless [1].

In this paper, I reconstruct three of these key critical approaches—by Davidson, Dennett and Sellars—as the first step in opening up the new approach. (That is, I open up the new approach by showing that this position in logical space has some occupants already.) My point is to show how these challenges—even though they

were not formulated in vehicle-content terms—deny that personal contents are carried by bodily or sensory vehicles and so advance the idea that such contents are vehicle-less. All three challenges are illuminating not only in the terms in which they were formulated, but they also open the way to understanding the vehicle-less nature of personal contents. To locate the critical positions, I will not offer a catalogue detailing which theories of mental representation try to explain personal contents in terms of vehicles. Rather, I will sketch the two essential ways in which personal contents might be carried by vehicles, namely by discrete vehicles located *within* experience in its sensory aspect or *outside* of the "level" of personal experience in its physiological conditions. I call these empiricist and physicalist models. I will then explain how Davidson's and Dennett's interpretationism challenges the physicalist model and how Sellars' anti-foundationalism challenges the empiricist model (Sellars, 1956; Dennett, 1978, 1991; Davidson, 1980). I elaborate both Davidsonian and Dennettian challenges because they emphasize different factors in arguing that personal contents are posited in distinctive types of explanations required for persons. Both Davidson and Dennett conceive personal contents holistically as pattern elements posited in explanations that deal with patterns that are related to and contained within still larger patterns. But Davidson's approach depends on strong premises about the nature of rationality whereas Dennett's approach offers a weaker independent position. To demonstrate how the vehicle-less nature of personal contents follows from the normative role of rationality in constituting the patterns at issue, I reconstruct a line of argumentation from Davidson. To show how just the context dependence of personal contents within larger patterns—without the premise that the rationality of those patterns is distinctive—also entails that personal contents are vehicle-less, I develop a line of argumentation from Dennett. Moreover, in addition to a negative case denying that personal contents have vehicles, Dennett's work also provides a positive case explaining how there can be vehicle-less contents. I sketch this briefly as one opening gambit—one example of the way an account of the vehicle-less nature of mental contents might be developed. Finally, I elaborate Sellars' challenge to the empiricist account of experience because Sellars shows most clearly that the empiricist account is a content/vehicle model and that such an account could not be coherent. Sellars' diagnostic work is especially important in that it helps us to see the essentially empiricist or neo-empiricist nature of current theories of mind that posit nonconceptual as well as conceptual contents at the level of personal experience.

Before proceeding, let me clarify a feature of my terminology. I use the notions of *personal* and *experiential* contents interchangeably for the kind of content at issue, though such content is more often designated with notions such as intentional or mental. We need to keep firmly in view that the kind of content at issue is enjoyed by *persons*. Using more impersonal concepts, such as those of intentional or mental content, makes it easier to lose sight of the sorts of factors involved in the contentful experience of persons. Enquiry might show such factors to be constitutive for the sort of content at issue—but only insofar as they remain in view [2]. The vocabulary of personal or experiential contents also underscores the fact that personal contents are potentially occurrent or conscious; they are contents that might form part of the

conscious or experiential mental life of a person. At the personal level, contents of the standing states that make up an explanatory background for occurrent contents may themselves become occurrent. For example, my standing belief that *springtime is exhilarating* might become occurrent, joining my perception that *this sky is bleak* and my accompanying occurrent wish that *it were spring again*. In this important sense, "colorless" contents like beliefs and wishes are as essentially a part of a person's experiential mental life as are her perceptions [3].

2. Representational vehicles

If we think about non-mental representations such as pictures and linguistic expressions, we can articulate the nature of representational *vehicles* more precisely as follows. A representational vehicle is an item, state or event

(1) Having physical properties;
(2) Whose identity is constituted independently of its semantic properties by virtue of its nonsemantic properties; and
(3) Which is associated with a content either by virtue of being a token of a physical type or by virtue of its particular physical nature so that either (a) tokens of one physical type are associated with instances of one kind of content, or (b) a particular item, state or event is associated with a particular content.

The first condition states that vehicles have physical properties in the extended sense of "physical" in which compressions of air or pixels across computer monitors and perhaps sensory episodes have physical properties. In this sense, physical properties are properties that are explainable in physical terms.

Together, the first and second conditions articulate the fact that vehicles can exist as the discrete items that they are independently of the fact that they carry contents. A pigmented canvas is constituted as just that independently of the content it carries. Similarly, chalk marks on a blackboard are just that independently of the content they carry. Hence these conditions secure the fact that since the identity of vehicles is independent of their semantic properties, vehicles are *in principle* identifiable independently of their semantic properties. This is important because insofar as we believe that representations consist of vehicles that carry contents, each of these needs to be identifiable independently of the other *in principle*.

The third condition specifies that contents and vehicles may be related in one of two ways. When it comes to extra mental representations, whenever there is a content, a vehicle is associated with the content either by virtue of the individual vehicle's particular physical nature or by virtue of the fact that the individual vehicle is a token of a physical type (a type that can be specified independently of semantic properties). In a representational system, individual or token vehicles of a certain vehicle *type* are associated with instances of one *type* of content (3a above). The relation between content and vehicle type is stipulated or symbolic: it is a matter of conventions or practices that tokens of a certain physical type are related to contents

of one type [4]. The vehicle type may be arbitrary but it need not be. Linguistic representations are arbitrary and symbolic in this sense. Each inscription or utterance of a certain sentence, for example "Springtime is exhilarating," is associated with an instance of the content expressed by that sentence, in this case the content that *springtime is exhilarating*. Certain imagistic contents such as schematic diagrams are symbolic in this sense as well (though note that the vehicle might not be completely arbitrary in this kind of case). Moreover, if the conventionalist account of "realistic" pictures is correct, then all imagistic or pictorial contents are symbolic as well.

Nonetheless, it may perhaps also be the case that there is something about certain items, states or events by virtue of which they are particularly associated with certain contents (3b above). In such cases, it is not because the vehicle is a token of a type but because of its particular nature that it carries its particular content. The vehicle is not arbitrary and the relation between the vehicle and its content is not stipulated or symbolic. Perhaps "realistic" pictures are carried by vehicles that are such that, in each case, the vehicle is associated with its content by virtue of the vehicle's particular, visually discernible physical properties. Such vehicles are particularly associated with their contents in the sense that if the discernible properties of a vehicle were changed, its content would be different. For example, if a botanical print depicts a blossoming cherry branch in pale pink, then altering the color of the vehicle ever so slightly would also change its content: it would change the color which the picture represents the blossoms as being [5]. But "realistic" pictures are only the most familiar (though not uncontroversial) examples of particular vehicles carrying particular contents. Personal contents might be another example if they supervene on subpersonal physiological conditions as physicalism suggests.

Let's turn now to personal contentful episodes. How might it be possible to understand our personal contents as carried by vehicles? In the first place, the vehicles of personal contents would either be found at the personal "level," the "level" of experience along with their contents, or the vehicles would be "outside" of the experiential "level" in some sense [6]. Secondly, whether the vehicles of personal contents were at the level of experience or outside of it, the identity of the vehicles would be independent of their semantic properties. More specifically, insofar as personal contents are conceptual and the identity of vehicles is constituted independently of their semantic properties, the identity of the vehicles of these personal contents would be constituted independently of concepts. That is, while the identification or individuation of their vehicles would need to *use* concepts, it could not need to *mention* concepts. The individuation of vehicles of conceptual personal contents could not involve essential or ineliminable mention of concepts. If there is non-conceptual personal level content as well, the vehicles of such contents would be constituted independently of the relevant semantic properties. We can put these first and second points together by saying simply and somewhat elliptically that the vehicles of personal contents would be some non-semantic or non-conceptual aspects of experience or non-semantically, non-conceptually identifiable states or events outside of experience. Finally, we need to keep in mind that non-semantic, non-conceptual aspects of experience or non-semantically, non-conceptually

identifiable states or events outside of experience would be associated with their contents either by virtue of belonging to a physical or non-semantic or non-conceptual type or by virtue of their particular physical nature. Hence, to put all these considerations together in a tractable form, if personal contents were carried by vehicles, their vehicles would be:

(1) Some non-semantic or specifically non-conceptual aspects of experience or some non-semantically, non-conceptually identifiable states, items or events outside of experience;

(2) That are associated with personal contents by virtue of belonging to a physical or non-semantic, or non-conceptual type or by virtue of their particular physical (non-semantic, non-conceptual) nature.

Though they were not formulated explicitly in these terms, accounts of personal contents that meet these conditions have been advanced.

Such accounts fall into two groups: empiricist and physicalist models (the discussion in the remainder of this paper should make good the following introductory sketches). According to "classical" empiricist and neo-empiricist models, perceptual experience has a non-conceptual sensory "part" or "aspect" that clearly meets the conditions for vehicles but whose features are argued to be sufficient for constituting a subset of "given" or "non-conceptual" experiential contents as well. Though their motivations differ and their terminologies bear little affinity, empiricist and neo-empiricist approaches share in explaining perceptual experience as an amalgam of sensory and conceptual capacities and in claiming that conditions for sensory vehicles are sufficient for some experiential contents. "Classical" or foundationalist empiricism, such as that of the British Empiricists or of the early twentieth century phenomenalists, tries to show that the conditions for the nonconceptual sensory aspect of experience are sufficient for a minimal or basic kind of conceptual content. Thereby, classical empiricism posits episodes with a hybrid conceptual-nonconceptual identity; episodes that I will argue are also hybrid in being both conceptual contents and vehicles of such contents. Current neo-empiricist theories that posit non-conceptual contents as part of experience along with conceptual contents (Peacocke, 1992, 2001; Crane, 1992; Dretske, 1995; Tye, 1995;), attempt to acknowledge and avoid criticism of such hybrid or "given" episodes by separating the non-conceptual and conceptual aspects of the hybrid into two kinds of experiential contents. In doing so, neo-empiricism retains the core empiricist idea that sensory episodes that meet the conditions for non-conceptually identifiable sensory vehicles are sufficient for a kind of content—albeit a *non*-conceptual kind [7].

According to what we might call the "physicalist model," the vehicles of personal contents are states, items or events of our central nervous system (CNS), which are physically or non-semantically identifiable and of which we are not experientially aware as such. These CNS states or events are associated with personal contents either by virtue of belonging to a physically or non-semantically identifiable type (in reductive forms of physicalism) or by virtue of being physically or non-semantically identifiable particulars (in non-reductive forms of physicalism).

Since physicalist models posit that the vehicles of personal contents are outside of experience, they need to explain how such vehicles may bear experiential content nonetheless. The current, widely accepted cognitivist or content-oriented approach is that certain CNS states or events are the vehicles of *non*-experiential or subpersonal contents and that personal contents are composed out of and reducible to these non-experiential, sub-personal contents (Fodor, 1975; Pylyshyn, 1984; Sterelny, 1991). Given a reductive relationship between personal and sub-personal contents, it follows that personal experiential contents are carried by the vehicles of sub-personal non-experiential contents. Hence, the cognitivist version of the physicalist proposal turns on whether personal contents are indeed reducible to (or constituted out of) subpersonal contents. Alternatively, non-reductive forms of physicalism contend that particular personal contents supervene on particular subpersonal conditions. Such physicalist models propose that, in any given case, particular personal contents occur in association with particular physiological vehicles so that if there were a difference in the personal content, there would also be a difference in the physiological vehicle.

3. Challenges to the physicalist model

3.1. The Davidsonian challenge: The regulative principle of rationality as a constitutive ideal

The vehicle-less nature of personal contents follows from Davidson's position that the identity of personal or experiential contents is determined by distinctively interpretive factors or considerations. If Davidson is correct, it follows that even if contentful mental events are token identical with subpersonal bodily physical events, those bodily events cannot be understood as vehicles carrying those contents. This strong consequence is entailed by the distinctive nature of interpretation or rationalizing explanation that holds implications concerning the sorts of associations in which mental contents might stand. Davidson draws these implications in terms of laws, arguing against the possibility of psycho-physical laws. I will draw the implications with respect to the sorts of associations required between contents and their vehicles to show that personal contents and subpersonal physiological events cannot stand in the requisite relations. Putting Davidson's approach in vehicle/content terms will make its force clearer. Let us begin with a brief reconstruction.

According to Davidson, mental or experiential contents are contents that figure in explanations of persons. Mental contents are attributable in interpreting or making sense of persons and such attributions are governed by a distinctive regulatory principle, the principle of rationality, which acts as a constitutive ideal. Put in more Davidsonian terms, interpretation of a person's speech and action requires simultaneous attribution of propositional attitudes to that person, thereby locating speech, action and propositional attitudes in a rational pattern. Such interpretation and attribution are governed constitutively by the regulative principle of rationality [8]. The idea is that to make sense of persons is to make sense of them as acting more or less rationally and this requires attributing mental representations to them

that would render their actions rationally intelligible and justifiable. To attribute mental representations *is* to construe the subject of those mental representations as a rational agent and vice versa, to construe a subject as a rational agent *is* to attribute mental representations to him or her. Hence, because mental contents are attributable in making rationalizing sense of persons, such contents are rationally structured [9]. Of course, the occurrence of mental contents does not depend on actual interpretation. Rather, the point is that mental contents are interpretable in principle. We understand the nature and identity conditions of mental states insofar as we come to understand the conditions that enter constitutively into making such states interpretable.

Davidson is working with the uncontroversial understanding that explanations and the concepts that figure in them are governed by regulative principles. However, he does so in order to make a controversial proposal, namely that the principle of rationality that governs rationalizing explanations is distinctive in that it acts as a constitutive ideal or standard. The suggestion is that we can only come to understand the nature of the entities that figure in rationalizing explanations if we recognize that the regulative principle governing such explanation has the distinctive nature of a constitutive ideal or a standard. What is rational or reasonable is determined not according to the general tendencies of people but by constitutive ideals or standards. Like principles of logic, broader considerations of overall cogency regulate interpretation of persons in terms of what ideally *ought to be* the case rather than by what *generally tends to be* the case. Accordingly, the identity of personal or experiential contents is determined in terms of what *ought to be the case* if the person were rational rather than in terms of what *generally tends to be the case* when people are rational. However, this does *not* imply that the attributed contents are themselves ideally rational or that they are idealizations. We can bring out what Davidson is suggesting if we consider that rules of deductive logic act as regulatory ideals for logic proofs. Yet, not all proof attempts are valid nor are they idealizations. We need to apply rules of logic to discern potential logical order. This allows us to discern attempted logic proofs that do not quite meet the standards, as many or most do not. A flawed attempt at logical inference is determined as such by rules that come not in degrees but only as ideals. Davidson's view is that the identity of personal contents is determined analogously by principles of overall cogency. What counts as acting and believing rationally is determined according to standards or ideals of rationality. We can make sense of one another because we necessarily hold ourselves, as well as each other, responsible to logical standards of rationality. Consequently, a person's mental life does not have a structure of the sort where matters take their course as such matters generally tend to do.

But the physical is of this sort. As Davidson uncontroversially makes clear, physical events or events under physical descriptions figure in general tendency explanations that are regulated by principles that act as constitutive *laws* (rather than ideals or normative standards). This means that descriptions of physical events and attributions of physical properties using physical predicates are governed by "constitutive … laws like those of measurement of length [which specify that such measurement is *always* transitive]" (Davidson, 1980, p. 221) [10].

Davidson's point is that the distinctiveness of rationalizing explanation entails that neither *psychological* nor *psychophysical* laws are possible. *Psychological* laws are not possible because the relations between mental events are not ones of strict law-like regularity: the relations between such events are governed by considerations of rationality rather than by considerations of general tendency. *Psychophysical* laws (which relate events under psychological and physical descriptions strictly) are not possible because mental events and physical events are governed by distinctive regulative principles [11]. As Davidson summarizes the argument,

> There are no strict psychophysical laws because of the disparate *commitments* of the mental and physical schemes. It is a feature of physical reality that physical change can be explained by laws that connect it with other changes and conditions physically described. It is a feature of the mental that the attribution of mental phenomena must be *responsible* to the *background* of reasons, beliefs, and intentions of the individual. There cannot be tight connections between the realms if each is to retain allegiance to its *proper source of evidence*. … The point is that when we use the concepts of belief, desire, and the rest, we must stand prepared, as the evidence accumulates, to adjust our theory in the light of considerations of *overall cogency*: the constitutive ideal of rationality partly controls each phase in the evolution of *what must be an evolving theory*. (Davidson, 1980, pp. 222–23, emphasis added)

Let us first be clear that if Davidson is correct that the identity of personal contents is determined by interpretive considerations of overall cogency, the case against psycho-physical laws would also apply to the cognitivist version of physicalism. Cognitivism proposes—put in Davidsonian terms—that instead of aligning statements about contentful mental events directly with statements about physical events, we might align statements about contentful mental events with statements about contentful non-mental or non-experiential events that are attributed to a person's physical parts (or to states of those parts or events involving them). While statements that attribute contents to a person's physical parts may seem superficially similar to statements that attribute contents to a person, they differ crucially in that they are governed by distinctive regulatory principles. Like attributions of physical properties, attributions of contents to physical properties or events are governed by general tendency principles. In explaining our enabling physical conditions—the physical conditions that make us intelligible as persons—we might individuate some states and episodes of persons' central nervous systems as content-bearing states and episodes. However, although this kind of explanation attributes contents to the physical parts of persons, such contents are of the kind that is attributable given the way things generally (or nomologically) tend to happen as determined by causal principles and initial conditions [12].

I am suggesting that if Davidson is correct that identifying something as a person and attributing contents to it are like two sides of a single coin, then similarly, attributions of contents to a person's physical parts and identification of those parts would also make up two sides of a single coin, albeit one of a different type. Put less

metaphorically, Davidson's approach entails that identification of something to which contents may be attributed and attribution of contents to it are governed by the same type of regulative principle. Hence, just as identification of a person and attribution of a person's mental contents are both governed by considerations of rationality; so similarly identification of physical parts and attribution of contents to those parts are both governed by nomological or general tendency regulative principles. If Davidson is correct that a structure defined in terms of the constitutive principle of rationality has "no echo in physical theory" (Davidson, 1980, p. 231), then we cannot suppose that it makes any difference whether the would-be echo consists of the physical states or events of a person's CNS or the contents attributable to those physical states or events.

If we think in terms of the sorts of association required between contents and their vehicles rather than in terms of (strict) laws, then the distinctness of rationalizing and general tendency explanations entails that the physical conditions associated with personal contents cannot obtain in either the systematic or particular way required of vehicles. I suggested that a content may be understood as carried by a vehicle if whenever the content occurs, it is associated with a state, item or event that has physical properties; whose identity is constituted independently of its semantic properties by virtue of its non-semantic properties; and that is associated with the content either by virtue of belonging to a physical or other non-semantic type or by virtue of its particular physical nature. Let us begin with the first sort of case where contents are associated with vehicles by virtue of the fact that the latter belong to non-semantic types. If Davidson is correct, the considerations that tell against the possibility of psycho-physical laws also apply to the possibility that mental contents might be associated with vehicles belonging to physical or other non-semantic kinds such as functional kinds. Insofar as the identity of representational vehicles is constituted independently of their semantic properties by virtue of their physical or other non-semantic properties, their identity is determined by general tendency principles. Insofar as the identity of mental contents is determined by normative standards rather than general tendency principles, it could not be claimed that in any given case, a CNS event is associated with a mental content by virtue of the fact that the CNS event belongs to a physical or functional type so that events of that physical or functional type are associated with instances of that content. For example, it could not be claimed that whenever the content *springtime is exhilarating* is attributable to a person, there is a CNS event belonging to a physical or functional type such that events of that physical or functional type are associated with instances of that content. Rather, even if there were CNS events that could be identified as making up a physical or functional type regularly associated with mental contents of the kind *springtime is exhilarating*, it is possible that, in any given case, interpretive factors might determine that a different content is attributable to the person in question in that case.

The potential for divergence between mental contents and kinds of CNS events is underscored by Davidson's claim that insofar as the identity conditions of mental contents are governed by normative standards, they belong to an ever "evolving" theory. Mental contents belong to a theory that is in principle ever "evolving"

because there is always the possibility of new evidence in the form of a person's further actions and speech, new evidence concerning the person's background beliefs and commitments and the possibility of identifying different or new logical principles. New evidence or identification of new logical principles would require revisions in the individuation of contents that are independent of the individuation of CNS conditions. In contrast to the determination of mental contents, the identification of events in terms of nomological principles does not belong to theories that are in principle ever "evolving" and open to revision. Of course, theories that involve nomological constitutive principles can and do involve new discoveries. But the possibility of ever new evidence is not a necessary feature of such theories, as the potential for evermore "text" is a necessary feature of interpretation [13].

We can bring out the key point in Davidson's argument if we suppose the discovery of some neuroscientific evidence. The discovery of such new evidence could only call for revising the identification of CNS conditions according to general tendency principles. It cannot require revising the identity of personal contents, which could only be required by independent new evidence concerning the person's background beliefs and commitments or the "discovery" or identification of different or new logical principles. Even if we suppose a fortuitous coincidence of new neuroscientific evidence with new evidence concerning a person's background beliefs or with the identification of new logical principles, the requisite revisions in identification of contents and CNS conditions would be independent and potentially diverging "if each is to retain allegiance to its *proper source of evidence.*" Hence, insofar as the identity conditions of personal contents and of (types of) CNS states or events are governed by distinct regulative principles with distinct or "proper" sources of evidence, the latter cannot be systematically associated with the former so as to be their vehicles.

To see how reconstructing Davidson's approach in content/vehicle terms makes the force of its implications clearer, let us consider two objections. My reconstrual might seem too strong in appearing to entail the two following consequences. The claim that there is no systematic association between mental contents and tokens of vehicle types might also seem to imply that (i) there is no systematic association between linguistic contents and tokens of (linguistic) vehicle types and that (ii) there is no systematic association between mental contents and syntactic features. Both entailments seem problematic if one believes that explanations of linguistic and mental contents are of one kind. The first objection notes that insofar as Davidson's approach implies that there is no systematic association between mental contents and vehicles, it would also deny that there is a systematic association between linguistic contents and vehicles. Approaching the matter from the direction of linguistic contents—which clearly do and must have vehicles—suggests that the denial must be wrong. However; in the case of linguistic contents, the denial does not follow from my elaboration of Davidson's approach but rather from an additional commitment made by Davidson that we need not undertake. I will clarify Davidson's position shortly to show that my reconstruction concerning mental contents can stand: linguistic contents are systematically associated with tokens of

vehicle types though mental contents are not. The second objection arises from the belief, shared by many theorists, that the fact that we use sentences to attribute mental contents, and the fact that the meanings of sentences are associated with syntactically complex vehicles entail that the mental content we attribute—using sentences—are themselves associated with syntactically complex vehicles (Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988; Fodor & McLaughlin, 1990; Davies, 1991). Just as the semantic complexity of linguistic contents is necessarily associated with and explainable in terms of syntactic complexity, the semantic complexity of mental contents is necessarily associated with and explainable in terms of syntactic complexity. But according to my reconstruction, Davidson's position entails—correctly, I will argue—that our explanations of linguistic and mental contents need to come apart exactly here: unlike its linguistic counterpart, the semantic complexity of mental contents is not associated with syntactic complexity.

Since interpretation of language is integrated with the ascription of contentful mental states according to Davidson, interpretive factors fix both the contents of mental states and the meanings of sentences and their components. Hence, it might seem to follow that insofar as linguistic contents are governed by the principle of rationality they also could not be associated systematically with tokens of vehicle types, just as I have argued in the case of mental contents. This is clearly antithetical not only to much of Davidson's position but also to most theories of language—as states the first objection. Like most theorists, Davidson holds that a theory of meaning must show how a language is learnable and hence compositional. Consequently, like many, he believes that the meanings of sentential components must be systematically associated with vehicles that are non-semantically individuated. For example, the meaning of utterances of the sentence "snowdrops are white" can only be composed from meanings of the components insofar as there is a systematic relationship between the vehicles of the components such as "snowdrops" and "white" and their meanings across utterances. Moreover, in laying out the truth theoretic approach to linguistic meaning, Davidson relies on the fact that it is possible to give a structural description of a sentence independently of interpretation. In other words, the truth theoretic approach *presupposes* that tokens of vehicle types can be individuated independently of semantic considerations.

There is; however, an additional factor in the case of linguistic contents and vehicles that is lacking in the case of mental contents. Though interpretation of language is governed by regulative principles of overall cogency, there might also be factors such as conventions or practices that specify types of vehicles whose tokens are systematically, although *defeasibly*, associated with types of contents. According to Davidson, such public factors play an *inessential* background role that merely facilitates the learnability and interpretability of linguistic communication. But the constitutive force of principles of rationality does not require that public factors linking linguistic vehicles with linguistic contents play an inessential role. What is required is that such factors play a defeasible role, a role that is defeasible by considerations of overall cogency (by the requirements of rationalizing explanation). Consider, for example, the interpretation of a linguistically competent person's utterance of "Aren't all these roses wonderful?" in a garden containing many

varieties of flowers none of which are roses. Considerations of overall cogency might warrant interpreting that utterance as meaning '*aren't all these flowers wonderful?*' In such a case, the customary association between the linguistic vehicle ⋆roses⋆ and the content '*roses*' (which is crucial for the compositionality and learnability of language) would be defeated by considerations about that particular person's background beliefs, etc. Examples of this kind show that a Davidsonian approach may consistently hold both (i) that the compositionality and learnability of language require that public factors specify vehicle types associated with linguistic meanings; and (ii) that principles of overall cogency are constitutive for the interpretation of thought as well as talk in that such principles may defeat customary associations between linguistic vehicles and contents [14]. Upon reflection, it makes sense that linguistic contents might be associated systematically with vehicles while mental contents cannot be, since it is possible that factors such as practices or conventions defeasibly specify vehicle types in the case of linguistic contents but not in the case of mental contents.

Secondly, what about the objection that my position is too strong in implying that insofar as there is no association between mental contents and tokens of vehicle types, there is also no association between mental contents and syntactic features? As I indicated, the issue here is: does the fact that we use sentences to attribute mental contents, and the fact that the meanings of sentences are associated with syntactically complex vehicles entail that the mental contents we attribute—using sentences—are themselves associated with syntactically complex vehicles? I am suggesting that the anomalousness of the mental shows we need to develop an understanding of mental contents that explains that the semantic complexity of mental contents is not associated with syntactic complexity. As in the case of physical vehicles, the identity of syntactic features is constituted independently of their semantic features (syntactic features are identifiable independently of contents). Hence, if the anomalousness of the mental entails that there is no relation between mental contents and features, items or events belonging to types that are identifiable independently of semantic considerations, it implies that there is no relation between mental contents and types of syntactic features. We have seen that this implication seems incorrect if one is committed to the view that the semantic complexity of mental contents—the fact that the capacity to think "snowdrops are white" involves the capacity to think "snowdrops are flowers" and "gardenias are white"—must be explainable in terms of syntactic complexity. But this view is also motivated by the theoretical urge to explain mental contents in terms of physical vehicles: types of syntactic features are associated with or carried by types of physical vehicles and so they provide a crucial "intermediary" between physical vehicles and contents. In the case of extra-mental linguistic representations, types of physical vehicles are associated with types of syntactic features that are in turn associated with contents. So, one might believe that linguistic contents must always be systematically associated with syntactic features, especially since this would imply that mental contents of the linguistic kind are carried by and so explainable in terms of physical vehicles. But this is precisely the theoretical tendency that I am arguing we need to relinquish. Our understanding of mental content needs to come apart from our understanding of linguistic content and sentence meaning in just this

respect, as Davidson's position entails: the semantic complexity of linguistic contents (such as the meanings of sentences) is associated with syntactic complexity and so with syntactically complex vehicles while the semantic complexity of mental content is not. Further substantive defense and development of the idea that the semantic complexity of mental contents is not associated with syntactic complexity would require another paper devoted to that task. I cannot do more in the context of this paper than to suggest, as I have just attempted, that this thesis is indeed a sensible option and to show how it fits with thinking about mental contents in terms of vehicles [15].

Let us turn to the second sort of association that can obtain between contents and vehicles, an association between particular contents and particular vehicles. This is the possibility that even though personal contents are determined by interpretive considerations and hence anomalous, each content is nevertheless particularly associated with a CNS event that is its vehicle. Even if the distinctiveness of rationalizing explanation precludes that mental contents are associated with tokens of vehicle types, might not such contents be *particularly* associated with vehicles nonetheless? After all, Davidson himself argued for anomalous *monism*, arguing that each mental event is identical, "token" by "token", with a particular physical event. (That is, each particular event that can be identified using mental predicates can also be identified using physical predicates. Hence, what we are considering here is the supposition that a particular event, identified using physical predicates constitutes the vehicle of the content that is attributed if that event is identified using mental predicates.)

However, even if there were such a token-by-token identity between mental and physical events, the constitutive role of the principle of rationality would preclude the possibility of understanding the particular physical events with which mental events are identical as their vehicles. We need to return to Davidson's key argument reconstructed above. We saw that to claim that the mental is governed by the constitutive ideal of rationality is to claim that attributions of mental contents are in principle always revisable "in the light of considerations or overall cogency." In this context, the revisability of mental contents highlights the key point that: whether a particular mental content is identical with a particular physical (CNS) event or which mental content is identical with a particular physical (CNS) event is *not* determined by the physical properties of the event but by the interpretive considerations that go into making sense of persons and attributing mental contents to them. This is crucial because if the identity of particular mental contents and particular physical (CNS) events is not determined by the physical properties of the events, it is not the physical properties of those events that renders them uniquely associated with their contents. But then the physical events are not particular vehicles. Physical events would be particular vehicles only if they are associated with particular contents by virtue of their particular physical properties. Hence, insofar as the identity of mental contents is governed by the constitutive ideal of rationality, the physical events with which mental contents are identical (if there are any) cannot be explained as the particular, uniquely associated vehicles of those contents.

In sum, Davidson's work indicates that if we recognize that mental or experien-

tial contents figure in rationalizing explanations in which they are governed by constitutive ideals or standards, then even if we subscribe to a token-identity thesis, we cannot conceive the physical events with which mental events are token-identical as their vehicles [16].

3.2. The Dennettian challenge: Intentional states as context dependent patterns within larger patterns

The vehicle-less nature of personal contents also follows from Dennett's thesis that intentional contents are context dependent patterns that are attributable to an intentional system as a whole in explaining or predicting the system's larger *patterns* of behavior and interaction with its environment. This thesis is weaker than Davidson's in that it does not rely on holding that the rationality of the patterns at issue is irreducibly distinctive. If this strand in Dennett's work is correct, then physical or functional states are not identical with intentional states and neither can be understood as vehicles carrying intentional or personal contents. Dennett's approach also provides a suggestive example of a substantive account of personal vehicle-less contents: as pattern elements that are not identifiable independently as elements, but only as patterns within the context of the larger patterns to which they contribute.

Dennett's thesis that intentional states are attributed in predicting the behavior of the whole intentional system has largely provoked debates over its *instrumentalism* or *realism*. The pressing issue has seemed to be the status or "reality" of intentional states. The reality of such states has appeared unclear or problematic insofar as they are claimed to be attributed to the system as a whole in predicting the system's behavior. I am suggesting that Dennett's attempts to resolve this debate by discussing the reality of patterns and their elements—especially his discussion in "Real Patterns" (Dennett, 1991) of the metaphysical and ontological status of pattern elements that are not identifiable independently of the patterns that they constitute—also provides an understanding of personal contents as vehicle-less.

Let us rehearse Dennett's position briefly. His central claim is that our contentful experiential states are intentional states and that such states are attributable only to an intentional system *as a whole*. To attribute contentful or intentional states to one another is to adopt the intentional explanatory stance and to understand each other as intentional systems. In adopting the intentional stance, we recognize and make sense of something as a true believer: a rational intelligent system which, for the most part, has the beliefs and desires that it ought to have, given the assumption that it is optimally suited for its environment. Therefore, an intentional system is a system that can be understood, in the sense that its behavior can be predicted, by having intentional or contenful states attributed to it.

The overarching difference marking intentional explanation from design and physical explanations—the other two kinds of explanatory stances Dennett contends are needed for explaining ourselves—is that design and physical stances deal with a system's parts or elements rather than with the system as a whole. We explain a system's behavior from the design stance insofar as we analyze it into functional

parts and predict its behavior by assuming that each part will "function properly" or as it was designed to do [17]. We explain a system's behavior from the physical stance when we describe the physical constitution of a particular system and predict the behavior of the whole system "by applying whatever knowledge we have of the laws of nature" to work out the state changes of each physical part or element (Dennett, 1978, p. 4). In both cases, the identity of the parts or elements of functional and physical systems is independent of their role as elements of larger physical and functional patterns. Physical and functional elements are identifiable as elements independently of their larger context (that is, independently of the larger patterns that they help constitute).

In contrast, since intentional states such as the belief that *springtime is exhilarating* are not attributed to parts of the system but to an intentional system as a whole, their identity is not independent of their role as elements of the larger intentional patterns. Though Dennett holds that intentional patterns are normatively constituted by rules such as those of logical inference and language, he does not focus on the normative nature of the patterns at issue. The status of normatively governed attributions and of normatively constituted phenomena is one of the issues on which Dennett has vacillated, modulating and perhaps even changing his view across time (Sedivy, 1995; Hornsby, 1997) [18]. From our perspective, it is important that in his recent work on intentional patterns, Dennett keeps the focus firmly on the context dependence of the pattern elements while according an unproblematic status (in the sense of observer-independent orderly arrangement to be clarified) to the larger normative, rule governed patterns. This allows him to argue that the question of the metaphysical and ontological status of intentional states is an instance of the more general metaphysical and ontological issue concerning the status of patterns and pattern elements that are not identifiable independently of the yet larger patterns they constitute.

In the case of intentional systems, their complex activity in their environment is the kind of pattern at issue. What a person says and does in various circumstances makes up a pattern or patterns—but only insofar as the person's intentional states also figure as elements in the patterns as well. For example, if I play a game of chess, my behavior only makes up a playing-a-game-of-chess pattern if the pattern includes beliefs and desires in light of which my behaviors are the makings of various chess moves. Only if I am construed as an intentional system which believes that its circumstances are those of playing a certain rule-governed game and which wants to win that game, does my behavior make up an intelligible pattern. Only then can my behavior be construed as my acting in response to my opponent's moves by performing legal moves that it makes sense for me to believe might further my goal of winning the game. This example shows that intentional activity is the sort of pattern that is made up of elements that are not identifiable independently of the pattern. Though the pattern of engaging in playing a game of chess is made-up of elements and so cannot be identified without them, the elements of making legal chess moves in light of certain beliefs and desires are not identifiable independently of the larger pattern.

In his significant elaboration of Dennett's work on patterns, Haugeland (1993)

gives us a way to understand how there can be patterns that are made up of elements which themselves are not independently identifiable. Haugeland distinguishes two kinds of patterns: *orderly* arrangements that can be defined in terms of nonrandomness and compression of information and so are observer-independent; and *recognizable* arrangements that can only be defined in terms of discernibility to an observer and may be context-dependent. Orderly arrangement patterns can be of either law-like or rule-governed varieties where the identity and possible arrangements of the elements are determined in lawful or rule bound manners respectively. Examples of the sorts of rules that constitute rule-governed orderly arrangements are those of logical inference and of various games like chess, as well as rules that govern languages. In general, one might expect that orderly arrangements are made up of independently identifiable elements. This seems to be implied by the fact that such arrangements are neither context nor observer dependent. However, orderly arrangement patterns are not always made up of independently identifiable elements. For example, though the patterns constituted by the rules of chess are observer-independent, they are not made up of independently identifiable elements.

Haugeland suggests that we can resolve the apparent contradiction and understand how a pattern might be both observer-independent and yet not made up of independently identifiable elements, once we realize that the elements might not be simple but that they might be patterns themselves, and crucially, that they might be context-dependent patterns. As Haugeland explains, chess phenomena such as locations, pieces and moves

> …are a perfect example of…something's being noteworthy *as a pattern* not by virtue of how it's built out of elements, but by virtue of how it participates in or contributes to something else. Hence, in our larger unified account, chess pieces, locations and moves, would fill the bill as *recognition* patterns, functioning as elements in the orderly arrangement pattern defined by the rules of the game. (Haugeland, 1993, pp. 60–1)

For example, the rook in a chess game is itself a context-dependent pattern rather than an independently identifiable element, such as a piece of plastic. We can appreciate this if we consider that a single game of chess can be continued with a different set of physical pieces where a different independently identifiable element, perhaps an ivory rather than a plastic one, will *be* the *same rook*. Haugeland suggests the example of a game of chess begun with a plastic set of pieces in the garden and continued with an ivory set indoors once it begins to rain. What makes different physical pieces the *same* rook are the rules of the game specifying what pieces can do (and thereby what they "are"): so that if the plastic piece has castled, the ivory one cannot. (Hence, as Haugeland notes, the rook is also not token-identical with an independently identifiable physical item)

Haugeland's proposal applies well to intentional patterns. Intentional systems, their states and activities are orderly, observer-independent arrangements constituted by rules such as those of logical inference and language. Intentional systems say, do and think what it is reasonable to say, do and believe (for the most part). However, although intentional states are elements of these orderly patterns, they are

not independently identifiable elements. Intentional states are not identifiable independently of the patterns that they make up because the larger patterns provide the rules in terms of which their elements—which are, in turn, legal patterns that meet those standards—can be identified. Therefore, intentional states are recognizable as patterns in context, their rule-governed context being supplied by the larger patterns that they themselves make up. Similarly, intentional actions and speech are also recognizable, observer dependent patterns rather than independently identifiable simple elements: they are not identifiable independently of the larger patterns that they make up and they are not identical with independently identifiable bodily movements or physical motions.

If Dennett is correct that intentional states are context-dependent patterns that are the elements of larger observer-independent, rule-governed patterns, this would show that intentional contents are not carried by vehicles. Let us recall my definition of a representational vehicle. I suggested that a vehicle of content is a state, item or event that has physical properties; whose identity is constituted independently of its semantic properties by virtue of its non-semantic properties; and that is associated with a content either by virtue of belonging to a physical or non-semantic type or by virtue of its particular physical nature. So let us consider both cases. In the first place, if intentional states are not identifiable independently of the patterns they constitute, then they cannot be associated with vehicles that belong to independently identifiable types. This is clear if we consider the opposite: if intentional contents were associated with vehicles that belong to independently identifiable types, then that association would render intentional contents identifiable independently of the patterns they constitute. Secondly, individual intentional contents are not *particularly* associated with individual physical vehicles. This is also precluded by the context-dependence of intentional contents as opposed to the independent identifiability of particular vehicles. Insofar as intentional states are not identifiable independently of the patterns they constitute, then they cannot be associated with particular vehicles that are independently identifiable. Again, it might be helpful to consider the opposite—the possibility that intentional contents are associated with particular vehicles—from the perspective of Dennett's approach. If intentional contents were associated with independently identifiable particular vehicles, then that association would render intentional contents identifiable independently of the patterns they constitute. In other words, insofar as intentional contents *are not* identifiable independently of the patterns they constitute but physical states *are* independently identifiable, it follows that: if a particular physical state were the vehicle of a particular content, then the content would (in a roundabout way) be independently identifiable after all. This is inconsistent. Hence, Dennett's approach entails that intentional contents are not carried by vehicles. If one understands intentional contents as Dennett suggests—as patterns that are elements of larger patterns only identifiable within those larger patterns—then such contents are vehicle-less.

To highlight the exact nuance of Dennett's position, let us consider the following objection. One might charge that Dennett's case for the vehicle-less nature of personal contents relies on the distinctiveness of normative constitutive principles.

Insofar as intentional states are not recognizable independently of the larger pattern that they make up this would be due to the distinctive normative constitution of the larger intentional patterns: intentional pattern elements depend on the larger patterns because of the distinctive normativity of the larger patterns. The objection contends that Dennett's position is not weaker than Davidson's but that it relies on Davidson's stronger position without acknowledging the debt. The challenge has force for theorists who are not convinced that normative regulative principles are distinctive because it suggests that the anti-physicalist case for the vehicle-less nature of personal contents relies essentially on that controversial premise—that normative principles are irreducibly distinctive.

But juxtaposing Davidson's and Dennett's accounts of the identity conditions of intentional pattern elements brings out the relationship between their positions. Both hold that the identity conditions of intentional pattern elements (or contents) are distinct from the identity conditions for physical pattern elements (or vehicles). Davidson argues that this is due to the distinctiveness of normative regulative principles whereas Dennett argues that this is due to the dependence of intentional pattern elements on the larger patterns [19]. That is, Dennett agrees that the larger patterns which provide the identity conditions for intentional states are normative, but he wants to resist the suggestion that normative regulative principles function as constitutive ideals (Dennett, 1984). Yes, the identity of intentional pattern elements depends on the larger rule governed patterns that provide the standards or rules for the identity of the elements. However, the significance of this fact is that it creates the interesting dependence relations we have examined. This is the key point of divergence at the core of Dennett's approach. According to Dennett, normativity creates complex dependence relations between patterns and elements even if we do not construe normativity as a regulative *ideal*. The complex dependence is established by the fact that the larger patterns provide rules or standards that define smaller *patterns* that are the *elements* of those larger patterns—without the need to argue that rules and standards function as regulative *ideals*. In Haugeland's (1993) key phrase, an intentional state is itself "*a pattern* not by virtue of how it's built out of elements, but by virtue of how it participates in or contributes to something else." If Dennett's work on patterns makes this argument successfully, we have a second case for the vehicle-less nature of personal contents that is independent of considerations about the nature of normative regulative principles. On my reconstruction, Dennett's case is significant precisely because it can stand unaffected by disputes over the nature of normative regulative principles.

Finally, Dennett's work also yields a positive explanation of vehicle-less contents if we note that despite their vehicle-less nature, intentional *contents* are real in the sense in which context and observer-dependent patterns that make up larger orderly, observer-independent patterns are real. Haugeland draws out this implication by invoking the distinction between metaphysics and ontology. This allows him to suggest that the elements of intentional patterns need not be *metaphysically* real even though such elements and the patterns they constitute are *ontologically* real entities. As Haugeland (1993, p. 63) notes, our understanding of what is metaphysically real is that it is independent "in a strong sense, as that which needs nothing

else in order to be." For example, the concept of a substance is of an independent bearer of properties. In this sense, the elements of intentional patterns, such as intentional states, speech and actions are not real, they are not metaphysically real. They are real entities nonetheless, they are ontologically real. They are context and recognition dependent arrangements that make up larger orderly, observer-independent patterns. Intentional states, speech and actions are real in the same sense in which a rook and its moves are real: the rook is clearly an entity even though it is not token-identical with a metaphysically real substance. So intentional *contents* are real and their reality consists in the fact that they are context and observer dependent patterns that make up larger orderly rule-governed patterns *rather* than consisting in their being carried by metaphysically real *vehicles*.

4. Challenge to empiricist and neo-empiricist models

4.1. The Sellarsian challenge: The myth of the given

In turning to empiricist and neo-empiricist models, we are turning to approaches that locate vehicles along with personal contents at the level of a person's experience as sensory parts or aspects, rather than outside of it. Such models construe perception as a dual capacity where sensation and conceptualization come together and it is in the joining of sensation and conceptualization that we find an illicit union of vehicle and content within experience. Challenges to empiricism help us to recognize and to reject dual capacity models of perception as models that involve irreconcilable tensions, including those involved in positing vehicles as sensory aspects of experience.

The widely shared view that our perception is, in some sense, a dual or amalgamated capacity in which our sensory and conceptual capacities come together is a legacy of empiricism where this assumption takes explicit form. Since "classical" empiricist theory of mind has passed from currency, while the neo-empiricist nature of certain current theories has not come into focus as a topic needing discussion, let us begin with a brief characterization. Empiricism holds that perceptual experience consists of minimal experiences which are the purely sensory result of the world's impact on our senses, and more complex conceptually structured experiences that involve our understanding or conceptual capacities as well. The empiricist idea is that minimal sensory experiences inform more complex perceptions as a proper part. To inform perceptions, sensory episodes must have a dual nature and function. Sensations must be causal impacts from the world lacking conceptual structure yet they must play a classificatory 'this is F' (for example, 'this is red') role that fits with the rest of conceptually or predicationally structured mental life as well.

The dual model of perceptual experience with its dual requirements on sensations owes its on-going appeal to its integral place within the empiricist outlook. Classically, this construal of perception was required by needs in empiricist theory of knowledge that are posed by its metaphysics. To show how we might have justified beliefs about the world, empiricist theories construe perception as the meeting place for the world's causal impact on our senses and the conceptual

scheme in terms of which we go on to think about the world. This is necessary because of empiricism's oppositional metaphysics. Empiricism construes thought and world in terms of a categorical difference between the conceptual structure that we bring to bear in thinking and its absence from both the natural world we think about and from its impacts upon us. On the one hand, the requirement that sensory awareness is simply the result of non-conceptual causal impact from what's out there follows from understanding the world, what's out there, as lacking conceptual structure. On the other hand, the requirement that sensory episodes must have some minimal 'this is F' predicational or conceptual structure follows from the fact that our thoughts are conceptually structured, so that only other conceptually articulated episodes can stand in inferential, justificatory relations with them. Hence, the idea that there are sensory episodes satisfying both requirements, that causally induced sensory impacts play a justificatory, evidential or in any sense rational or epistemic role, is a core empiricist idea. It is the idea of what has come to be known as the *given*. While the notion of the given is by now rather infamous, it is important to recognize that this idea is not optional for empiricism but required by its metaphysics. Hence, it is apt to recognize, along with Davidson, that one of empiricism's defining dogmas is its larger metaphysical outlook, which distinguishes thoughts from the world they are about in terms of the respective presence and absence of conceptual structure [20]. This "third" dogma is sublimated in recent theoretical tendencies to split perceptual experience into qualia or qualitative contents on one hand and intentional or propositional contents on the other; or to split perceptual experience into non-conceptual and conceptual contents. The former attempts to explain perception's qualitative nature in terms of qualia or qualitative contents. The latter tries to explain the wealth of determinate information presented in perceptual experience in terms of non-conceptual contents. But both retain the dual-capacity model of perception [20]. I suggest that a theory is neo-empiricist insofar as it retains the dual-capacity model of perception while attempting to fix the problems encountered by classical empiricist accounts, problems posed by the fact that the dual model of perception resolves into a dual and opposing set of requirements on sensory episodes.

Empiricist theories do not explicitly give sensations such a dual role of course, lacking in conceptual structure on the one hand, yet rationalizing or epistemic on the other hand as well. That is the work of Sellars' diagnosis (1956), to show that empiricist theories hold that sensations (or their more recent counterparts) inform perceptions by giving sensations a rationalizing role that their lack of conceptual structure could not allow them to play. My point is that Sellars' diagnosis allows us to recognize that the idea that sensations are a rational part of experience is the idea that certain mental episodes are at once vehicles and contents, that the conditions for vehicles of contents are sufficient for certain contents as well. Sellars argues for the vehicle-less nature of experiential contents by arguing against the idea that sensations could be a rational part of experience.

Let us briefly trace Sellars' diagnosis in the terms in which it was formulated. Sellars exhibits the incoherence of the core idea by reconstructing the empiricist account of the way sensory episodes function in conceptually structured mental life

[21]. According to empiricist foundationalism, sensory episodes play a conceptual role and so have conceptually structured content by virtue of having a certain intrinsic character (that is *antecedent to* and *independent* of conceptual structure). The intrinsic character of a sensory episode is the character of one's experience when one has a sensation of, for example, red or C#. Hence, the notion of the intrinsic character of a sensory episode is the notion of an unstructured particular. In contrast, perceptual experiences are structured episodes rather than unstructured particulars. The fact that perceptual experiences are structured follows from the fact that they are cognitive episodes—such episodes must have minimal (judgmental) 'S is P' or 'this is F' structure necessary for inferential relations. So perceptual experiences are conceptually structured experiential episodes having a structure that corresponds minimally to facts of the form 'this is F'. The conceptually structured content of a perceptual experience would be that a certain item is, for example, red or C#. Sellars argues that despite this difference—between an unstructured particular and a predicatively or conceptually structured episode—the empiricist thought is that their particular causally induced character allows sensory episodes to play a conceptual role in our mental lives: the role of classifying the stimuli that cause episodes having that intrinsic character. The idea is that because the particular intrinsic (and non-conceptual) character of sensory episodes is causally induced, it allows sensory episodes to play the role of classifying the stimuli that cause episodes having that character. Therefore, sensory episodes can play conceptually structured 'this is F' roles in our mental lives, that is, in our inferences, by virtue of having the particular intrinsic character they have. It is in virtue of playing the role 'this is F' in inferences that they represent facts of the form 'this is F'. Hence, it is clear that according to foundationalism, the intrinsic causally induced (and non-conceptual) character of these episodes determines the *content* they bear since it is in virtue of that intrinsic character that these episodes play a classificatory conceptual role in our mental lives.

But this is a conception of an impossible "mongrel," Sellars argues, because an episode's just having a certain intrinsic character independently of conceptual structure and the episode's ability to play the role 'this is F' in mental life have opposing conditions of possibility. If a causally induced episode has a certain intrinsic character *independently of having conceptual structure* then that character is the result *only* of the nature of that causal process and of the particular factors involved in it. In contrast, Sellars notes that all empirically minded philosophers would agree that the conceptual classificatory consciousness that 'this is F' is an ability that needs to be acquired—at the very least such an ability must involve the "forming of associations" or the "setting up of stimulus-response connections" (1956, p. 258). Consequently, episodes in our mental life that are classificatory presuppose some acquisition or learning process. Hence, it is incoherent to suppose that there could be content bearing items or episodes whose content both presupposes and does not presuppose acquisition; a content that is at once just the particular intrinsic character of that state as well as a conceptually structured classification of that character. We cannot suppose that a sensory experience might *play* the classificatory role 'this is F' in our mental life, and so *bear* the conceptually

structured content 'this is *F*' exclusively in virtue of the fact that the episode *has* a certain intrinsic character antecedently to and independently of conceptual structure.

This diagnosis also shows that the empiricist conception of sensory episodes is a conception of vehicles within experience that are particularly suited for bearing certain contents. Let us recall that the identity of representational vehicles is independent of their semantic properties (since such vehicles are in principle identifiable independently of their conceptual contents). This is precisely the aim of the empiricist conception of sensory episodes: the identity of such episodes is determined by their causally induced intrinsic character. Moreover, the empiricist idea is that sensory episodes are particularly suited for carrying out the role of conceptually structured experiential episodes by virtue of their intrinsic causally induced character. That is, by virtue of their causally induced character, sensory episodes are independently identifiable, particularly suited vehicles of conceptually structured experiential contents.

However, as Sellars makes clear, because of the conceptually articulated nature of perceptual and other personal contents, and because of the fact that sensory episodes need to stand in inferential, justificatory relations to personal contents, empiricism also needs to hold that sensory episodes are contentful and that their contents have minimal conceptual structure. But that is to hold that sensory episodes are conceptually identifiable, that they are themselves minimal contentful episodes. This shows that empiricism is committed to the idea that sensory episodes are both minimal experiential contents and the vehicles of experiential contents. However, contents and vehicles have distinct identity conditions in that the identity of vehicles cannot involve essential or ineliminable mention of concepts whereas the identity of personal conceptual contents involves ineliminable or essential mention of concepts. Insofar as given sensory episodes are simply non-conceptual impacts, their individuation does not involve essential mention of concepts; insofar as given experiential episodes bear contents with minimal conceptual structure, their individuation involves ineliminable mention of concepts.

What about the current neo-empiricist trend to explain perception as composed of conceptual as well as non-conceptual contents? Though a number of theorists of mind propose somewhat varying characterizations of non-conceptual contents to meet explanatory needs in theories of mental representation (Crane, 1992; Peacocke, 1992, 2001; Dretske, 1995; Tye, 1995; Davies, 1996;), the trend might nonetheless be encapsulated fairly as follows. Non-conceptual contents are posited principally to explain the distinctive character of perceptual experience: its wealth of detail and determinacy—not to mention its qualitative aspect—as well as its resistance to alteration by our beliefs in illusory cases. Aside from its qualitative nature, perceptual experience poses problems for theories of mental representation in the first instance because it presents information that goes beyond the descriptive concepts possessed by perceivers such as the concept *red* or even *crimson, scarlet* or *fuchsia* [22]. To explain this phenomenon, it is proposed that perceptual experience consists of non-conceptual contents, such as for example *red23*, whose primary defining feature is that "the general features entering into those contents need not

be ones for which their subjects possess matching concepts" (see Tye, 1995; although, we still need to specify such contents using our concepts, for example, red 23) [23]. Since they are non-conceptual, such contents lack predicational or conceptual 'this is F' or 'S is P' structure. Proposals diverge concerning whether non-conceptual contents are simply unstructured or whether they have some alternative sort of structure (e.g. see Peacocke's (1992) proposal of two alternative sorts of structure—scenario and proto-propositional—for two varieties of non-conceptual contents he posits). However, it is agreed that non-conceptual contents must be able to serve an evidentiary function in mental life. Though not conceptually structured, it is held that they *are* pieces of evidence [24].

In one respect, these theories are clearly responsive to the incoherence of the given, of positing hybrid conceptual–non-conceptual episodes. The idea that there are non-conceptual as well as conceptual contents separates the two aspects of the classical empiricist hybrid into two distinct kinds of mental episodes. We can appreciate this with Sellars' precise diagnosis in view, but we can also see that this is still a dual-capacity model of perception. This is especially evident in some works, such as Tye's (1995), where non-conceptual contents are explicitly defined as located or "poised" at the "interface" between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. Consequently, like any model that divides perception into two distinct capacities or kinds of contents, non-conceptual content theories need to explain exactly how the dual capacities of dual contents can relate or function together. This is the key issue: can non-conceptual content theories provide a coherent explanation of the relationship between non-conceptual and conceptual contents—unlike their empiricist predecessors—one that does not fall afoul of the distinction between contents and vehicles?

Sellars' work helps us to refine this issue into two more focused questions. Firstly, his diagnosis allows us to identify the chief points of similarity and dissimilarity between given experiential episodes and non-conceptual contents. Like the given, non-conceptual contents both (i) play a descriptively classificatory and evidentiary function in experience, and (ii) have an identity that is determined independently of concepts. For example, the non-conceptual content *red23* would be individuated independently of our conceptual capacity which consists of much less precise classifications such as *crimson* and *scarlet*. The idea is that such non-conceptual content explains how a person can experience— that is, discriminate and re-identify—a particular hue for which she lacks a correspondingly precise descriptive concept. Insofar as perceivers have the capacity to discriminate and to reidentity hues such as *red23*, their experiences are classificatory and rationalizing, they can serve as evidence for conceptually structured perceptions and beliefs. But unlike the given, non-conceptual contents lack conceptual structure. That is why discussion of non-conceptual contents often proceeds by focusing on the possibility that representational states could have a classificatory and rationalizing function, particularly an evidential one, yet lack conceptual structure. Since the representational states at issue are at the personal level, we can pose the more focused question whether episodes at the level of a person's experience *can* be classificatory and evidential yet lacking in conceptual structure?

Secondly, by showing that the classical notion of hybrid conceptual/non-conceptual sensory episodes is the notion of episodes that are both contents and vehicles of contents, Sellars' diagnosis alerts us to the fact that de-hybridized non-conceptual episodes are also aspects of mental life that meet the conditions on vehicles and yet are claimed to be contents. Since non-conceptual contents are episodes in mental life whose identity is constituted independently of concepts and which lack conceptual structure, they clearly meet the conditions for vehicles. (Moreover, non-conceptual contents belong to types (e.g. *red23*) and so satisfy the condition of vehicles that are associated with contents by virtue of being tokens of a type that can be specified independently of concepts.) However, though the episodes in question meet the conditions on vehicles of conceptual contents, they are claimed to be distinctively non-conceptual contents. This suggests that theorists of non-conceptual contents are proposing that the conditions for vehicles of conceptual contents suffice for a distinctive type of representational content also found at the personal level of experience. Hence, we can pose the second more focused question whether the conditions for the vehicles of conceptual contents are sufficient for contentfulness at the level of a person's experience?

With foundationalist empiricism in view, we can answer these questions in the negative, starting from the epistemic issue raised by our first question. There was reason, after all, why empiricists felt compelled to posit hybridized episodes. Insofar as we agree that mental life at the level of an experiencing person is broadly rational and inferentially structured, we are committed to agreeing that anything that figures within such mental life has conceptual structure. Foundationalist empiricism saw that an aspect of experience can function as evidence only if it can support some proposition or claim. This means that to function as evidence an aspect of experience needs to have propositional or conceptual structure. A conceptually structured content can only be "supported" by another conceptually structured content. Given or hybrid non-conceptual/conceptual episodes were posited in response to appreciating the need for conceptual structure for inference and hence for anything that might figure as evidence or play a justificatory, rationalizing role within the mental lives of persons. In turn, neo-empiricists appreciate that such hybrid episodes are not possible and so feel compelled to separate the hybrid by postulating that episodes lacking conceptual structure can have classificatory content and figure as evidence within persons' mental lives. Their proposal is that the non-conceptual contents of perceptions "may *be* pieces of evidence" even though they do not stand in either inferential or evidential relations (Crane, 1992, p. 151) [25]. But surely this is an empty verbal manipulation, as empty as the posit of given episodes. We speak loosely of particular physical items as evidence. Yet, this does not mitigate the fact that only something with predicational or conceptual 'S is P' structure can support or justify a conclusion by serving as a premise in inference. When we speak loosely of a piece of evidence we have in mind what our courts refer to more precisely as something like "(people's or defense) *exhibit* (a or b…)." The evidence is the testimony of the witnesses and the argumentation presented by lawyers (which in a loose sense renders the exhibits into evidence); together these conceptually structured contents serve as the support for the jury's conclusion [26]. Hence, insofar as

one grants, as proponents of non-conceptual contents do, that the contents at issue—contents that explain the wealth of determinate perceptual information—need to serve a rationalizing, evidentiary function in a person's mental life, such contents cannot be non-conceptual, lacking conceptual structure. When we recognize this, we see that it answers our second question as well: the conditions that suffice for non-conceptually identifiable vehicles of conceptual contents cannot also suffice for contents at the level of a person's experience. The two answers fit together: contents at the personal level cannot lack conceptual structure and fulfill the rationalizing functions required at that level. At the personal level, the conditions for contents and vehicles cannot merge.

To summarize, Sellars' work enables us to see that empiricist accounts of perceptual experience hold that the properties of sensory vehicles (within experience) are sufficient for at least some "basic" contents. Classical foundationalist empiricism claims that the conditions for sensory vehicles are sufficient for a subset of "minimal" *conceptual* contents while neo-empiricism proposes that the conditions for sensory vehicles suffice for *non-conceptual* contents. We can also turn this point around and note that empiricist and neo-empiricist approaches to mind hold that there is a subset of personal contents—argued to be minimal and basic in some sense—for which the conditions for sensory vehicles are sufficient. But Sellars' diagnosis of the foundationalist empiricist proposal establishes the general conclusion that if one tries to explain experiential contents as carried by vehicles that are themselves some part or aspect of experience or as having just the same conditions as vehicles that figure in experience one is engaged in an incoherent project. The project is incoherent because one will be conceiving of some intrinsic part or aspect of experience as both vehicle and content while these have incompatible conditions. One will be conceiving of it, along with the empiricists, as both nonconceptual in identity and conceptually structured, as both unacquired and requiring acquisition. Alternatively, one will be conceiving it, along with the neo-empiricists, as both lacking in conceptual structure yet functioning as evidence in conceptually structured mental life.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us draw these challenges to empiricist and physicalist models together. Davidsonian and Dennettian challenges to physicalist models argue that personal contents are posited in a distinctive way of making sense of ourselves and that, as a consequence, they are not carried by physically or non-semantically identifiable vehicles, which figure in a different type of explanation. Making sense of ourselves as experiencing, thinking persons is distinctive in that such understanding is normatively governed and concerns ourselves as whole beings. These positions depart from empiricism. They advance a new, *non-oppositional* way of understanding the nature of conceptual thought that diagnoses of givenness invite. That is, interpretationist approaches do not identify human mentality—whose hallmark is rational, conceptual structure—by contrast with a reality that is lacking in such structure. Rather, interpretationism proposes that understanding human thought is an integral

part of the framework by means of which we render ourselves intelligible as rational agents. The notion of *conceptual thought* is properly located in the framework of concepts we need to make ourselves intelligible as rational persons—as agents who act in light of their conceptually structured beliefs, perceptions, wishes and fears. The factors that determine the identity conditions of thoughts are found here.

In undertaking these departures from empiricism, interpretationist theories reject the empiricist model of perception as the meeting place where sensation informs understanding, the meeting place of the non-conceptual and the conceptual [27]. That model locates sensory vehicles along with contents *within* experience by conflating their conditions. Yet, these departures also allow interpretationism to afford its own lessons. Interpretationist theories show that we cannot explain personal contents in terms of vehicles that are found *outside of* the personal level either. This is the way that challenges to empiricist and physicalist models come together.

Their relationship stands out clearly if we proceed chronologically from anti-empiricist challenges to interpretationism (reversing the order of presentation in this paper). Anti-empiricist challenges showed that we cannot explain perceptual experience as an amalgam of sensation and conceptualization, of sensory non-conceptual as well as conceptual contents. We cannot explain personal contents as carried by vehicles that are themselves found within experience as "parts" or "aspects." We cannot suppose that the conditions for representational vehicles suffice for personal contents. The personal is constituted by contents that can stand in broadly rationalizing relations to one another—it is fully conceptual (to use the current term). Interpretationist approaches meet these requirements by locating personal content in the framework of explaining ourselves as rational agents, stressing that all perceptual content is rationalizing or conceptual. However, in doing so, they show that it is not enough to avoid positing vehicles within experience. They show that we also cannot explain personal contents as carried by vehicles that are "outside" of experience in the physiological conditions of parts of persons, thereby challenging physicalism. It turns out that to relinquish the empiricist model is to challenge the physicalist model.

Perhaps we might have expected this, for as Sellars (1956, p. 298–99) wrote "in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing [or thinking or experiencing], … *we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says*." The alternative framework that these words suggest—one that can encompass more than the interpretationist approaches on which the introductory discussion in this paper has focused—brings its own problems and explanatory hurdles, of course. Here are just two explanatory demands—perhaps the most obvious—posed by recognizing that personal contents figure in the space of reasons so that they are vehicle-less and fully conceptual in nature: (i) the need to explain the physical conditions that enable personal contents without construing those conditions as vehicles while accommodating and even illuminating the causal efficacy of contentful personal level episodes; and (ii) the need to explain the determinate content presented in perception as fully conceptual. We can strive for

innovative solutions. Alternatively, we can further sublimate the well-worn explanatory tendencies against which this paper has argued.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] It might be said that the vehicle of personal contents is the whole person, or the whole brain or large chunks of it functioning as a connectionist system on which multiple representations are superposed, or some wide combination of person or connectionist brain embedded in the world. However, in such claims, the notion of a vehicle is not doing any informative work since contents are no longer associated with specifiable, discrete carriers. Rather, the more specific notion of a vehicle is being used to refer to all of the conditions of whatever kind that stand in an explanatory relation to personal contents without there being anything like one vehicle per content. It seems to me that usage of this kind has the potential, at least, for being misleading.

[2] For an extended case for the importance of retaining the notion of persons in our theoretical sights, see Hornsby (1997).

[3] Using these notions interchangeably does not beg the question against proponents of non-conceptual contents who hold that experiential contents are not all conceptual. The issue is not whether the personal level is the level of experience but whether that level can be partitioned into contents that have and that lack conceptual structure.

[4] To be more precise, it is stipulated that certain differences among physical properties are not relevant so that items, states or events that differ in those respects count as tokens of one physical type and it is stipulated that all tokens of that type are associated with contents of one kind.

[5] Though "realistic" pictures are the obvious example of representations where particular vehicles carry particular contents, I do not intend to suggest that the notion of a particular vehicle is to be understood narrowly in terms of the sort of resemblance model popular for pictorial vehicles and their subjects. I do not believe that such approaches to pictorial representations are correct (Sedivy, 1996a). More importantly, a resemblance approach is too restrictive to capture the nature of the particular vehicles on which personal contents supervene according to non-reductive forms of physicalism—see the discussion of the physicalist model above.

[6] I put the well-worn expression of a "level" in scare quotes here at its first occurrence to signal that this is a metaphor that imports dangerous commitments: levels are found in vertical arrangements where some are necessarily lower than others and where there must be a lowest level that is "basic" in some sense. As Wittgenstein would say, the "conjuring trick" has already been done: what seems to be our explanatory task is set for us by the picture this bit of language creates.

[7] For the purposes of this article, I am restricting my attention to the most recent form of neo-empiricism that takes the form of positing non-conceptual contents at the personal level along with conceptual contents. However, quite recent theories such as functionalism and the central state identity theory that divide perceptual states into qualia or qualitative contents on one hand, and intentional or propositional contents on the other are also neo-empiricist in holding onto the classical

dual-capacity model of perception as an amalgam of sensory and conceptual capacities. More detailed exposition will be provided in the section dealing with empiricist and neo-empiricist models.

[8]   See especially Davidson's (1980) "Mental Events." I can reconstruct Davidson's work in my terms as concerning the attribution and hence individuation of experiential or personal contents because propositional attitudes, such as *wishing that it were spring*, are experiential or personal level attitudes to propositional contents. By mental events, Davidson means events described using mental or psychological predicates, such as the predicates used to attribute propositional attitudes. Hence, where Davidson speaks of mental events, we can understand that he means contentful, experiential events at the personal level. See Evnine (1991) for a summary discussion of the way in which Davidson's conception of the nature of events in general, and of mental events in particular, seems to have changed since the writing of his seminal "Mental Events" (Davidson, 1980). Those changes make a difference to Davidson's arguments for monism but not for his thesis that the mental is anomalous and hence they do not affect my argument.

[9]   I do not use the notion of *rationalizing* explanation in contrast to causal explanation. Hence, my use of the notion of *rationalizing* explanation does not imply that such explanation is not causal or that the contentful episodes identified thereby are not causally efficacious.

[10] Davidson's point also applies to functional explanation (of the causal variety), which identifies phenomena that are determined by constitutive principles specifying general tendencies rather than constitutive ideals or standards.

[11] Laws in general—and psychophysical laws in particular—would "bring together predicates that we know a priori are made for each other" (Davidson, 1980, p. 218). Hence, if we understand the nature of the regulative principles that govern mental and physical predicates, we can know whether law-like statements that bring the two predicates together are possible. I will shortly address the concerns of those who counter that Davidson's argument turns on the impossibility of strict psychophysical laws while only non-strict generalizations between the mental and physical descriptions are sufficient. I believe that considering the latter in terms of the associations required between contents and vehicles will illuminate the strength and import of Davidson's position.

[12] This point also applies to functionalist cognitivism, which attributes non-experiential contents to a person's functional parts and only thereby in turn, if at all, to a person's physical parts. The point applies because contents attributed to functional states are attributable given the way things generally tend to happen as determined by causal principles and initial conditions.

[13] My choice of the word "text" here echoes Hilary Putnam (1983, p. 150): "A translation scheme, however well it works on a finite amount of corpus, may always have to be modified on the basis of additional text."

[14] Though the present paper is not the place in which to press the point, I suggest that tracing the implications of Davidson's stress on the distinctiveness of the regulative principle of rationality with respect to the relation between contents and vehicles shows that his approach needs to relinquish the claim that background practices or conventions specifying linguistic vehicle types are *inessential* rather than *defeasible*.

[15] I am grateful to Christopher Peacocke and Ronald de Sousa for making this objection and to William Seager for helping me see that I may maintain my position.

[16] Let me mention a variant on Davidson's position. Davidson's arguments for monism have been criticized by philosophers such as Jennifer Hornsby (1997) and John McDowell (1985). These challenges would leave us with a position according to which the mental is anomalous but not token-identical with the physical. Clearly, this variant position also holds that mental contents are not carried by vehicles.

[17] Moreover, in explaining the behavior of a system in terms of the behavior of its functional parts or sub-systems, we can, as Dennett (1978, p. 4) says, "make predictions solely from knowledge or assumptions about the system's functional design, irrespective of the physical constitution or condition of the innards of the particular object."

[18] Perhaps it needs to be stated explicitly that the reconstruction I am offering captures one strand in Dennett's thought but does not purport to define Dennett's position as such since I believe that Dennett's views have been changing across time.

[19]   To take the contrast one step further, Dennett holds that the distinctive identity conditions of intentional patterns preclude identification with physical pattern elements whereas Davidson argues that they do not: intentional and physical pattern elements have distinct identity conditions but are one and the same events nonetheless.

[20]   I want to urge that this ... dualism of scheme and content, of organizing system and something waiting to be organized, cannot be made intelligible and defensible. It is itself a dogma of empiricism, the third dogma. The third, and perhaps the last, for if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to call empiricism, (Davidson, 1984, p. 189).

[21]   Sellars focuses on the phenomenalist form of empiricist foundationalism prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century, briefly considering the classical empiricism of Locke, Berkeley and Hume as well.

[22]   It might be argued that the current focus on the determinate wealth of information presented by perception is a way of recasting the problem that used to be discussed as the qualitative nature of perception.

[23]   For the most part, definitions of non-conceptual contents and arguments for such contents neglect the distinction between descriptive and demonstrative contents. Put more precisely, the idea that there are non-conceptual contents is the idea that there are contents that outrun our descriptive concepts such as the concepts cat, red or crimson. This level of precision is important since one argument against the proposal that there are non-conceptual contents is that the content of complex demonstrative concepts, such as the concepts this cat, that red, or this crimson are as fully determinate as that which they represent so that such concepts can inform and structure the most determinate contents of our perceptions. Clearly, this issue lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, in the interest of accuracy I characterize the non-conceptualist's proposal as suggesting that there are contents that outrun our descriptive concepts even though the proposal is not made with this precision.

[24]   For a detailed discussion of this proposal, see Crane (1992). I am putting forward the view that non-conceptual contents *are* evidence as paradigmatic of non-conceptual content theories even though some of the theories vary in their proposals on this point. In particular, Christopher Peacocke has advanced a different proposal (1992, 2001). However, I do not consider his proposal because its complexity lies beyond the scope of this paper and I argue against it in Sedivy (1996b). However, let me mention as what might seem to be a significant variant, Tye's (1995) approach. Tye's proposal is couched in a thoroughly non-epistemic cognitive science vocabulary of inputs, outputs, causal relations and boundaries. Despite this terminology, it can be shown that Tye's proposal is also concerned to have nonconceptual contents play an epistemic or evidentiary function (i) in its requirement that nonconceptual contents supply "the inputs for certain cognitive processes whose job it is to produce beliefs (or desires) from the *appropriate* nonconceptual representations" (1995, pp. 138, 143–44) together with (ii) its concession that the content of the resultant beliefs cannot be explained in terms of causal covariance (1995, pp. 101–2).

[25]   Please recall that Crane's proposal (1992) is being taken as paradigmatic.

[26]   Consider the crucial exhibit or "piece" of evidence in a murder trial, let us say a particular gun. The only way the "piece" can support the claim that its owner is the murderer in question is if it is accompanied by a commentary establishing that and how the piece—namely, the gun—was used by its owner. But what supplies the mediating commentary in our mental lives? All there is according to non-conceptual content theories are non-conceptual and conceptual contents. There is no middleman in our mental lives brokering the evidential relation between perception and belief. To posit yet another mediating type of state or content would only make matters worse. Hence, perceptual content must be conceptual as well as determinate. But this is the starting point of a new substantive account rather than another maneuver in the factorizing empiricist framework we are considering.

[27]   I am not trying to suggest that the way in which Davidson's and Dennett's interpretationist theories go on to explain perception is correct. It is only their rejection of the empiricist model that I am mentioning and endorsing. To avert misunderstanding, it might be useful to state that

I am also not suggesting that Sellars' substantive account of perception is correct—again, it is only his diagnosis of the empiricist model that I am endorsing (see Sedivy, 2004).

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