

Non-conceptualism and the Myth of the Given

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ABSTRACT

Defenders of non-conceptualism have been accused of falling into the Myth of the Given. This is John McDowell's main objection to non-conceptualism. In this article I evaluate some well-known non-conceptualist responses to that objection. My analysis shows that non-conceptualists have not provided plausible explanations for the epistemic role of experience. As a consequence, McDowell's objection seems to be correct. The structure of the article is as follows: first, taking into account the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists, I shed light on what the Myth of the Given is. Second, I critically examine Richard Heck's, Christopher Peacocke's and Robert Hanna's proposals on how experiences justify beliefs. I end the article by clarifying the scope of McDowell's criticism.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, many philosophers have held that the content of perceptual experience is non-conceptual in character. Some of them have believed, moreover, that perceptual experiences with non-conceptual content can rationally justify empirical beliefs. However, the idea that experiences so conceived can have that epistemological role has been criticized for being a recognizable form of the Myth of the Given (McDowell 1996, 2009). This objection questions the use of the very notion of non-conceptual content in epistemology. Certainly, contemporary discussion in philosophy of perception has turned towards a new direction: there are those who hold that perceptual experience has representational content (conceptual or non-conceptual), and those who believe that perception has no representational content at all. However, I think that the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists not only has provided us with a set of important arguments and ideas for the philosophy of mind and epistemology, most of which may be relevant for current discussions in philosophy of perception, but also, and crucially, an indeterminate result about the nature of perceptual content. Given this situation, it seems to me that the time is ripe for a critical review of a central aspect of the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists, namely whether or not non-conceptualism, insofar as it claims that experiences are epistemic reasons for holding beliefs and judgments, actually falls

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into the Myth of the Given. In this article I therefore evaluate some prominent non-conceptualist attempts to explain the justificatory role of perceptual experience without lapsing into the Myth of the Given. In order to do so, I shall firstly clarify how the Myth of the Given is understood in the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists (section 2). In the following sections (3–5) I shall consider three well-known non-conceptualist proposals for the justificatory role of experience. My analysis shows that those proposals are not successful in trying to elude the aforementioned criticism. The last section (6) summarizes the results of my analysis and clarifies the scope of such criticism.

2. *What is the Myth of the Given?*

When one tries to evaluate the criticism of non-conceptualists for falling into the Myth of the Given, two immediate difficulties arise: it is hard to properly understand, first, what this Myth is, and, second, how the objection supposedly applies to contemporary non-conceptualism. Hence, let me begin by trying to clarify the notion of the Myth of the Given and why falling into it can constitute a problem for non-conceptualists.

The expression the ‘Myth of the Given’ was introduced, as is well known, by Sellars in his famous criticism of traditional empiricism. Unfortunately, though the Myth of the Given is the central target of Sellars’s criticism in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars does not explicitly offer any definition or a single characterization of what the Myth of the Given consists in. Regarding how Sellars speaks about the Myth in question, it is clear that the Myth of the Given adopts different forms and plays distinctive roles in epistemology. Those forms “have in common the idea that the awareness of certain *sorts*” – i.e., according to Sellars, determinate sense repeatables “is a primordial, non-problematic feature of ‘immediate experience’” (Sellars 1997, 59). According to Sellars, the category of “the given” has been introduced into epistemology in order to “explicate the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a ‘foundation’ of non-inferential knowledge of matter of fact” (Sellars 1997, 15). But foundationalism is only one form that the Myth of the Given can adopt. If we take the case of the theory of sense data as a paradigmatic example of the Given,¹ it is possible to characterize the main form of the Myth of the Given in virtue of the following elements:

¹ Although Sellars’s attack mainly concerns the theory of sense data as the paradigm of the Given, he makes it clear that the framework of the Given also includes material objects, universals, propositions and first principles. See Sellars (1997, §1). Sellars’s criticism of the Given has had a great influence on analytic philosophy and new pragmatism. See, for example, Rorty (1979), Brandom (1994) and McDowell (1996, 2009). For criticisms of Sellars’s article, see Robinson (1975), Alston (1983) and Bonevac (2002).

- (a) The idea that there are certain inner episodes (i.e. sensations of red), which are necessary for having experiences (i.e. that a physical thing is red) and which can occur in the mind without having concepts; and
- (b) The thesis according to which those episodes constitute a case of non-inferential knowledge.

In my opinion, claims (a) and (b) seem to be sufficient for an adequate description of the core of the Myth of the Given. So characterized, the Myth is the error that consists in not realizing that the episodes that figure in (a) cannot be cases of non-inferential knowledge at all. In other words, episodes that can occur in the mind without having the appropriate concepts cannot have – Sellars argues – any sort of epistemic significance. Notwithstanding this, if a more comprehensive characterization of the Myth were required, a reference to classical foundationalism should surely be added:²

- (c) The thesis according to which those episodes provide the ultimate foundation of all our empirical knowledge.

When we have traditional empiricism in mind, statements (a)–(c) constitute a complete and adequate characterization of the Myth of the Given such as that Sellars criticizes in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.

Now, although falling into the Myth of the Given seems to be a significant accusation nowadays, it is not easy to see how it is supposed to apply to contemporary non-conceptualists. Clearly, the introduction of the notion of non-conceptual content in the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists has not been motivated by foundationalist aims. Moreover, contemporary non-conceptualists do not adhere to the theory of sense data either, which is Sellars's main target in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Finally, in contrast to one of Sellars's central claims against the sense data theory – i.e., that mere sensations do not have any sort of representational content³ – non-conceptualists explicitly claim that perceptual experiences have representational non-conceptual content. In effect, non-conceptual content is usually defined in this way: if a certain kind of representational content can be attributed to a subject without needing to attribute to her mastery of the concepts required to specify it, then that kind of content is non-conceptual.⁴ Thus, it would seem that the idea of the Myth of the Given cannot

² As is well known, Section VIII of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* is devoted entirely to classical foundationalism.

³ See Sellars (1997).

⁴ See, for instance, Bermúdez and Cahen (2011). For more detailed characterizations, see Cussins (1990) and Hanna (2015). In the following sections, I will consider three particular varieties of perceptual non-conceptual content. For the moment, the general characterization provided by Bermúdez and Cahen will be suitable for my purposes. As is well known, Heck (2000, 485) makes a

be directly applied to the notion of experience as currently defended by non-conceptualists.

How, then, is the Myth of the Given understood by the critics of non-conceptualism nowadays? And how is it supposed to apply to non-conceptualists? McDowell characterizes the Myth as follows:

Givenness in the sense of the Myth would be an availability for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question [...] Having something Given to one would be being given something for knowledge without needing to have capacities that would be necessary for one to be able to get to know it. And that is incoherent (McDowell 2009, 256).

Evidently, McDowell's formulation is quite abstract. In the text quoted above, the capacities alluded to are conceptual ones. According to McDowell, conceptual capacities are capacities "whose paradigmatic actualizations are exercises of them in judgment" (McDowell 1998, 410). The issue is about whether or not perception can provide, at least in favourable cases, some sort of knowledge – perceptual knowledge – even when conceptual capacities are not at work in it. More specifically, the issue is about whether or not perceptual experience, in virtue of its content, can rationally justify empirical beliefs even if its content is non-conceptual in character.⁵ Thus, according to McDowell's characterization of the Myth of the Given, non-conceptualists fall into the Myth of the Given because they make two incompatible statements: on the one hand, they claim that in perceptual experience, some aspects of the world are given, and this givenness has cognitive significance for the perceiver in the sense that it provides her with reasons to justify empirical beliefs. On the other hand, however, they deny that the required capacities to perceptually know the world – conceptual capacities – are at work in

distinction between "the state view" and "the content view" (see also Speaks 2005; Bermúdez 2007). In the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists, the conceptual/non-conceptual distinction could be seen either as a distinction between two different types of content, or between two different types of content-bearing state. Like Heck (2000, 486, fn. 6) and Bermúdez (2007, 66ff.), I believe that the state view may be indefensible and perhaps incoherent. One particularly clear difficulty for this view arises when we think about content as constituted by concepts, because, according to the state view, it could be possible for a subject, who does not possess the relevant concepts, to be in a perceptual (non-conceptual) state whose content is, yet, conceptual in nature. And this possibility seems to be very awkward. For this reason, and because the authors who are considered here can be suitably interpreted as different advocates of the content view, in what follows I will take for granted the perspective of the content view.

⁵ As will be apparent below, the notion of justification at stake here is internalist: it is supposed that experiences constitute reasons for the subject. Externalist conceptions of epistemic justification do not fall within the scope of the present discussion. I will return to this point at the end of the article.

experience. According to non-conceptualists, then, perceptual states have non-conceptual content and yet could justify empirical judgments and beliefs. However, “we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts” (McDowell 1996, 7). This is the incoherence which, in McDowell’s view, determines the nature of the Myth of the Given.

But is it true that a subject’s conceptual capacities must be in play in perception for that subject to have the opportunity, at least, of acquiring perceptual knowledge? In order to answer this question, it will be helpful to distinguish three varieties, or forms, that the accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given has adopted in the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists. This will help us to further specify McDowell’s characterization of the Myth.

(i) Conceptualists hold that reasons are mental states, or involve mental states,⁶ whose contents necessarily have logical (inferential or non-inferential)⁷ relations between them.⁸ This means that the contents of reasons must be able to figure as premises or conclusions of inferences (deductive or of some other kind⁹) or, at least, in logical, though non-inferential, transitions. Thus, the idea is that whether reasons-giving relations are inferential or not, the contents of reasons must be able to participate in logical relations. Conceptualists have also argued that only conceptual contents – paradigmatically, propositions – can be premises and conclusions of inferences, or maintain the relevant logical relations with propositions (specifically, with the content of judgments and beliefs).¹⁰ Conceptual content is often

⁶ Even when reasons are facts (i.e. true propositions), as some philosophers hold (presumably, McDowell among them), it is true that, in order to *have* a reason, the subject must be aware of it *as* a reason for believing or doing something. See Alvarez (2010, 25–26). I mean: if a certain fact can be the subject’s reason, she must be aware of that fact and she must consider it, or take it, as a reason for something else.

⁷ Brewer (2005, 218) expresses this point in terms of inferential relations; in contrast, McDowell (2009, 131) explicitly holds that the relation between experience and judgment is not inferential.

⁸ There has been some discussion about what reasons are, especially in philosophy of action. Are they propositions, facts or mental states? See Alvarez (2010), Dancy (2004) and Scanlon (1998). For discussion about epistemic reasons, see Turri (2009). I do not need to enter this debate here; nothing in what follows depends on it. For my purposes, it only matters that reasons must be able to have logical or inferential relations between them.

⁹ E.g. inductive or abductive.

¹⁰ See McDowell (1996, Lectures I and III) and Brewer (1999, chap. 5). I say ‘paradigmatically’ in order to leave open other possibilities. In effect, McDowell (2009) changed his mind about the content of perceptual experience. In the last article of this book, McDowell claims that experiences have “intuitional conceptual content” (not propositional content), which could be expressed by means of demonstrative expressions such as “this red cube”. However, he still maintains that perceptual experiences can be reasons to hold empirical beliefs. See also McDowell (2013a). For simplicity, I shall omit this point. After all, McDowell still maintains that the intuitional content of experience is conceptual in nature. A discussion about whether there are non-propositional reasons is beyond the scope of this article.

characterized as the kind of content that is entirely constituted by concepts.¹¹ In that sense, it is frequently said that conceptual content is content of a kind that can be the content of judgment and belief.¹² Thus, when non-conceptualists claim that experiences with supposedly non-conceptual content can be reasons for holding beliefs, they introduce – conceptualists critically claim – a certain sort of incoherence: that of attributing the capacity for being reasons to states whose putative contents can actually be neither premises nor conclusions of any reasoning, or even to have logical relations (of the relevant kind) with judgments and beliefs (in case epistemic justification is considered as non-inferential). In other words, the conceptualists' idea is that what is *merely* given in experience, what is presented in experience without the constitutive participation of conceptual capacities, is not apt to have logical relations, of the relevant kind, with the contents of other kinds of mental states such as judgments and beliefs (i.e., it is not apt to be a premise in any reasoning or participate in a rational transition of the form, for example, “p, then, p”). Hence, conceptualists conclude that claiming that perceptual experiences so conceived are reasons is, in the sense that McDowell notes, inconsistent. This could be considered a first specific variety of the Myth of the Given or a particular instantiation of McDowell's abstract characterization of the Given.

(ii) The second form that the Myth of the Given adopts in the conceptualism vs. non-conceptualism debate is this: reasons which are involved in epistemic justification must be reasons *for the subject*.¹³ If a person is capable of justifying an empirical belief, the reasons she has for her belief must be *her own* reasons. This implies that the person must be able to *think* of her experiences as reasons that she has for holding an empirical belief. For example, if a person is able to claim that she believes that a certain book is brown because she sees that the book in question is brown, her reason to believe so must be her own reason. And, in order to be her own reason, she must be able to think of her own experience as the reason it is. To the extent that she can consider her experience a reason, she must be able to linguistically express it or think of it as the reason she has for holding the relevant belief.¹⁴

¹¹ See McDowell (1996); Brewer (2005).

¹² See, for instance, McDowell (1996, 1998, 2009); Peacocke (2001); Byrne (2005); and Brewer (2005).

¹³ See McDowell (1996, 163) and Brewer (2005, 218).

¹⁴ As an anonymous referee of *dialectica* points out, this requirement is too strong: it implies that subjects must possess the concepts of experience, belief, reason and the like. I argue elsewhere for a less demanding version of the requirement in question, a version that makes intelligible the possibility of being *rationally* justified without needing to be able to justify what one believes or does (see Kalpokas 2014). Notwithstanding this, it is fair to claim, in favor of McDowell and Brewer, that the requirement of thinking of one's own reasons as the reasons one has is proposed in the context of the logical space of reasons, i.e. the space of “justifying and being able to justify what one says” (Sellars 1997, 76). It is, thus, a requirement to be a participant in the practice of justifying and being able to justify what one believes and says, not merely a requirement to be justified.

Now, in order to do so – conceptualists argue – the subject must have the relevant concepts, that is, the concepts which figure in the content of her reasons. Consequently, if experiences can be, in appropriate circumstances, reasons for the subject, then they must have conceptual content.¹⁵ This is exactly what allows us to distinguish between justifications and exculpations because, as McDowell claims, “the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications” (McDowell 1996, 8). In effect, for McDowell (and surely for the other authors to be considered in this article, both conceptualists and non-conceptualists), the notion of epistemic justification is a normative one. According to it, we are responsible for what we accept as justified and for the way in which we justify what we believe or judge. We have that epistemic responsibility because we are able to participate in the logical space of reasons, the space of justifying and being able to justify what we claim and believe. Now, since the logical space of reasons is, according to McDowell, co-extensive with the conceptual sphere, our epistemic responsibility can only take place, then, within that sphere. In contrast, to be exculpated, as McDowell says, is to be exempt of epistemic blame in the sense that we are not responsible for the way in which the causal force of the world impacts on us. In McDowell’s view, this is equivalent to claiming that we cannot be blamed for what happens at the outer boundary of the conceptual sphere. But the Given is, precisely, at that outer boundary. As a result, according to McDowell, what is merely Given should not be conceived but as a brute force, coming from the exterior, that impacts our sensibility. For this reason, McDowell holds that what is merely Given only offers exculpations, but not justifications.

Now, even though (at least some) non-conceptualists agree with the requirement according to which reasons must be the subject’s reasons, they do not duly acknowledge, in the conceptualists’ opinion, what is needed to satisfy it: that the reasons provided by experiences must be credited, at least when the subject thinks of them as the reasons she has, with conceptual content. As a result, non-conceptualists are not able to explain how perceptual experiences – which have, in their view, non-conceptual content – may be something more than an alien force “operating outside the control of our spontaneity” (McDowell 1996, 8). Hence, if the content of perceptual experience is merely given, experience cannot be a reason for the perceiver because – conceptualists conclude – in order to be such, perceptual content must be thought, and this presupposes that such content must be constituted by the concepts that figure in the perceptual reasons that the perceiver has for holding her beliefs.¹⁶

¹⁵ See McDowell (1996, Postscript to Lecture III); Brewer (1999, chap. 5).

¹⁶ An anonymous referee of *dialectica* has objected to this argument in the following way: the conceptualist argument begs the question against the non-conceptualists because, if in order to be subject’s reasons experiences must be thought, and thought is conceptual, then the content of experiences

(iii) Perceptual experience has a recognizable epistemic role in the lives of human beings. Through perception, we are able to identify, recognize and track objects, properties and states of affairs in the objective world. This, together with other factors, explains why we can offer experiences as reasons for empirical beliefs and judgments. In effect, to a question such as “Why do you believe that this book is brown?”, one must be able to answer, as one commonly does, something like “Because I see that it is brown”. Possible answers of this kind presuppose that one is able to perceptually identify or recognize objects and properties such as books and colors. In more general terms, if experience itself did not allow us to identify, or recognize, the things and properties that we perceive *as* the things and properties that they are, experience could not be our reason for judging, or believing, that things are thus and so. In such a case, our judgments and beliefs would surely lack their perceptual basis.¹⁷

Now, conceptualists typically hold that, in order to be able to play that epistemic role, perceptual content must be conceptual in character. In effect, they argue that we could not perceptually identify, recognize or track a certain object as a book, say, if the concept of book did not figure in the content of the experience, allowing us to perceive the relevant object *as* a book. And similar considerations go for properties such as colors, shapes and the like. The mere presentation of a

must be, trivially, conceptual as well. However, if thought is interpreted as (non-conceptually) cognizing or cognition, the conceptualist conclusion no longer follows. I would like to respond to the objection as follows. First, the non-conceptualist authors that are considered here (Heck, Peacocke and Hanna) accept, as far as I know, that the content of thought is exclusively conceptual. Second, the idea that thought is cognition or cognizing is open to dispute: one can think or have a thought without cognizing. This happens when one’s thoughts are false or incorrect in some other respects. Thus, the equivalence between thought (or a certain variety of it) and cognition is not recommendable. Finally, the proposal that some human thoughts, or aspects of them, are non-conceptual (besides being conceptual in other respects), though conceptually possible, is difficult to maintain. The problem lies in the difficulty of explaining how the conceptual content of thought could be articulated with the non-conceptual content of it. In effect, let us suppose that I am asked why I hold the observational belief that, for example, a certain object within my field of view is square. My answer might perfectly be ‘Because it looks that way’ (see McDowell 1996, 163). This is *my* reason to believe so because I can think of it as the reason I have. In doing this, I use the relevant concepts that I possess: the object looks square to me (i.e., it looks in a way that it is in agreement with my conceptual knowledge about how squares typically look), and I am aware of the fact that my experience, in virtue of its content, is the reason I have to believe that the object is square. So, even if the contents of my thoughts had some non-conceptual aspects, the reason I have, as far as I think of it as the reason I have, must be conceptually articulated.

¹⁷ Someone might think that genuine classification, recognition or identification only comes, not with perceptual experience, but, later on, with judgment, belief or, in general, thought. In such a case, however, classification, recognition, etc., would come too late: the content of experience could not be the reason why one judges, believes, or thinks as one does. This is so because experience would not reveal things *as* being in any way and, consequently, it would not provide the required knowledge to judge that things are in some way or other. On this topic, see Ginsborg (2011).

property in a subject's experience – an instance of the color red, for example – does not count, in itself, as an act of identifying that property. Perceptual identification is a kind of cognitive achievement. It involves, for example, the capacity to be aware that a certain property is the same as the one that was perceived before; or the capacity to classify it as a color or a shape. The mere capacity to discriminate a certain color, thus, is not equivalent to the capacity to identify it. The capacity to see an instance of red *as red* – in the sense that seeing an object as red may be a reason for judging that the object is red – necessarily requires, conceptualists hold, possessing the concept of red. This concept constitutes the criterion for classifying the instance of red as an instance of that color.¹⁸

Now, whereas non-conceptualists acknowledge that perception has this epistemic role, they believe that possession of the relevant concepts is not necessary (at least for the case of colors, shapes, sounds, etc.).¹⁹ According to them, the mere natural capacity to perceive the most basic features of the environment is sufficient to identify, recognize and track objects, properties and states of affairs in the environment. However, to claim that experience has the epistemic role of identifying, recognizing or tracking objects and properties without acknowledging what is required for carrying out such a role is – conceptualists argue – incoherent. To insist that experience allows us to identify and recognize things and properties, even if it does not have conceptual content, seems to be, then, a third form of the Myth of the Given that is at play in the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists.²⁰

Thus, taking the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists into account, it can be said that points (i)–(iii) illustrate three particular versions of the Myth as McDowell characterizes it. In fact, the non-conceptualists who will be considered here – Richard Heck, Christopher Peacocke and Robert Hanna – accept that experiences are reasons for holding empirical beliefs; and they also accept that, when experiences justify a subject's beliefs, they constitute the subject's own reasons. All of them also assume, of course, that experience has the epistemic

¹⁸ This is in harmony with Sellars's claim according to which "*all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc.*, in short, all awareness of abstract entities – indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair" (Sellars 1997, 63).

¹⁹ I say "at least for the case of colors, shapes, sounds, etc.", because some non-conceptualists (notably, Peacocke 1992a) acknowledge that, besides non-conceptual content, experience has conceptual content. Thus, non-conceptualists can maintain that in order to perceptually identify a tree, say, the concept of tree is required. Their point is that this is not the case for the perceptual identification of perceptual properties such as colors, shapes, sounds, etc. The conceptualist objection is that believing that concepts of colors, shapes, sound, etc., are not required for perceptually identifying, tracking and recognizing colors, shapes, sounds, etc., constitutes a new episode of the Myth of the Given.

²⁰ In this article, I am mainly concerned with 'truth structures', i.e. relations between items that can be true or false. This does not prevent us from acknowledging the existence of other structures, such as 'activity structures', i.e. activities that involve capacities to successfully move or act in our surroundings. On this last point, see Cussins (1990) and McDowell (2013b).

role of allowing us to identify, recognize and track items in the world. Hence, the challenge non-conceptualists face – which is expressed in the criticism of them for falling into the Myth of the Given – is to explain how experiences with non-conceptual content may have the epistemic roles they attribute to it.²¹

In what follows, I will not argue directly in favor of the claims made by conceptualists in points (i)–(iii). Rather, I want to show that, as far as the debate concerns the epistemic roles of perceptual experience sketched in points (i)–(iii), non-conceptualists have not provided convincing answers to the objection of falling into the Myth of the Given. This strategy may be considered as an indirect way of arguing in favor of the arguments presented in (i)–(iii). I shall consider here Heck's, Peacocke's and Hanna's proposals in part because they constitute three different versions of perceptual non-conceptualism, and in part because these authors have been particularly sensitive to the objection of falling into the Myth of the Given, which is considered here.²² My conclusion will be that, despite

²¹ *Prima facie*, it might be thought that the accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given, directed against non-conceptualists, merely lies in the question-begging conceptualist presupposition that only conceptual content can provide the epistemic roles that are attributed to perceptual experience. However, as I anticipate in the next paragraph of the text and try to show in the rest of the article, my strategy consists in giving indirect support to the objection of falling into the Myth of the Given by arguing that the non-conceptualists considered here do not appropriately show how perceptual experience could have epistemic roles (i)–(iii). If my arguments are correct, it follows that experience has conceptual content, at least to the extent that we are concerned with (i)–(iii).

²² As I mentioned in the first paragraph of this article, nowadays the discussion in philosophy of perception revolves around whether or not perceptual experience indeed has representational content. The philosophers involved in the conceptualism vs. non-conceptualism debate take for granted that experience has such a kind of content. In contrast, other philosophers (Campbell 2002; Brewer 2006, 2008, 2011; Travis 2004; Martin 1997, 2002, 2004; Johnston 2006; Fish 2009) have recently disputed that assumption. The debate has been framed as a discussion between 'representationalists' (advocates of intentionalism and some varieties of disjunctivism) and advocates of 'the relational view', 'the object view', or 'naïve realism' (all of these terms for naming the point of view according to which perception is not a mental contentful state). A striking case is that of Brewer, who firstly held that perceptual experience has conceptual representational content, but who now argues against that very thesis. In this article I cannot consider this new proposal. Notwithstanding this, let me claim that, in my opinion, the advocates of the relational view (the object view or naïve realism) also fall into the Myth of the Given. In effect, on the one hand, they hold that perceptual experience has no content at all, whereas they also claim, on the other hand, that perception has some essential epistemological roles (e.g., perception rationally justifies beliefs and judgments, and it provides identificatory knowledge of the reference of demonstratives). Arguably, this is a clear episode of the Myth of the Given: it is the error that consists in failing to realize that, if knowledge is to be considered as a rational achievement, mental states or episodes that lack representational content cannot have any epistemic significance at all. For this accusation, particularly directed to Travis's version of the relational view, see (McDowell 2009, 267). Ginsborg (2011) argues, against Brewer, that if perception did not have representational content, it could not be a reason for holding judgments and beliefs at all. I believe that Ginsborg's argument could be reworded as an accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given. For proposals according to which perceptual experience is both a relation with the physical items of our surroundings and a contentful mental state, see McDowell (2013a) and Schellenberg (2011).

non-conceptualists' attempts to explain how experience could have the epistemic roles outlined in (i)–(iii), the accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given, directed at non-conceptualism, is a fair one.

3. *Informational states and the space of reasons: Heck's proposal*

In “Nonconceptual Content and the ‘Space of Reasons’”, Heck tries to show how non-conceptualists could avoid being criticized for falling into the Myth of the Given. In particular, he aims to defend what he calls “Evans’s view”. Heck stresses the fact that, contrary to sense-data theorists, non-conceptualists acknowledge that perceptual states have representational content. The particular kind of content of perceptual states is – in Heck’s view – informational (differing from propositional content).²³ In trying to avoid the Myth of the Given, Heck begins by claiming that perceptual states with informational content provide reasons in the same way beliefs do.²⁴ When I look around, he claims, “I come to have a presentational attitude towards a particular non-conceptual content; then there is an inference or transition (...) from my perceptual state to some belief I recognize it to underwrite”. Thus, Heck adds, “my belief will then be justified by the perception on which I base it, in much the same way it might have been justified by another belief upon which I based it. Moreover, my perception is my reason for my belief” (Heck 2000, 511).

It is important to note here that Heck accepts, as does McDowell, that (a) perceptual states justify beliefs about the world in the sense that they provide reasons for the subject in favor of those beliefs. He also accepts that (b) if perception gives us reasons for our beliefs, we must be able to epistemically evaluate the force of those reasons. Finally, he accepts that (c) in order to rationally evaluate the reasons provided by perception, we have to consider how the world appears to us.²⁵ The particular conceptualist challenge consists in asking how perceptions could be reasons for holding beliefs if perceptual content is non-conceptual in character. And it is with this point that Heck aims to show that the acceptance of (a), (b) and (c) is perfectly compatible with the idea that perceptual states have non-conceptual content.

²³ The notion of information is “a *causal* notion, not a *cognitive* one” (Heck 2000, 504). What information a certain state carries is a function of its causal ancestry. As Heck emphasizes, “What information a state carries is (...) a matter of its place in the causal nexus, not of its place in some rational order” (2000, 504).

²⁴ See Heck (2000, 509).

²⁵ See Heck (2000, 512–513).

However, Heck's answer to the conceptualist challenge is unconvincing. In effect, in his view, the judgments I make about how things appear to me and how the world is "are based upon my perceptual experience" (Heck 2000, 515). And to say how things appear to me "is to say how I would judge the world to be if I were to judge purely on the basis of my current experience, that is, in such a way that the judgment would be *prima facie*, though defeasibly, justified by that very experience" (Heck 2000, 515). But in what sense are my judgments "based upon my perceptual experience"? Heck claims: "The contents of my judgments about how things appear, when I make them correctly, will *track* the contents of my perceptual states" (Heck 2000, 515). Yet this does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation of the epistemic relation between perceptual experiences and empirical beliefs, because why should one accept that tracking is a justificatory relation? More specifically, why should one accept that tracking is a reason-giving relation at all? The promise was to explain how states with non-conceptual content could warrant logical non-inferential transitions from experiences to beliefs and judgments, or could be premises in inferences where the conclusion – a belief or judgment – is a state with conceptual content. But it is not at all obvious that the term 'tracking' serves that explanatory purpose. The other terms used by Heck to express the relation between experiences and judgments ('translate', 'reflect', 'conceptualize') are not of help either because they also do not seem to grasp the idea of giving reasons.

As an example, let us consider one terminological variant used by Heck to express the reason-giving relation between perceptual states and beliefs: 'conceptualization'. He claims: "For me to say, or think, 'It appears to me as if *p*' is for me to report, or make, a *judgment*, one that requires me to conceptualize the non-conceptual content of my experience, just as making judgments about the world does" (Heck 2000, 516).

Now, succinctly, a reason is a mental state, or involves a mental state – conceptualists have claimed – whose content can be a premise or a conclusion of an inference or, alternatively, a mental state whose content can figure in a non-inferential transition. Nothing in what Heck says contradicts this platitude. When this sort of content is used in reasoning by the subject, in order to justify a judgment or a belief, the mental content so used makes the relevant judgment or belief appropriate from the point of view of rationality.²⁶ If the content of perception were given by the proposition *p*, say, it would be easy to see how that perception could justify the belief that *p*: the identity relation between those two contents warrants a simple rational transition from the perceptual state to the doxastic one. When I see that *p*, and I have the experience in normal conditions, I am entitled to take at face value what that experience tells me and, consequently,

²⁶ See Brewer (1999, 150–151).

I can come to believe that *p*. Given the appropriate relevant conditions, I can take my experience as a reason for holding my belief. From this point of view, perceptual states can be reasons because their contents *can* figure in the thinker's thought as a premise of an inference. Because of that, perceptual states can be rationally evaluated in reference to the drawn conclusion.²⁷

Why, then, should we accept that the conceptualization of the non-conceptual content of experiences is equivalent to a reason-giving relation as has been outlined above? According to Heck, conceptualization is a process by which a subject can, in herself, produce a cognitive state;²⁸ that is, it is a process by which part of the non-conceptual content of experience is transformed into a different kind of content. However, understood in this way, conceptualization cannot be a reason-giving relation for at least two reasons. First, if it is true that conceptualization of the putative non-conceptual content of experience is the process by way of which a cognitive state is produced in the subject, then it is obvious that experience cannot be a reason at all, because to have a reason is surely to be in a cognitive state and, since cognitive states are produced only when conceptualization takes place, the putative non-conceptualized content of experience must be a non-cognitive state.

Second, the process of changing the nature of certain putative content does not seem to be, in itself, a reason-giving relation. For example, let us suppose that pictures or maps have non-conceptual content.²⁹ When one puts the content of a map into words, one does not actually give any reason for holding any belief or judgment; rather, one does something similar to translating the content of the map into a set of words. In doing so, one uses a certain sort of vehicle (words) in order to express a content already engendered by another sort of vehicle. However, one does not take the content of the map as a premise for a conceptual conclusion nor, alternatively, as a reason to make a non-inferential transition; rather, one tries merely to capture part of the content of the map by using words (or concepts).³⁰

Consequently, I believe that Heck does not appropriately explain how perceptual experiences with putatively non-conceptual contents could enter reason-giving relations. As we have seen, he initially claims that perceptual states

²⁷ See McDowell (1996, 2009).

²⁸ See Heck's quotation of Evans on p. 515.

²⁹ I do not want to commit myself to that thesis. I simply assume it here in order to illustrate my point.

³⁰ Something similar happens with another metaphor used by Heck, namely, 'translation'. When one translates a text written in a certain language, for instance, to another language, one tries to capture the semantic content of the text. Typically, one does not infer certain conclusions from certain accepted premises expressed in the target language. One does not consider the content of that text to be a reason for a judgment or belief. Moreover, in translation, it does not matter what the truth-value of the expressions to be translated is. Of course, when the sentences to be translated are true, their translation will be true as well. But my point is that, in contrast to what happens in justification, an epistemic

with informational content provide reasons in the same way beliefs do. But beliefs do not ‘conceptualize’ nor ‘track’ the contents of other beliefs when they justify them. Instead, they simply support them; they are reasons for holding them. Thus, I believe that we have here a recognizable form of the Myth of the Given such as it was sketched in §2(i): on the one hand, Heck acknowledges that perceptual experiences constitute reasons for holding beliefs; however, on the other hand, he is not able to explain how perceptual states with informational content may be premises for conceptual conclusions, or how perceptual experiences, in virtue of their content, could maintain non-inferential relations (e.g. identity transitions) with the content of judgments and beliefs. This is the true reason why Heck speaks of ‘tracking’, ‘conceptualizing’ and ‘translating’ relations between experiences and judgments or beliefs instead of speaking of reasons, premises, inferences or justifications. The appeal to those terms merely conceals his difficulties in explaining how perceptual experiences with non-conceptual content may be reasons for beliefs. Informational content merely given to experience cannot figure in logical non-inferential transitions, nor can be a premise or a conclusion for any reasoning; thus, it cannot be a reason at all.

Moreover, Heck does not appropriately account for how perceptual experiences may be reasons *for the subject* who enjoys those experiences. In effect, as conceptualists claim, a content can be a reason *for* a subject only if the subject is able to think of the content as a premise or a conclusion of an inference (or, alternatively, if the subject can think of it in order to non-inferentially hold her beliefs and judgments). Supposedly, this was a shared assumption by both conceptualists and Heck alike. Yet, in one passage, Heck astonishingly claims: “though the (nonconceptual) contents of my perceptual states do not themselves figure in my thought, in reflecting on how things appear, I still reflect on the contents of my perceptual states, on how they present the world as being” (Heck 2000, 515). However, if it is true that non-conceptual contents of my experiences “do not themselves figure

evaluation of those sentences is irrelevant. In such a case, all that matters is the preservation of semantic content. In her new book, Schmidt (2015) also appeals to that metaphor. In her words: “if the translation is done correctly, the perceptual experience justifies the belief, and the correctness of the experience will make the belief’s truth probable” (Schmidt, 2015, 206). The same considerations go for Schmidt’s statement. Finally, an anonymous referee has suggested to me a further alternative, which consists of holding that non-conceptual content is not informational content, but, rather, mediational content. This kind of content is not motivationally or attitudinally neutral or inert (see Cussins 2012). So a ‘translation’ of a mediational content could generate two parts at the level of the referential content: one part that would correspond to the attitude, and the other part, which would correspond to the conceptual specification of the referential content. Thus, the translational process could presumably generate a belief. This alternative would not help Heck (because Heck holds a different notion of non-conceptual content), but it may be an option for a non-conceptualist like Cussins. I cannot consider this proposal here, but I think that the same question I formulate to Heck may arise: why should we think of such a process as a reason-giving relation at all?

in my thought”, how is it supposed that my perceptual experiences could be reasons *for me*? It seems to be clear that, for a certain content to be a reason that is epistemically evaluable for a subject, the content itself must be thought by the subject. However, if the putative non-conceptual content of experience cannot admittedly figure in the subject’s thought, it cannot be a reason for her. Hence, strictly speaking, Heck is not in a position to say that, in reflecting on how perceptual states present the world, he is reflecting on how they present the world as being, because to be able to do that, the content of perceptual states has to figure in his thought. At this point, therefore, one may recognize a second variety of the Myth of the Given. In effect, on the one hand, Heck acknowledges that, if perceptual experiences are reasons for beliefs, they must be the subject’s reasons. However, on the other hand, he finally recognizes that the putative non-conceptual content of experience cannot figure in the subject’s thought. Indeed, this is the kind of incoherence outlined in §2(ii). Thus, perceptual experience with putative non-conceptual content “offers exculpations where we wanted justifications” because the informational content of experience remains “outside the control of our spontaneity” (McDowell 1996, 8). It is not something for which we may be epistemically responsible.

Thus, even when Heck claims to accept (b) (if perception gives us reasons for our beliefs, then we must be able to epistemically evaluate the force of those reasons), he cannot adequately explain how a subject could evaluate the reasons provided by her perceptual experiences (if these have non-conceptual content). The conceptualist’s challenge was that of explaining how perceptual experiences with non-conceptual content could be reasons for the subject to hold her beliefs. Resorting to tracking relations (or their terminological alternatives) does not explain that. Heck simply asserts that there can be inferential relations between the non-conceptual contents of perceptions and the conceptual contents of beliefs, but he does not explain how that is possible. As I have just claimed, we have here the first form of the Myth of the Given (i). Moreover, when Heck acknowledges that the non-conceptual contents of perceptual states cannot themselves figure in thought – even though he accepts that perceptual reasons must be the subject’s own reasons – he creates a certain sort of incoherence, namely, that which is expressed by the second variant of the Myth of the Given (ii). In sum, Heck cannot plausibly explain how experiences with informational non-conceptual contents could be reasons for beliefs and judgments, nor how experiences could be reasons for a subject without her having conceptualized their contents.

4. *Scenarios and protopositions: Peacocke’s theory*

According to Peacocke, perceptual non-conceptual content has two levels: the level of scenarios and the level of protopositions. A scenario is a basic form

of representational content which is individuated by specifying ways of filling out the space around the perceiver. That sort of content is a spatial type which can be specified by fixing an origin and axes (e.g., the chest being the center and the directions being back/front, left/right, up/down, respectively), and by specifying a way of filling out the space around the origin (for each point identified by its distance and direction from the origin, we need to specify whether there is a surface, and if so what texture, hue, saturation, etc., it has). Thus, a scenario is a way of locating surfaces, features, and so on, in relation to an origin and a set of axes.

Two more concepts are needed in order to fully describe this level of non-conceptual content. The concept of *scene* is used by Peacocke to refer to the volume of the real world around the perceiver at the time of the experience with an origin and axes in the real world fixed in accordance with the scenario. So the content of the experience is correct if the scene falls under the way of locating surfaces, textures, etc., which constitutes the scenario. The other concept is that of a *positioned scenario*, which refers to the content of a perceptual experience that is assessable outright. A positioned scenario is composed of a scenario and assignments of real directions, places and time in the world to axes and origins of the scenario. The positioned scenario is the content of the experience. Although we have to employ concepts in describing a scenario, this does not entail that the concepts used in the description are components of the representational content of the experience. The perceiver does not need to have the concepts that specify the scenario.

The other level of perceptual non-conceptual content is defined by what Peacocke calls “protopositions”. Protopositions are introduced by Peacocke to account for those cases in which two experiences have the same positioned scenario content but different protopositional contents. For example, a thinker, taking her experiences at face value and possessing the concept *square*, need not find it compelling for a floor-tile in a diamond orientation to be square, even though it may be the case that in the positioned scenario of her experience, the region of space occupied by the floor-tile is indeed square. So an experience in which something is perceived as square is one whose non-conceptual representational content contains the protoposition that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisector of its sides. An experience in which something is perceived as a diamond is one whose content contains the protoposition that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisectors of its angles.³¹

³¹ Someone might ask: since it seems that, just like propositions, protopositions could be true or false, is it clear that Peacocke’s notion of protopositions is not a notion of conceptual content? Assuming (as Peacocke does) that propositions are constituted by concepts, it may be claimed that the crucial difference between propositions and protopositions lies in the following two points: first, protopositions are not constituted by concepts but, rather, by objects, properties and relations; and second, grasping them does not require possession of the concepts that are used in the theorist’s canonical specification of them.

Peacocke introduces his version of non-conceptual content in order to explain possession conditions and the individuation of concepts. He makes explicit that the nature of concepts is defined by the capacity of a thinker to have propositional attitudes that contain the concepts the thinker possesses. Non-conceptual contents are required because an account of the possession conditions and individuation of concepts must, according to Peacocke, avoid circularity; that is, the account must not presume that the thinker already possesses the concepts to be explained.³² For instance, an account of the possession conditions for the concept *square* must not assume that the thinker has the concept *square* in order to perceive – or to be able to perceive – something square. In spite of the latter, if a person possesses the concept *square*, she must be capable of judging that something is square when the circumstances specified in the possession conditions of the concept *square* are perceived by her. In other words, the person must find the present-tense demonstrative thought that that object is square “to be primitively compelling” (Peacocke 1992b, 117).³³ At this point, Peacocke clearly acknowledges that experiences provide reasons *for* the thinker to judge or believe that the world is as she perceives it: “Experiences give a thinker who possesses the relatively observational concept *square* not merely reasons but good reasons for forming the belief that the demonstratively presented object is square” (Peacocke 1992a, 80).³⁴

However, Peacocke’s theory faces several difficulties. For example, McDowell has made the following objection: we can epistemically evaluate the rational relations between an experience and a judgment “only by comprehending the putatively grounding content in conceptual terms, even if our theory is that the item that has that content does not do its representing in a conceptual way” (McDowell 1996, 166). Peacocke’s theory “does not credit ordinary subjects with this comprehensive view of the two contents” (McDowell 1996, 166) and for that reason makes it unintelligible how experiences with non-conceptual content can be someone’s reason for judging in accordance with her experience.³⁵

³² Peacocke does not deny that perceptual experiences have conceptual content; see Peacocke (1992a, 88) and (1992b, 123). He acknowledges that in order to see, for instance, trees or hear a sound such as that of a car approaching, we need to have the appropriate concepts. Thus, he acknowledges that “once a thinker has acquired a perceptually-individuated concept, his possession of that concept can causally influence what contents his experiences possess” (1992b, 126).

³³ It is plausible to interpret Peacocke’s expression “primitively compelling” as meaning, or at least implying, that the transition from experience to the demonstrative thought is immediate, unreflective and non-inferential. This is not any impediment to acknowledging, as, in fact, Peacocke does in the next quotation in the text, that experiences are reasons for the thinker.

³⁴ See also Peacocke (1998, 387), where explaining the possession conditions of the concept *red*, Peacocke claims that “the thinker must also be disposed to form the belief [whose content involves the concept *red*] for the reason that the object is so presented”.

³⁵ See also McDowell (1998, 417).

Peacocke's response has been that the last step of McDowell's criticism is a *non sequitur*. He accepts that we can rationally scrutinize the relation between experience and judgment, but he thinks that his theory can explain how the rational transition from the non-conceptual to the conceptual can be reflexively evaluated. Let us suppose, Peacocke argues, that a person asks whether or not the fact that a certain object appears that way is a reason for judging that it is square. Here, "that way" refers demonstratively to a way in which something can be perceived. The reference itself is made by demonstrative concepts, but "there is no requirement that the reference of the demonstrative be conceptualized (...). So thought can scrutinize and evaluate the relations between nonconceptual and conceptual contents, and obtain a comprehensive view of both" (Peacocke 2001, 255–256). Thus, as Peacocke claims elsewhere, when I hold an observational belief about an object, there is a way W, which is the way the object is presented in my experience, which in turn can be my reason for believing the object is thus and so. Here, "it is the way itself which features in the reasons, not a mode of presentation thereof" (Peacocke 1998, 383).

However, it is hard to see how this response avoids McDowell's objection. As I understand it, McDowell's argument can be reconstructed as follows:

Premise 1: In order to epistemically evaluate the rational relations between her experiences and empirical beliefs (i.e., in order to consider whether her experiences indeed constitute reasons for holding certain empirical beliefs or not), a subject has to have a comprehensive view of both the content of her experiences and of her beliefs.

Premise 2: In order to have a comprehensive view of these contents, a subject has to think of them as standing in the relevant rational relations (i.e., the subject has to select, from among her experiences, those that constitute reasons for holding the beliefs or judgments that she aims to justify, and think of her experiences as the reasons she has).

Premise 3: The content of thought is entirely constituted by concepts.

Conclusion: The content of experiences, at least when a subject thoughtfully evaluates the rational relations between her experiences and judgments, must be credited with conceptual content.

Peacocke clearly accepts the first two premises of McDowell's argument. He also seems to accept the third one.³⁶ Nevertheless, Peacocke rejects the conclusion because, even though it is true that we can refer to the way a certain object appears to us by using a demonstrative concept such as "that way", he believes that the reference of that demonstrative concept can be non-conceptual. However, could the non-conceptual content of experience (the way itself) really be

³⁶ See Peacocke (2001, 243; 1992b, 119).

a reason for a subject? If the way an object appears to us fell outside the conceptual sphere, then – according to the third premise of McDowell’s argument – it would fall outside the sphere of thought. Thus, a subject could not have a comprehensive view of both her experiences and her beliefs. In such a case, the subject could not take the content of her experiences as reasons for her judgments and beliefs. She could not claim or think, for example, that she believes that an object within her field of view is square because it looks that way. According to this point of view, if we are to accept the third premise of McDowell’s argument (a premise that, as I have claimed, Peacocke accepts as well), we should acknowledge that what constitutes the content of a thought about the way in which an object looks is not the way itself (the reference of the demonstrative *that way*), but rather the concept or Fregean sense *that way*. As a result, Peacocke’s thesis that experiences can have non-conceptual content even in the case when a subject evaluates their logical relations with her judgments is inconsistent with his acceptance of the premises of McDowell’s objection. A subject cannot think of her experiences, whether they rationally justify her judgments or not, except by considering them as having conceptual content. The contents of her experiences cannot be outside the conceptual sphere, because if they were, a subject could not think of them as the reasons she has for holding her judgments and beliefs. In other words, it cannot be true that, considering the way an object or property is presented in experience, “it is the way itself which features in the reasons, not a mode of presentation thereof” because this means that the way in which an object or property is presented in experience is not presented to thought at all. Thus, when Peacocke states that “as long as we can think about the nonconceptual representational content, as we certainly can, we can have the required scrutinizability” (Peacocke 2001, 256), McDowell can respond that as long as we can think of the putative non-conceptual representational content of experience, that content *is* conceptual.³⁷ At this point it is possible to recognize the first form of the Myth of the Given presented in §2(i): on the one hand, Peacocke claims that perceptual experiences could be reasons for empirical beliefs; however, on the other, he

³⁷ Of course, thinking about x, or thinking of x, does not entail that x is conceptual. But the point under discussion is whether or not x can be considered as a reason for holding a judgment or belief, and what this presupposes. As I understand it, McDowell’s idea is that, in order to evaluate whether or not a certain experience constitutes a reason for a certain belief, one needs to think of the experience as having certain content and as being the reason one has for holding the belief in question. From this point of view, then, the mere visual presentation of a square object (even if this presentation is non-conceptually characterized) cannot *eo ipso* be a reason to judge that the object is square. In order to evaluate whether that perceptual presentation is a reason to believe that the object is square or not, one has to additionally think of the perceived shape as being square and think of one’s experience as the reason one has.

fails to acknowledge that, at least to the extent that an epistemic evaluation of experiences is concerned, experiences must have conceptual content. This kind of inconsistency is equivalent to falling into a variety of the Myth of the Given.

Here Peacocke's theory must face another objection. Let us consider the judgment "This is square". The conceptualist account of how the experience of a square could provide a reason for said judgment is as follows: since experience has conceptual content, when we see a figure *as* square we subsume that figure under the extension of the concept *square*. It is, then, easy to account for how the experience of a square could be a reason for the judgment "This is square": in the content of the experience figures the very concept which appears in the judgment. Thus, the experience of a certain figure as square could – in virtue of its conceptual content – be a reason for the appropriate judgment.

In contrast, Peacocke claims that a perceptual experience with non-conceptual content of a square must be sufficient to rationally make the judgment "This is square". The explanation of why the linkage between the experience and the judgment is rational "can proceed without appealing to the fact that the justifying experience mentioned in the possession condition represents the object as falling under the concept *square*" (Peacocke 1992a, 80). Thus, if the non-conceptual content of a person's experience contains the protoproposition that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisectors of its sides, she supposedly has a reason for making the judgment "This is square".

The problem with this proposal is that a person may see a certain figure as symmetrical about the bisectors of its sides without knowing that the concept *square* applies to it. In effect, in the judgment "This is square", the concept *square* is applied to the shape of a certain object; so the shape of the object, if the concept is correctly applied, falls under the extension of the concept. Yet if the person does not perceive a square as falling under the concept *square*, how could she know she has to apply the concept *square* to the figure she perceives? In other words, how could an experience of something square which does not represent the square as falling under the concept *square* be a reason for applying the concept *square* in the judgment "This is square"? If seeing something square does not involve subsuming the relevant shape under the concept *square*, why should a person assume that the property she perceives is the same property as the one she ascribes to the object in her judgment or belief?³⁸ Once again, this difficulty reveals – as the first variant of the Myth of the Given expresses – that experiences with putative non-conceptual content cannot

³⁸ It might be thought that Peacocke can respond to my objection by arguing that, according to his theory, having an experience with non-conceptual content of a square object constitutes a condition for the possession and application of the concept *square*. But this is not helpful because the problem

warrant or justify empirical judgments and beliefs. Moreover, this difficulty highlights the epistemic relevance of concepts in perceptual identification, which is the topic of the third variety of the Myth of the Given outlined in §2(iii).³⁹

remains. In effect, if the possession conditions of the concept *square* did not involve seeing square objects as falling under the concept *square*, then the proposed possession conditions would not actually be the possession conditions of the concept *square*. Likewise, to claim that a person is primitively compelled to apply the concept *square* to a square object is not of help either because the claim leaves the nature of that disposition indeterminate. In effect, in order to be rationally compelled to apply the concept in question, the person has to have a reason, and, again, how could her experience provide a reason to her if it does not present the relevant shape as falling under the concept *square*? Finally, the requirement that a person need to know that the property that she sees is the same property that she ascribes in her judgments and beliefs does not presuppose, in my opinion, an over-intellectualization of epistemic justification. It is, rather, an essential condition to be able to think and speak about what we perceive. Even non-sophisticated subjects intuitively take this condition for granted.

³⁹ Recently, Schmidt (2015) has tried to explain in what sense experience with non-conceptual content may supposedly be a reason for holding an empirical belief or judgment. She holds that the epistemic relation between experience and belief is not inferential, but rather a content-sensitive correctness-truth transition which goes from the experience to the belief. According to Schmidt, such a kind of transition between experience and belief makes the truth of the relevant belief probable if the experience is likely correct. How can such a transition take place? What is its nature? At this point, Schmidt introduces a distinction between internal and external content, which corresponds – she claims – to differences between an intensional and extensional understanding of the notion of content. Hence, while Fregean propositions and scenario contents are intensional, worldly states of affairs, which she takes to be instantiations of properties in the subject’s environment, are external contents. According to Schmidt, then, there can be a semantic relation between a perceptual experience and the belief based on it “because both mental states represent the same worldly states of affairs” (Schmidt 2015, 194). It is external content – the worldly states of affairs represented by both experience and belief – that guarantees the relevant justificatory transition between experience and belief: “the obtaining of the state of affairs represented by my experience makes it probable (even guarantees) that the state of affairs represented by my belief obtains as well. So, if I undergo the perceptual experience, I am justified to form the belief” (Schmidt 2015, 194). Unfortunately, this response misses the point at stake. In effect, even when it is conceded that a subject’s experience correctly represents the same worldly state of affairs as her belief, a further question remains, that is, the question of how the subject can know this. I mean, even if experience has scenario content, as Schmidt holds, and this kind of content correctly represents the same worldly state of affairs as the relevant belief, it must still be explained how the subject can know this. And the subject has to know this (at least, implicitly) if her experience is to be her reason to hold her belief. In order to explain how experience can justify beliefs, we need not merely what Schmidt calls “the external content” but also and crucially the internal content. To consider Schmidt’s example, let us suppose that I see a computer screen located in front of me. Now, if my experience is to be my reason to believe that there is a computer screen in front of me, it is not clear enough that the external content of my experience and belief is the same. Rather, I have to be able to perceptually identify a computer screen when I see one and its location in reference to me. But how could I perceptually know that the object that is in front of me is a computer screen if in seeing it the relevant concepts (i.e., that of a computer screen) do not intervene in my experience? Clearly, seeing a certain shape and color (if this is what the non-conceptual content of experience provides) is not equivalent to perceptually

Finally, perceptual identification seems to require possessing the concepts of what is identified. In effect, it is a plain fact that we perceive objects, properties and relations from different perspectives and in diverse circumstances. The same shape, for instance, can look different depending on the perceiver's location. Notwithstanding, normal perceivers are commonly able to identify a single shape from diverse perspectives and through its different appearances. In spite of it looking different from each perspective, normal perceivers are usually able to perceptually know that it is the same shape that they perceive through its different appearances. For example, let us suppose that W_1 , W_2 and W_3 are different ways a square looks to a normal perceiver. A normal perceiver certainly has the capacity to identify the same shape through its different appearances: W_1 , W_2 and W_3 . Of course, this is a fallible capacity, and there are occasions in which perceivers fail to identify or track a single object or property through its different appearances. But it seems to be indisputable that we have this capacity and that we are frequently successful in the exercise of it. In fact, this capacity plays an essential role in our lives. Without it, we would have trouble identifying or recognizing people, houses, cars, colors, shapes and the like.⁴⁰ Now, Peacocke explicitly acknowledges the existence of this ordinary phenomenon;⁴¹ however, his theory does not have the resources to explain it.

In order to see that explanatory failure, let us consider Peacocke's own case, that of a square which is viewed in different orientations. In one case, the non-conceptual representational content of the experience contains the protoproposition that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisectors of its sides. In the other case, in contrast, the content of the experience contains the protoproposition that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisectors of its angles. According to

identifying a computer screen. Some background knowledge is required to identify, by seeing it, a computer screen as such. In any case, my question is: why should we assume that an experience in which an object is not perceived as falling under the concept *computer-screen* is a reason to believe that this concept rightly applies to the perceived object? Similar considerations apply to the spatial relation "in front of me". In effect, even if we attribute a centered scenario content to experience (Schmidt 2015, 198 and ff.), why should we take for granted that the spatial relation between me and the computer screen represented in experience is the same as the one that ordinarily falls under the concept expressible by "in front of me"? At this point, appealing to Peacocke's story about the acquisition of perceptual concepts is not helpful. If it is claimed that the concept *round* is defined as the concept a subject will be compelled to exercise in those situations in which her experience represents something round (Schmidt, 2015, 203–204), it could be asked, again, why that subject should move from her experience to the belief *that's round*. As can be noticed, what is at stake here is why the subject, from her own perspective, should take for granted that her experience, if it really has non-conceptual content, represents the same property as the one that is represented by her mental states with conceptual content.

⁴⁰ In fact, the phenomenon is much more complex because we are normally capable of identifying the same object, property or state of affairs by way of different senses.

⁴¹ See Peacocke (1992a, 2001, 1998).

Peacocke, whereas a person may be able to recognize a square in the first case, she may plausibly fail to do so in the second. Now, although this may certainly be the case, it commonly happens also that a normal perceiver is able to identify the same shape when it appears to her as square and when it appears to her as a regular diamond. What devices does Peacocke's theory offer us to explain that phenomenon? As we have seen, the scenario content cannot explain – according to Peacocke himself – the difference between perceiving the same shape as a square or as a regular diamond. This is why he introduces the second level of perceptual non-conceptual content, namely, that of protopositional content. However, even this second level of non-conceptual content does not explain how a perceiver is able to identify the same shape through its different appearances. In fact, Peacocke's protopositions only explain – assuming that, in fact, they do – what it is to perceive a certain way (what it is to perceive a certain appearance of a shape). Notwithstanding, protopositions do not explain how a perceiver, when seeing a regular diamond, for example, is able to identify a square. In other words, Peacocke's theory does not explain how a normal perceiver is able to understand that a certain perceptual appearance of a shape – a regular diamond – is a square. Peacocke's protopositions only explain – assuming that, in fact, they do – how a person may fail to perceptually identify or recognize the same shape – a square – when she sees it as a figure that is symmetrical about the bisectors of its sides and when she sees it as a figure that is symmetrical about the bisectors of its angles. But Peacocke's protopositions do not explain how a person may be successful in perceptually identifying or recognizing the same shape – a square – through those different appearances.⁴²

Now, surely, the experience of a regular diamond, when it is perceived as a square, is quite different, at least in its epistemic significance, from the experience of a regular diamond which is not perceived as a square. A person who has the first sort of experience could make the judgment “This is square” (or find it “primarily compelling”, as Peacocke says), while a person who has the second sort of experience cannot do so. The first person would be able to say that the shape she perceives is square even when it does not appear in this way. The other person, in contrast, would not think in this manner.

⁴² It might be thought that the case of a person whose experience carries both protopositions (that a certain figure is symmetrical about the bisectors of its sides and that it is symmetrical about the bisectors of its angles) could help Peacocke in handling this objection. However, this possible response misses the point of my objection. The point of the objection is that even if a person's experience carried these two protopositions, there would be nothing in it that indicated to the person that she is seeing *the same* shape. In other words, in seeing different appearances of a square, which might be captured by different protopositions, a person's experience would not reveal to her that she is seeing, under such different appearances, the same shape, i.e. a square. The reference of those different appearances to a single shape is the task developed – I hold – by the concept *square*.

Thus, even if we concede that experience has the sort of non-conceptual content that Peacocke attributes to it, that sort of content is not sufficient to explain how a subject is able to perceptually identify a shape – such as square – by perceiving the different ways in which the shape is perceived. Consequently, the non-conceptual content of experience, made up of scenario and protopositional content, is not sufficient for a subject to apply the appropriate concept of shape rationally (in the present case, the concept *square*) when a shape appears in different ways. Hence, in contrast to what Peacocke claims, I believe that experience with non-conceptual content cannot, in the kind of cases considered above, give a subject a reason for judging according to her experience. To claim that we are able to identify colors, shapes and the like through their different appearances while maintaining that perceptual experience has non-conceptual content introduces a recognizable sort of incoherence, namely, that which is expressed in the third form of the Myth of the Given such as it was presented in §2(iii).

Conceptualists, however, seem to have a promising account for the phenomenon in question. According to conceptualists, the concept *square*, which is in play in the experience, enables us to perceive the way in which a square is presented in the experience *as* a square. The concept *square* allows us to subsume the different ways in which a square is perceived under a single shape. This promises to explain how a subject could perceptually identify a square even when the shape that is perceived does not obviously look square. The different ways a shape (square) looks are taken as appearances of that particular shape because those ways are understood as falling under the concept of the corresponding shape. Therefore, if someone is able to perceptually identify a square, say, through the different ways it appears, she has certainly conceptualized those ways as the ways in which a square could appear.⁴³

To sum up, when Peacocke claims, on the one hand, that experiences give a subject reasons for forming the appropriate beliefs while he implies, on the other hand, that protopositions are not thoughts, he falls into a recognizable sort of incoherence, namely, that which has been described in §2(i). Just like Heck, Peacocke faces the following dilemma: either he holds that experiences can be reasons for beliefs and judgments but, as reasons are thoughts and the content of thoughts is conceptual, he has to acknowledge that the content of experiences is conceptual in nature; or he holds that the content of experiences is non-conceptual; but in this case he may not claim that experiences are reasons for beliefs and judgments.

Moreover, Peacocke attributes to experiences the capacity of being reasons even in those cases in which experiences do not represent the items perceived as falling

⁴³ Even if a person does not have the concept of a certain shape, she can still use demonstrative concepts to think that the different ways the shape appears are the ways *that* shape appears. In order to do so, the person must only be able to retain in her memory the shape that she originally saw.

under the concepts involved in the corresponding judgments and beliefs. However, this particular thesis has been revealed as the same kind of incoherence, namely, that which appears in §2(i). In effect, to the extent that experiences can be reasons for judgments and beliefs, experiences cannot have non-conceptual content because, in order to justifiably apply observational concepts in judgments and beliefs, the concepts that figure in the content of those judgments must figure in the content of experiences as well. In other words, perceptual reasons have to include the same concepts that appear in the contents of judgments and beliefs which they justify.

Finally, whereas Peacocke acknowledges that we have the capacity to identify or recognize objects, properties and states of affairs from different perspectives, he does not offer the required theoretical devices to explain it. Thus, to maintain that we are able perceptually identify objects, properties and states of affairs without needing to possess the relevant concepts introduces a new kind of incoherence, namely, the one outlined in §2(iii). Perceptual identification of shapes, for instance, requires possessing the concepts of the identified shapes, because one needs to understand that the different appearances that one sees are appearances of the same shape.

5. *Essentially non-conceptual content: Hanna's Myth of the Myth*

Robert Hanna (2011) has tried to defend a new version of non-conceptualism. He offers a particular argument for the existence of what he calls “essentially non-conceptual content” – “The Two Hands Argument” – and, in the final section of his paper, he presents an answer to the objection according to which non-conceptualism falls into the Myth of the Given. I cannot consider here his positive argument for non-conceptualism; rather, I shall evaluate his answer to the objection mentioned.

Hanna supports Russell’s classical distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Nevertheless, contrary to Russell, Hanna maintains that the primary objects of cognitive acquaintance are individual macroscopic material beings, not sense data or universals. Furthermore, he maintains that cognitive acquaintance is always a matter of knowing how to move one’s own living body in response to the causal-dynamic powers of macroscopic external material beings. Therefore, “knowing X” is, according to Hanna, necessarily “knowing how to move my body in response to X” (Hanna 2011, 352–353), where X is a macroscopic external material being. From his point of view, our dynamic, embodied and pre-reflective consciousness of material things is due to our perceptual acquaintance, whose content is non-conceptual in character.

Moreover, Hanna claims that only non-conceptual content can adequately represent the unique location, movement, change and causal activities of perceivable

objects, including the embodied subject herself and her living body parts. Only essentially non-conceptual content is structurally and functionally suited to the fine-grained sensorimotor control of the living body in human and non-human cognition and basic intentional action.⁴⁴ To take Hanna's example, only non-conceptual content is suited to mediate my ability to get my key quickly and smoothly out of my pocket and into the keyhole in the door.

Hanna believes that it is an illusion to think that the Myth of the Given actually applies to non-conceptualism. Indeed, he holds that this objection is a myth, the Myth of the Myth of the Given. In order to support this claim, he tries to respond to McDowell's challenge according to which states with non-conceptual content only give us exculpations (instead of justifications). Hanna acknowledges that states with non-conceptual content can never stand in inferential relations to beliefs, but he adds that not all reasons stand in inferential relations to beliefs. He believes that essentially non-conceptual content is presupposed by all rational conceptual content and therefore "can and does sometimes sufficiently justify perceptual beliefs and basic intentional actions, and thereby provide reasons for them, even without standing in inferential relations to them" (Hanna 2011, 387).

Essentially non-conceptual content thus conceived provides us with what Hanna calls "The Grip of the Given". To stand within The Grip of the Given is to be so related to things and to have such a grip on the positions and dispositions of things via essentially non-conceptual content, that we are poised for making accurate reference, true statements, knowledge, effectiveness in intentional action, rightness in choice, etc. Thus, according to Hanna, in addition to inferential relations to beliefs and actions, there is also

[t]he normative, sufficiently justifying non-inferential grip relation to beliefs, choices, and actions, and essentially non-conceptual content can stand in that kind of relation to them. Therefore it is precisely The Grip of the Given, via essentially non-conceptual content, that is our non-inferential sufficiently justifying reason for basic perceptual belief (...) or at least this grip is the primitive fact that provides non-inferential sufficiently justifying reasons for us to hold basic perceptual beliefs or perform basic intentional actions (Hanna 2011, 389).

Yet how is non-inferential justification provided by states with non-conceptual content? At this point, it is crucial to take into account what kind of knowledge the essentially non-conceptual content provides. Hanna argues that "the knowledge yielded by essential embodied mental states with essentially non-conceptual content is fundamentally and irreducibly knowledge-*how*, not knowledge-*that*" (2011, 372). But if this is so, how could non-conceptual knowledge-how be a reason for holding perceptual beliefs? Surely, to know *that* I know how to do

⁴⁴ See Hanna (2011, 371).

something can be a reason for holding a belief or acting in a certain way. But, how could the very practical knowledge to do something be a reason for a perceptual belief? In other words, how could knowing-how to do something be, in-itself, a reason for an empirical judgment or belief? This is the crucial point that, unfortunately, Hanna leaves unexplained.

What is more, it is not at all clear how Hanna could give the required explanation. He actually believes that essentially non-conceptual content involves what Adrian Cussins calls “basic spatial and temporal tracking and discriminatory skills which are required to find our way around the environment” (Cussins 1990, 147).⁴⁵ However, Cussins’s notion of non-conceptual content does not seem to be apt for Hanna’s purposes. In fact, in contrast to what happens with conceptual content, states with non-conceptual content present the world – according to Cussins – not as a truth-maker, not as a realm of reference, but as a mediator. Non-conceptual content presents the world “as an environment that mediates activity in the environment” (Cussins 1990, 155). What Cussins calls “the realm of mediation” consists of “the trails that distinguish patterns of afforded activity from patterns of resisted activity” (Cussins 1990, 155). The world experienced as the realm of mediation guides us in our activities in the environment. Correspondingly, Cussins assigns two different sorts of normativity to conceptual and non-conceptual contents. Conceptual contents are constitutively governed by the norm of truth; in contrast, non-conceptual contents are governed by “mundane normativity”, “the gentle bumpings of one’s body and informational systems; the cognitive affordances and resistances of the environment” (Cussins 1990, 154).

If it is true that Hanna’s essentially non-conceptual content involves Cussins’s notion of non-conceptual content, the following difficulty arises for Hanna: how could states with non-conceptual content so characterized constitute reasons for holding judgments and beliefs? How should we understand that states that present the world in non-referential terms – states which are governed by a norm different from truth – constitute reasons for judgments and beliefs? Surely we have a pre-reflexive ability (or set of abilities) by virtue of which we are able to make reference to different entities in the world, to be responsive to reasons, to behave according to our purposes, to draw logical consequences from certain propositions, etc.⁴⁶ In short, surely there is some kind of knowing-how that is essentially practical in character in virtue of which, as Hanna claims, “we are poised for achieving any or all of the highest values of our cognitive and practical lives”

⁴⁵ See Hanna (2011, 372), where Hanna quotes Cussins’s article.

⁴⁶ Hanna speaks as if pre-reflexive knowledge were necessarily non-propositional in nature (see Hanna 2011, 372). However, I do not see any impediment to believing that propositional knowledge may be pre-reflexive as well.

(Hanna 2011, 388).⁴⁷ However, why should one say that this sort of know-how, as Hanna understands it, can constitute, in itself, a reason for holding beliefs? Why should one say that these abilities are reasons at all? The point is that practical abilities, or the kind of contents that make such abilities experientially available, such as Cussins and Hanna conceive them, do not seem to be the sort of things that can be reasons for holding judgments or beliefs: they do not represent objects or states of affairs, they are not true or false, and they are not, in themselves, devices to make reference to objects or properties in the environment. As a result, it is very difficult to see how they could have the appropriate relations to judgments and beliefs which are needed in order to be able to rationally justify them.

In his new book *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori* (2015), Hanna develops in more detail his theory of essentially non-conceptual content and introduces some clarifications about his response to the accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given. Although Hanna's book considers many topics in philosophy of mind and epistemology, here I can only focus my attention on his response to that accusation.

In contrast to what Hanna takes to be McDowell's position, he claims that "not all reasons stand in inferential relations to beliefs, choices, or actions. Reasons can justify beliefs, choices, or actions directly and non-inferentially" (Hanna 2015, 108), as when a person delivers, demonstrates, or presents a fact to someone else for believing something: "in such cases the act of seeing itself is a good reason for believing what is seen" (Hanna 2015, 108). Thus, in response to the accusation of falling into the Myth of the Given, Hanna claims that

In addition to inferential relations to beliefs, choices, and actions, there is also the normative, sufficiently justifying non-inferential 'grip' or 'handle' relation to beliefs, choices, and actions, and autonomous essentially non-conceptual content can stand in that kind of relation to them, thereby providing non-inferential good reasons for those beliefs (Hanna 2015, 110).

Hanna seems to believe that a crucial point at issue between conceptualists and non-conceptualists lies in the question of whether all kinds of justification are indeed inferential or not.⁴⁸ However, this is not the crucial difference between Hanna's and McDowell's proposals because McDowell explicitly holds that the justification that experience provides is non-inferential in nature. Here it is what McDowell claims:

⁴⁷ McDowell explicitly acknowledges that, in a sense, there is a level of know-how that is the ground-floor level for higher levels of our cognitive life. See McDowell (2013b).

⁴⁸ Indeed, Hanna reconstructs McDowell's position as if McDowell held that all kinds of justification were inferential (see Hanna 2011, 40 and 2015, 107).

My aim was to spell out how the idea of rationality is in play when we explain perceptual beliefs in terms of experience. And here the notion of inference gets no grip. When one acquires a belief in this way, one comes to believe that things are as one's experience reveals, or at least seems to reveal, that things are. The content that the explanation attributes to the experience is the same as the content of the belief explained, not a premise from which it would make sense to think of the subject as having reached the belief by an inferential step (McDowell 2009, 131).⁴⁹

Thus, just like Hanna, McDowell can also claim that a perceptual presentation of a fact, singled out by focusing attention on it, can be a non-inferential reason to hold an observational belief. So, for example, let us suppose that someone asks me why I believe that a certain book is on the table. In such case, pointing to the relevant fact, I could answer: "Because I see that the book is on the table" or, simply, "Because I see that it is there". According to what McDowell takes to be perceptual justification, this would be an example in which my belief is non-inferentially justified by my perceptual experience. Therefore, the mere fact that experience can provide non-inferential reasons is not something that distinguishes non-conceptualists from conceptualists and, consequently, cannot be used as a rationale in favor of non-conceptualism.

Now, Hanna's idea about how experiences with autonomous essentially non-conceptual content supposedly justify beliefs and judgments raises some questions. According to what Hanna claims now, experience reveals facts or states of affairs.⁵⁰ Moreover, he still maintains his thesis according to which the knowledge yielded by essential embodied mental states with essentially non-conceptual content "is fundamentally and irreducibly 'knowledge-how', or action-oriented knowledge, not 'knowledge-that', or propositional knowledge" (Hanna 2015, 91). However, if all of this is so, how is it that the knowledge yielded by the essentially non-conceptual content of experience, which is fundamentally and irreducibly knowledge-how, constitutes a presentation of facts or states of affairs in such a way that it could be a reason for holding an empirical belief? To be sure, even when one acknowledges that knowledge-how is irreducible to propositional knowledge, one can perfectly accept that knowledge-how *involves* knowledge of facts and propositional knowledge. This is not to claim, however, that knowledge-how, in itself, is a kind of knowledge that represents facts or states of affairs in a way that, occasion by occasion, could constitute a reason for holding an empirical belief. This might be a genuine possibility for those who believe (incorrectly in my opinion) that knowledge-how can be reduced to knowledge-that.⁵¹ But this is not Hanna's opinion. So my question remains: how is it that the

⁴⁹ See also McDowell (2004).

⁵⁰ See Hanna (2015, 108).

⁵¹ See Stanley and Williamson (2001).

knowledge-how provided by essentially non-conceptual content could constitute, in itself, a presentation of facts and thereby be a reason for a belief? In other words, how could an act of seeing itself, which delivers fundamental and irreducible knowledge-how, be a reason for believing what is seen? The difficulty lies in the fact that knowledge-how, understood as irreducible to propositional knowledge, does not seem to have the appropriate sort of content (if it has content) to stand in the relevant non-inferential relations with mental states, such as beliefs and judgments, that could count, in appropriate circumstances, as cases of propositional knowledge.

I believe that Hanna correctly identifies an important dimension of our cognitive and agentic life: the dimension constituted by a kind of bodily capacities which make possible the so-called “Grip of the Given”, which in turn situates us well for epistemic justification and intentional action. Surely, these capacities have an essential role in our capacity to perceive, to move in the environment, and to acquire perceptual reasons for beliefs. However, acknowledging this point is not equivalent to the statement that the essentially non-conceptual content, supposedly involved in those capacities, can stand in non-inferential relations to beliefs. On the contrary, as I have argued, to the extent that the knowledge provided by mental states with essentially non-conceptual content is knowledge-how, it is not clear at all how such a kind of knowledge could have the relevant non-inferential relations with beliefs and judgments.

But even if this objection was overcome, Hanna’s non-conceptualism faces a general difficulty, which is outlined in the previous section and directed against Peacocke’s variety of non-conceptualism. In order to count as a reason for holding an empirical belief, the perceptual presentation of the relevant fact must be appropriately articulated to the belief it justifies. So, let us suppose that the belief in question is that this is a book (in the case in which the book in question is in my field of view). Let us suppose also that my belief is true. It may be claimed that in my believing so, the book falls under the concept of book. Now, if my experience of the book is to be a reason to truly predicate of the seen object the concept *book*, my experience must be able to disclose to me when, or under what conditions, the object in question effectively falls under the concept of book. However, if my experience really had essentially non-conceptual content, it could not present to me the object as falling under the concept of book (otherwise, it would, after all, have conceptual content). But, if experience did not present to me the relevant object as falling under the concept of book, why should I suppose that my experience constitutes a reason for holding the belief in question (i.e., to predicate of the seen object “... is a book”)? Indeed, it seems that if my experience really had essentially non-conceptual content, it could not be an appropriate reason for holding the belief that this is a book (or to predicate “... is a book” of the seen object) because the content of my experience could not disclose to me what I take to

be a necessary condition to correctly applying the concept of book to the relevant object. In other words, we are not entitled to uncritically assume, or believe, that the perceptual presentations of facts can be reasons for our judgments and beliefs, if such perceptual presentations, because of their supposedly non-conceptual content, do not present to us those facts as falling under the concepts that we use in our judgments and beliefs.

Thus, although Hanna claims that the Myth of the Given is a myth, he seems to fall into the first version of the Myth of the Given (§2[i]). He claims that mental states with essentially non-conceptual content justify perceptual beliefs (they have logical non-inferential relations with them) without acknowledging the necessary kind of content to do so. Consequently, I do not believe that Hanna has appropriately responded to the conceptualist's challenge; he has not clearly shown how experiences with putative non-conceptual content could justify mental states with propositional contents.

6. Conclusion

My original question was whether non-conceptualists have appropriately responded to McDowell's objection when accused of falling into the Myth of the Given. My arguments support a response in the negative, at least in the case of three important and, I take it, representative non-conceptualists. They also reinforce a Kantian insight,⁵² namely that in order to acquire perceptual knowledge, it is not sufficient that objects be given to experience; rather, it is also necessary to be able to think about those objects as the objects they are. And human thought, at least such as it has traditionally been conceived, is exclusively conceptual. Basically, this is Sellars's point when he warns us that we should not take perceptual awareness of particulars and sorts as a non-problematic feature of perceptual experience. We should not take for granted that having sensations or merely being presented with something (an object, property or fact) constitutes a cognitive achievement.

In virtue of the obtained outcome, it can be said that conceptualism is in a better position to explain how perceptual experiences are integrated into our cognitive lives. Notwithstanding, it is fair to say that the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists is highly complex and engages more than just the epistemological dimension. The considerations made here do not prevent, in

⁵² I say "Kantian insight" with the following qualification: to the extent that we interpret Kant's *First Critique* in conceptualist terms. Hanna has developed a non-conceptualist interpretation of Kant's works. See, for instance, Hanna (2005, 2015). For a conceptualist reading of Kant, see McDowell (1996 and 2009), and Gunther (2003). It may be worth noting that Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* is written in a Kantian (conceptualist) spirit. For a specific criticism of non-conceptualist readings of Kant's *Critique*, see Ginsborg (2008).

themselves, the use of the notion of ‘non-conceptual content’ in a field other than epistemology (perhaps, for example, in the explanation of primitive bodily movements). Even in the epistemological field, the non-conceptualist still has a possible move, namely that of abandoning the idea that perceptual experiences are reasons at all.⁵³ In such a case, they would have to hold that the warrant that experience provides to beliefs and judgments is distinct from that of providing reasons for them.⁵⁴ Although I do not believe this strategy to be a promising one, I also think that, by opting for that alternative, the non-conceptualist may escape from being objected to fall into the Myth of the Given.*

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⁵³ This is the alternative explicitly followed by Tyler Burge. See Burge (2003).

⁵⁴ Burge’s idea is that perceptual experiences do not provide reasons for beliefs, but, rather, entitlements to holding empirical beliefs. Perceptual entitlement is, according to him, a kind of warrant; and this kind of warrant is conceived in externalist terms: experiences reliably produce empirical beliefs. For a critical consideration of Burge’s theory of perceptual entitlement, see Kalpokas (2014).

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