

**NEO-KANTIAN INTELLECTUALISM:  
A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE**

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## **DECLARATION:**

I, Amber Corfield-Moore, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources I confirm that this has been indicated.

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## **ABSTRACT:**

In this thesis I address Tyler Burge's recent challenges to Strawson's and Evans' theories of 'mental representation'. I take 'mental representation' to be a subject's capacity to 'singularly represent' physical objects within mental content—for example, by having object-directed thought. While both Strawson and Evans take this capacity to be restricted to adult humans, believing that such thought requires high levels of cognitive development, Burge alleges that there is theoretical and scientific motivation to think that a (cognitively) less demanding theory is the correct account of mental representation. However despite Burge's objections that both Strawson and Evans 'hyperintellectualise' mental representation I argue that an 'intellectualism' based upon their discussions is not refuted by Burge's anti-intellectualist opposition. I argue that, while some objections to Strawson and Evans might be sound, they do not automatically refute an intellectualism based on the same principles and motivations. Moreover, though such an intellectualist theory will need to justify its demanding conditions in the face of Burge's less-demanding—and scientifically motivated—anti-intellectualism, I argue that nothing Burge has claimed so far shows that such a theory should be dismissed. In conclusion then I argue that a distinctly 'neo-Kantian' intellectualism can be seen to be a viable, alternative theory and can prolong a debate with Burge over the nature of mental representation.

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# INTRODUCTION

“We are not to rush forward along a path neither attractive nor Kantian.”

P. F. Strawson

*Bounds of Sense*

An elucidation of a subject’s psychology often appeals to what we might call *representational states*: states which are ‘about’ some object in the world and might serve to represent that object as some *way*—i.e. big, small, tall, short etc. Though such states might be thought of as representing generalities or abstracts—e.g. love is beautiful—the states I will be concerned with possess *content* which can refer to, ‘pick out’ or—as I shall describe it—*singularly represent* a physical object in the environment. Such states can be posited as part of a subject’s *perception* of the world, or as part of their thought about it; in singularly representing objects in the world around them they can be thought of as ‘bridging the gap’ between an internal, mental life—the subject-matter of psychology—and the physical world.

Such states can play a key role in psychological explanation, explaining object-directed action and behavioural interaction with the physical world. But if we are to use these states in such a way we must question what sort of creatures are capable of such representation: is it only rational, linguistic creatures, like humans who can think about and perceptually represent the world, or are some of these representational capacities shared with cognitively ‘less-developed’ creatures, like apes and human infants? The theories of mental representation which I discuss here disagree about just such a question because they differ about ‘what it takes’ for a creature to represent in either perception or thought.

The debate begins with Tyler Burge, who opposes a class of theories which:

“[R]equires individual’s representations to contain general materials to make sense of objective representation [...] ostensibly simple, direct empirical represen-

tation of the physical environment is held to be impossible without help from further representational resources" (Burge, 2010a p. 16)

The notion of what it is to ‘make sense’ of a representation (or representational state) will be explained in chapters one and two. However, the upshot of such a requirement, as Burge notes, is that to represent an object, *o*, (in perception or thought) a subject will need to possess ‘supplementary capacities’ (*ibid.*): for example, he might have to be capable of *explaining* his thought (thus utilising linguistic capacities) or of representing *o* in the context of a distinction between appearance and reality etc.

Burge calls such theories *Second Family Individualist* however I will refer to them as *Intellectualist* theories of mental representation. They are taken to be intellectualist because, in one way or another, the conditions they place on the entertainment of representational states can be fulfilled only by subjects who possess ‘higher level’, ‘well developed’ or ‘advanced’ cognitive capacities. On the other hand Burge propounds an *Anti-Intellectualist* view of mental representation which claims that subjects do *not* require such advanced capacities in order to entertain the representational states under discussion. One of his key aims in *Origins of Objectivity* is thus to disprove or rebut such intellectualist theories with their consequence that only ‘advanced’ subjects like human beings are capable of mental representation.

My aim in this thesis is to question whether such theories could be defended from Burge’s attack. I focus on just two of the individual theorists who he opposes: the so-called *neo-Kantians*, P. F. Strawson and Gareth Evans. As I will show the distinctive feature of these ‘neo-Kantians’ is that they prize a subject’s *awareness* of the distinction between the objects he represents and his *experience* of them. Because such awareness is taken to require considerable intelligence (the capacity to conceive of the world as *objective*) these theories—or a theory based upon them—are a species of what I’ll refer to as *neo-Kantian intellectualism*.

Burge presents two challenges to neo-Kantian intellectualism: first, that it is based on discussions in Strawson and Evans which are confused and counterintuitive; second that any neo-Kantian intellectualism must *justify* its demanding, intellectualist conditions against a less-demanding, anti-intellectualist alternative. I will question whether either of these challenges constitutes a crippling objection to any form of neo-Kantian intellectualism, or whether a theory based on the discussions found in Strawson and Evans could provide a viable alternative to an anti-intellectualist ac-

count of mental representation.

I will not attempt to defend every aspect of the theories of Strawson and Evans—rather there are parts of Evans' theory of perception and their common commitment to what is referred to as ‘Russell’s Principle’ which, I will argue, should be abandoned. Yet I will claim that we can devise a theory *based* on their discussions which preserves many of their central concerns and conflicts with Burge’s anti-intellectualism. In-keeping with the theorists I will be discussing here I ignore questions about the ontology or metaphysics of the representational states in question. Rather I will assume that they are an irreducible part of our psychological taxonomy, whatever the correct metaphysical explanation might be. Instead the question I will pursue is whether Burge is justified in rejecting this intellectualism in favour of his anti-intellectualist alternative.

In chapter one I begin with Burge’s main objections to Strawson’s and Evans’ respective discussions on mental representation: their theories of perception. But I will take issue with the wider significance of this challenge; chapter two will claim that the real battleground for Burge and the neo-Kantians is in their different approaches to the nature of singular thought, a debate which—so I will claim—can be divorced from their diverse theories of perception. Chapters three and four will then assess how far the neo-Kantian claims can be defended, first by examining their relation to the objectionable Russell’s Principle (chapter three), then by addressing Burge’s two objections. I will not show enough to *settle* the question between these two opposing sides. But I will argue—*contra* Burge—that there is still considerable debate to be had before he can claim to have disproved intellectualism and paved the way for his anti-intellectualist theory. Rather I will claim that the writings of Strawson and Evans may still provide valuable insights to any theory of mental representation and that a ‘neo-Kantian’ intellectualism remains a viable alternative.

# 1

The main basis upon which Burge rejects the accounts of mental representation in both Strawson and Evans is the claim that they ‘hyper-intellectualise’ the notion of perception. He takes Strawson and Evans to maintain that “an individual cannot represent an objective subject-matter unless the individual can represent preconditions of objectivity[—i.e. can conceive of the subject-matter of experience as independent of their experience of it]” (Burge, 2010a p. 105). It is assumed—by both Burge and the neo-Kantians—that only cognitively advanced subjects, such as adult humans, will be capable of meeting such a demand. This means that less-developed creatures, such as infants and (possibly some) animals, will be incapable of ‘representing an objective subject-matter’—i.e. representing physical objects in the world—at all.

For Burge this is a problematic commitment. As §2 will show it has the potential, not only to conflict with aspects of Burge’s theory of perception, but may even conflict with claims which Burge alleges to be grounded in perceptual psychology (2010a p. 99). In this chapter, however, I will claim that Burge’s objections to Strawson’s and Evans’ accounts of perception are misguided. In the case of Strawson I will claim, in §3, that Burge’s allegations are grounded in misinterpretation and that a subtler reading could exonerate him from the worst of Burge’s criticisms. As §4 will show, Evans’ claims are more explicit; however, though they do conflict with Burge’s theory of perception, they do not fall foul of the scientific claims which Burge appeals to. Nonetheless I will end by questioning whether a defence of neo-Kantian intellectualism will rely on defending Evans’ theory of perception. Instead I will claim that further discussion of their respective theories of mental representation—their theories of singular thought—will reveal the significance of this divergence from Burge.

To begin, §1, I will explore one of Strawson’s most intriguing discussions of per-

ceptual experience—taken from ‘Perception and its Objects’—which, I suggest, offers an insight into his views. It will be necessary to focus on Strawson here (and the paper mentioned) both because he provides a more detailed discussion than Evans and because, as will be shown in §2, Burge believes Strawson’s discussion to be culpable for the confusions and mistakes in Evans’ later conception. Burge’s objection, and own theory of perception, will be explained in §2, where some ambiguities in Strawson’s account will be discussed. §3 and §4 will therefore be concerned with the correct interpretation of both the theory of perception discussed in §1 and certain ‘incriminating’ passages which Burge finds in Evans.

## §1.

In ‘Perception and its Objects’ Strawson responds to a widespread assumption about perceptual experience: “that our ordinary perceptual judgements carry implications not carried by a ‘strict account’ of the sensible experience which gives rise to them” (Strawson, 1979 p. 92). The thought here is that, though what we might call our ‘commonsense’ *descriptions* of experience reference entire objects—e.g. cars, tables and bikes—such accounts can be reduced to a ‘basic’ account which references no such objects. As such the ‘commonsense’ description ‘I saw a red car’ might be broken down into a more monadic description such as ‘I saw a red patch; felt solidity etc.’ Strawson’s intended target is Ayer, however the assumption at play—that our commonsense accounts are extrapolations from these basic elements which can thus be discerned out of them—can be traced to earlier writers such as Locke and Hume.

Against this Strawson enigmatically claims:

“Our perceptual judgements [...] embody or reflect a certain view of the world, as containing objects, variously propertied, located in a common space and continuing their existence independently of our interrupted and relatively fleeting perceptions of them. Our making of such judgements implies our possession and application of concepts of such objects. But now it appears that we cannot give a veridical characterisation even of the sensible experience which these judgements [...] ‘go beyond’, without reference to those objects themselves; that our sensible experience itself is thoroughly permeated with those concepts of objects which figure in such judgements.” (Strawson, 1979 p. 94)

Strawson is clear that this discussion, not only centres on adult humans rather than less developed subjects like infants (1979 p. 92), but that it concerns ‘non-philosophical man’—i.e. the way we, as conscious beings, ordinarily conceive of perceptual experience in our ‘unreflective’ moments, before we are tempted to respond to philosophical questions (1979 p. 95). What this passage suggests, first, is that our accounts of experience encapsulate a certain view of the world: as containing discrete, propertied particulars which exist *objectively* (i.e. outside of observation)—call these *object-directed judgements*. Secondly it suggests these judgements, and the concepts employed therein, aren’t extrapolations from more basic experiential elements but rather *permeate* experience itself.

So far this debate focuses on the ‘account’ or ‘description’ we provide of experience, the opposing thought being that these descriptions could be altered to provide a ‘stricter’ account of the nature of the experience which commonsense accounts describe using object-terms.<sup>1</sup> Strawson’s response suggests one important claim about our perception of the world which I’ll refer to as Strawson’s *Perceptual Thesis* (PT):

(PT): The ‘concepts of objects’ which feature in object-directed judgements form an irreducible part of a ‘strictly veridical’ description of perceptual experience.

At this stage (PT) should be understood as a rendition of the claims contained in the quoted passage, but not as committing Strawson to any very substantive perceptual theses. For example, it is not claiming that objects are the *only* constituents of a perceptual experience, as might distinguish a form of naive realist from a (form of) present-day representationalist.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it claiming that all experience must make reference to objects which actually exist, which would preclude experiences with no (spatio-temporal) objects, such as hallucinations. It does not even claim that *any* report of experience necessarily references external objects, precluding descriptions like ‘I feel cold’ (or, if the ‘I’ is such an object, ‘there is cold’). Rather (PT) only claims that refer-

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<sup>1</sup> In lieu of the discovery of any terminological difference, I will (in this section) use ‘perception’, ‘perceptual experience’ and ‘experience’ interchangeably—Strawson’s exact meaning will be made clearer over the course of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> However ‘Perception and its Objects’ argues in favour of a *direct realism* about perception, which I take to be compatible with each of the views mentioned.

ences to objects are consistent with a ‘strictly veridical’ account of perceptual experience.

The dispute between Strawson and the latter-day empiricists are slightly tangential to the question at issue here—i.e. whether the neo-Kantians do ‘hyperintellectualise’ perception in conflict with Burge’s own theory. What is interesting about (PT), as regards this question, is the significance of the ‘concepts of objects’ mentioned both in the passage quoted and the formulation of (PT). Roughly Strawson’s idea is that issuing such object-directed accounts requires a certain *conception* of objects—e.g. as discrete, propertied etc. However from his discussion of this concept-possession it is left unclear whether these concepts merely enable us to *describe* our experience in these object-directed ways or whether we require them to *have* experience which is *of objects* rather than a dreamy mosaic of sensations. In other words—which will become especially pertinent when we discuss Burge—whether we require such a ‘conception of objects’ in order for the *content* of perception to come to *refer to* or *represent* (physical) objects in the first place. A fuller discussion of this ambiguity must be reserved for §2; for now it is necessary to ask what is involved in a ‘conception of an object’ and what concepts must be employed in order to invoke object-directed judgements.

We might begin by asking what sort of thing Strawson has in mind when he discusses the objects of perception. He makes clear that such objects are often conceived of as the *causes* of our experiences (1979 p. 99), and items of which we are *directly* aware (1979 p. 103). Ordinarily we would think of such objects as physical entities: extended substances with physical properties and dimensions and as such these are the items upon which I will focus in this discussion.

One feature which is implicit though not discussed in ‘Perception and its Objects’ (as it is in other of Strawson’s works) is the *discrete* nature of these objects. We take ourselves to experience a multiplicity of individuals, distinct both from other objects and ourselves (or our bodies). Thus our descriptions of experience are not, as Strawson makes clear, mere sense-data reports which list various, generic phenomena—“round red patches, brown oblongs, flashes whistles, tickling sensations, smells” (1966 p. 99)—rather they reference *entire objects* like walls, bicycles, feathers and food. Even if an object is not entirely available to me (if, for example, the wall is occluded), my experience must still be described in a way which makes reference to this individual: I will be said to have seen ‘part of *a wall*’.

Thus we can begin to elucidate the concepts employed in an object-directed judgement which (PT) claimed was descriptively irreducible:

(PT<sub>discrete</sub>): A description of perceptual experience which references an object necessarily references a discrete individual.

Sometimes experience can be described *as of* a ‘wholly present’ individual—such as a wall, or bicycle. On other occasions however the environment we experience might be ‘featureless’—e.g. a vast expanse of desert or a snowy tundra—in which there are no individual objects to be distinguished at one time. Furthermore, Evans highlights that there are many discrete individuals which are *process-like*—e.g. rainstorms (see Evans, 1980 p. 257), races or the reign of Henry VIII. Such particulars extend over time and thus may not be fully experienced in one perceptual event. Nonetheless it is easy to see how (PT<sub>discrete</sub>) might apply; for an experience of the rainstorm or a desert may still be described in a way which references one particular—e.g. the Gobi desert, or a rainstorm which can be distinguished from the one last week. Thus, like the case of the occluded wall, I might be said to have seen part of a larger particular which, in some way, is distinguishable from other such particulars.

But there is something else which is remarkable about the objects we are said to experience. To see this it is necessary to dwell once more on the original dispute between Strawson and his opponent in ‘Perception and its Objects’. It was claimed that his opponent thought object-directed descriptions could be distilled into more ‘generic’ accounts—e.g. ‘I see a red ball’ became ‘I sense roundness and redness’. The sensations described in this latter report are not thought to be ‘distinct’ from the subject in any way—they are simply a subject’s states of mind. The former description, on the other hand, makes reference to an object which is implicitly conceived to be distinct from the subject. Even if the subject does not *believe* that there is a ball present—if he only claims ‘it *seems* to me as if there is a ball there’—he still describes a scene in which he must conceive of something which is distinct from himself. But, further, these objects are though capable of occupying states and possessing properties independently of any subject’s experience of them.<sup>3</sup> Not only is an implicit

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<sup>3</sup> Strawson suggests that, even for ‘secondary properties’ like colour—which are possibly dependent on our experience—we pre-theoretically *conceive* of objects as possessing these properties independently

distinction made between a *subject* who has these private experiences and an *object* which causes them, but such objects are conceived of as *public* in that, unlike a subject's own experiences, it is capable of being the object of others' perceptions and observations; while others can experience the same rainstorm as me they cannot experience *my* wetness.

A further aspect in our conception of objects is thus that we conceive of them as *independent*. As Strawson describes it:

“we distinguish, naturally, and unreflectively, between our seeing and hearings and feelings—our perceiving—of objects and the objects we see and hear and feel; and hence quite consistently accept both the interruptedness of the former and the continuance in existence, unobserved, of the latter.” (1979 p. 98)

What this passage indicates is that the objects of experience are taken to persist outside of our episodic perception of them. Our experience of an object is thus an event which is fundamentally distinct from the object itself: our object,  $\alpha$ , might be in that state at time  $t$  even if we were not here to see it and might continue in that state even when we look away. Thus objects are independent both in that they are *distinct* from an experience of them and that they are capable of persisting when that experience ceases. Consequently a further emendation can be added to (PT):

(PT<sub>independence</sub>): A description of perceptual experience which references an object will invariably reference a particular which can exist independently of such experience.

Unlike the discreteness of such objects which is a feature of the concept of an object itself (it cannot be the object it is unless it is distinguishable from other objects of the same kind) the independence of these objects may be thought to be a merely contingent feature of our conception of them. Thus the fact that we conceive of it as existing independently does not seem essential to its being an object in the first place—thus (PT<sub>independence</sub>) uses the locution ‘will invariably’ rather than ‘necessarily’.

To conceive of objects in this way requires conceiving of the world as relatively stable: that it is simply a brute fact of the world we live in that most of the objects we

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of our experience, even if that does not match our so-called ‘scientific’ conception of the world (1979 p. 104).

encounter will persist outside of experience and will not ‘pop’ in and out of existence. We conceive of objects as such that we can re-encounter them (even *reidentify* them as objects we have encountered before) after periods of non-observation and as such that they can exist, in just the way we would experience them as being, even if they weren’t experienced by us at all.

We are now in a position to see the conception of objects involved in object-directed judgements. The sort of descriptions to which (PT) applies—according to Strawson—are those which refer to discrete individuals (as per (PT<sub>discrete</sub>)) which are capable of existing outside of our fleeting perceptions of them (as per (PT<sub>independence</sub>)). As noted, the question now is what significance we are to attach to such concepts: are they required only to make such judgements or to *have* object-involving perceptual experience (perception which ‘represents’ objects) in the first place?

Before this however a little more light can be shed on our conception of objects as the neo-Kantians understand it. One key question yet to be answered is how we *individuate* the objects referenced in our object-directed judgements—i.e. how is a red ball distinguished as a discrete object from amongst the more general sensations? The key factor here is the spatial position of an object; as I will show in the rest of this section Strawson took Spatial thinking to be necessary for a form of experience which is accurately described by (PT). Moreover the form of spatial thinking employed in object-directed judgements offers a valuable insight into neo-Kantian intellectualism more generally conceived.

One description of how objects are individuated can be found in Strawson’s account of *feature-placing*. This account trades on the idea that, as indicated in the passage from (1979, p.94), objects are *propertied* and located in space. *Feature-placing* begins with the claim that objects (that is, individual instances of general properties) can be introduced into ‘empirical singular statements’ only by ‘narrowing down’ from more general statements which index a spatial location. These *feature-placing* statements take forms like ‘Music can be heard in the distance’ ‘Snow is here’ etc. and form the starting point for a theory of singular-introduction because ““(a) [they] do not make use of the notion of individual instances, and (b) [they] do not presuppose the existence of statements which do make use of this notion” (1953-4 p. 37). While such statements do not introduce an individual, they do introduce a general element (snow) and ascribe it a location in the world (there). Strawson seems to think this provides all

the materials we need for the introduction of an individual: if we are able to distinguish a place (here) where there is snow, and distinguish it from other places (there) where there is no snow then we have the means to identify *multiple* areas where there is snow: ‘here and here and here and here’. As Strawson claims:

“The considerations which determine multiplicity of placing become, when we introduce particulars, the criteria for distinguishing this *patch* of snow from that, or the first *fall* of snow from the second.” (1953-4 p. 39)

What this means is that distinguishing locations in which there is snow is just the same as distinguishing individual *instances* of snow. Individuals—including more ordinary objects like cats—are, according to this account, individuated by spatially locating certain general properties. By identifying the spatial boundary at which our feature is located (at time  $t$ ) we are able to discriminate individual, physical instances or objects at  $t$  which have that property. Thus space (and time) not only aids us in discriminating an object from all other objects (which Strawson takes to be necessary for reference) it also aids us in individuating that object *as a propertied particular* in the first place. In other words, objects are individuated in experience by identifying a *location* or *place* which harbours a property and distinguishing that from contiguous places—and different objects—by contrasting the properties present.

Of course we are searching here for an account of how our *perceptual experience* allows us to individuate objects such that an object-involving judgement can form a correct account of it. So far feature-placing is touted as an account at the level of thought and reference, describing how individuals can be introduced into propositions. However the situation is a little too complicated to dismiss the relevance of feature-placing to Strawson’s account of perception: for one thing (PT) explicitly claims that object-involving statements—i.e. statements which will depend on feature-placing, in Strawson’s terms—form an ‘irreducible description’ of experience, suggesting that the divide between *perception* of objects and *thought* about such objects is not so clear cut. Yet, whatever the apparent relation turns out to be, feature-placing offers one, important idea which seems essential to an account of object-individuation: that objects are individuated by sensibly discriminating their boundaries—i.e. the place where they end and another object begins. This suggests that the spatial properties of an object—e.g. its’ relation to other objects—plays an invaluable role in allowing a subject to discriminate it. To locate something spatially is, at bottom, to locate a *place*.

and one does this by distinguishing the boundaries of a property-instance from surroundings which manifest a different property. Thus a patch of snow, or even a cat, can be distinguished from the mud which surrounds it by recognising the difference between snow, cat and mud. Another way of putting this is that objects (and, by extension, distinguishable *places* in space) are located through their relation to another particular.

As we will see in chapter two Evans famously distinguishes between two ways in which a subject may spatially locate an object which, so I will attempt to show, can reveal an extra dimension of neo-Kantian intellectualism. Now though, we have a clearer idea of the conception of objects which Strawson takes us to possess. We can assume that conceiving of objects as existing independently of any subject's experience of them—i.e. conceiving of objects as *objective*—requires highly advanced cognitive capacities which neither very young children nor non-human animals are commonly taken to have. Thus the question highlighted by the original formulation of (PT) becomes important in understanding Strawson's intellectualism: is this conception of objects necessary merely to *describe* experience in object-directed terms or to *have* experience of objects (as opposed to a sensory-mosaic) in the first place? In the next section I will present Burge's answer to this question and explain why he takes it to be a problem for Strawson's theory of perception.

## §2.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter Burge accuses both Strawson and Evans of 'hyperintellectualising' the notion of the perception of objects by claiming that one needs to conceive of them as objective before one can perceptually represent them. He does not discuss 'Perception and its Objects' specifically, but he seems to take his objection to Strawson's understanding of perception to range over Strawson's work. As such I take the theses advanced in that paper to be of great importance in understanding Burge's objection and in assessing its validity. Here I will present a Burgian interpretation of the ambiguity identified in that paper: whether the conception of objects identified under the labels (PT<sub>discrete</sub>) and (PT<sub>independence</sub>) is necessary merely to *describe* perception as object-directed or to *have* experience of objects in the first place (i.e. to represent them).

Before I discuss this, a word should be said about Burge's own theory of perception. He claims that perception consists in the *representation* of physical items in *representational content*. For Burge perception of  $o$  is *constituted* by what we might call 'mental content' which *singularly represents*  $o$ . Such representation involves two main components: singular *reference* which 'picks out' an individual,  $o$ , and the attribution of a more general property.<sup>4</sup> A relevant example of such representation is a proposition: the proposition 'That is water' attributes a general kind (e.g. being water) to a certain particular (e.g. certain liquid particles). As such it requires the content to bear a referential relation to some entity in the world such that a kind (water-hood) can be attributed to a particular picked out from a multiplicity of relevantly similar particulars. As Burge describes it:

"I believe that perceptual content is not propositional. But it is analogous to some propositional representational contents in having singular elements that purport to pick out particulars and general, attributive elements that purport to attribute properties to the particulars." (2005 p. 6)

In singularly representing  $o$  content is subject to *accuracy conditions* regarding the attribution of a general property to  $o$ : because it is representing the individual,  $o$ , its attribution will be accurate only if  $o$  is as represented (2010a p. 83). The singular and general elements work together to provide perception of a world which, much like the neo-Kantian perceptual thesis, contains individual instances of more general kinds (see Burge, 2005 p. 6). To represent a given  $o$  is to represent it *as* some way, or as having some property.

In the face of this theory the original way of putting the question raised in §1—i.e. whether this conception of objects is required to perceptually *represent* such objects—seems very apt. But, from what Strawson has to say, Burge believes it is not so clear what the answer is:

"The first is [...] the project of *explaining minimal constitutive conditions on objective representation* of the physical environment. Objective representation comprises accurate representation of physical entities *as* having specific physical characteristics. The second project is that of explaining constitutive conditions for having a *con-*

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<sup>4</sup> Burge is happy to describe this singular element as 'referring' to  $o$  however, in the interests of keeping clear that this terminology refers to mental representation and not language I will largely call this 'singular representation' of an object  $o$ .

*ception* of mind-independent entities as mind-independent. I call this second project that of *explaining conditions for our conception of objectivity.*" (2010a p. 156)

Since Strawson fails to distinguish between these two projects, so Burge believes, his discussion of ‘perceptual experience’ inadvertently “reduces the problem on explaining minimum conditions on experience of objective reality to the problem of explaining necessary conditions on our *conception* of the relation between perceptions and their objects” (2010a p. 161). In short Strawson’s discussions of what it is to experience objectively—i.e. consciously aware of the independence of objects—end up making claims about the necessary conditions for the *representation* of objects in mental content.

This supposed prevarication in Strawson becomes especially troubling in Evans who was, undoubtedly, directly influenced by Strawson’s work. Evans, as Burge argues, explicitly identifies ‘objective reference’ (content’s ability to be about a single object) with a subject’s capacity to conceive of that object as objective (2010a p. 182). In short, representing *o* as being some way, *F*, requires representing *o* as part of a public space, or world which persists outside of observation. As such Evans “turns Strawson’s slide into a plunge” (*ibid.*).

If Strawson and (by this interpretation) Evans believe that a subject must be able to make object-directed judgements—i.e. must *conceive* of objects in a certain way—in order to represent them then they must believe that such representing requires advanced conceptual capacities. As discussed in §1 such judgements invoke ‘concepts of objects’ (or a conception of objects) as independently existing, discrete, propertied individuals—a capacity not thought to be possessed by cognitively less-developed subjects like infant humans or non-human animals. Thus, on the principle under discussion, such subjects would be unable to represent objects in mental content; this constitutes what Burge calls a ‘hyper-intellectualisation’ of singular representation (more accurately, perceptual experience). As it is levelled against Strawson and Evans this charge can be construed as a charge of what I will call *Broad Intellectualism* (BI) regarding mental representation:

(BI): (For *all* physical objects, *o*, and for *all* forms of mental representation of *o*) A subject, *S*, cannot represent *o* unless he can conceive of *o* as a discrete particular existing independently of his experience.

(BI) is a troublesome commitment to have: it not only entails that perceptual representation of objects requires advanced cognitive development, it also entails that *any* form of mental representation (including beliefs) requires such conceptual capacities. Burge's criticism of this is simple: "Common sense and empirical science supports the view that animals and young children have perceptions and beliefs about bodies" (2010a p. 162).

Of course Strawson or Evans could deny that perception is inherently representational and thus resist the claim that their theories preclude young children and animals from having 'perceptions of objects' (the point about beliefs must be deferred to chapter four). Alternatively they could concede that perception functions to represent objects in representational content but could claim that it is constituted by *concepts* or what we might call *conceptual content* (of course this would again entail that those who lack the conceptual capacities required are unable to 'perceive objects' in the relevant sense).

Either answer would be problematic for Burge. To claim that perception is not representational would, so he claims, be at odds with fundamental assumptions in perceptual psychology. He takes it to be essential to the psychological explanation in such fields that perception is representational (see Burge, 2005). It is unclear whether the claim that perceptual content is conceptual is equally at odds with the science but it does come into conflict with fundamental aspects of Burge's own theory: he claims that at the level of perception, the representation of objects is completely non-conceptual. As the quotation from (2005, p.6) makes clear, Burge distinguishes perceptual representation from propositional representation. In propositional representation the general attribute applied to a represented particular is a *concept* (2010a p. 36). Such representation, says Burge, takes place only at the level of thought, while perception can be distinguished by its non-conceptual nature:

"I use 'thought' to apply only to propositional attitudes, or representational contents with propositional structure. I believe that perception is not propositional and hence is not thought. Perception lacks a propositional structure. So perceptual attributives are not concepts, and perceptions are not thoughts." (2010a p. 36)

As such Burge's theory of perceptual representation can be roughly distinguished from representation in thought along conceptual/non-conceptual lines: perception is

essentially representation in non-conceptual content while thought representation is in conceptual content.

Burge's non-conceptualism seems to rely on his anti-individualistic account of content-determination. Anti-individualism can be formulated in many ways but essentially it involves the claim that the individuation and nature of mental states (or mental state kinds) is determined by causal interaction with entities and natural kinds in the external environment. A useful formulation is as follows:

"(A) The natures of mental states that empirically represent the physical environment depend constitutively on relations between specific aspects of the environment and the individual, including causal relations, which are not in themselves representational" (2010a p. 61)

Representational content is taken to be intimately bound up with the environment such that, if environmental properties were relevantly similar (e.g. there was a liquid with all the phenomenal properties of water) but compositionally different from the actual environment (e.g. this liquid was not H<sub>2</sub>O but XYZ), the representational content arising over time from causal transactions would be different.

The representational kinds applied to specified particulars are (at least partially) constituted by causal (or inherited causal) contact with natural kinds. The relevant environment is that in which the individual (and his ancestors) have had to function—to find food, reproduce etc. The representational kinds he employs in perception are related to the functions he (or his perceptual system) has evolved to perform:

"[T]he individuation and natures of perceptual states are necessarily associated with certain relations between the types of states that are part of the perceptual system of the individual, on the one hand, and kinds of objects, properties and relations to the physical environment, on the other." (2005 p. 4)

However there is a minimal condition on representing the world, before we are capable of doing so accurately, and that is that our content actually *refers* to a particular. Burge's anti-individualist theory affects content-determination at this singular level as well. Burge can use the causal role of objects in perception to determine the reference-relation between content and particular:

"Singular aspects of perceptual representational content depend for successful referential representation on being caused by particulars" (2010a p. 83)

In advancing (A') Burge can claim that reference occurs in non-conceptual, perceptual content, allowing cognitively less-developed species to singularly represent so long as they are capable of perceptual representation. In such a way he is completely opposed to (BI) which precludes less-developed beings from representing the environment.

I will not seek to question Burge's appeal to scientific data regarding perception, nor will I argue with him that (BI) seems a rather untenable position. Even outside of a commitment to Burge's views it seems hard to deny that less developed creatures cannot represent objects in their environment. Often psychological explanation and an explication of such creatures' mental content will appeal to singular representations (though these are not always conceived to be conceptual). Consequently a position as strong as (BI)—which claims that *all* singular representation must take place in conceptual mental content—requires considerable defence. However, as I will show in the following two sections, it is unclear that this is a position upon which neo-Kantian intellectualism need rely.

### §3.

In the last section it was shown that Burge takes Strawson implicitly to affirm (BI) while Evans, under his influence, makes his own commitment explicit. I will discuss Burge's interpretation of Evans in the next section, for now I will address his charges against Strawson.

Strawson's claims about perceptual experience are hard to understand in the context of today's debate. Some phrases, especially from 'Perception and its Objects', seem to chime with a Burgian interpretation—he mentions, for example that, (PT) does not have "the character of an *interpretation* [...] of the *content* of our sensible experience" (1979 p. 95, my emphasis). What such remarks might suggest is that (PT), not only lays conditions on a 'strict report' of experience but on the *content* of experience such that, individuated objects could not be part of the content—i.e. could not be represented—without a conception of Space. But I believe that it is hard to place too strong an interpretation on these comments. Specifically it seems presumptuous to claim that, whenever Strawson mentions experience, or even the contents of experience, he has in mind precisely the type of content Burge discusses.

It is thus difficult to maintain that (PT) directly links to experiential content. Indeed I believe it is possible to read Strawson's use of 'experience' as having an entirely different resonance from the contemporary use and Burge's notion of representational content.

(PT) might be thought to be related to Kant's famous saying 'intuitions without concepts are blind'. It might be thought that to be 'blind' is to be lacking in content which singularly represents an individuated object. As Burge interprets Strawson we are 'blind' until we can bring to bear a certain 'conception of objects'; thus our 'intuitions', or most primary and basic sensations, of the world are not 'object-directed'. This is not the only possible interpretation of that phrase, consider Burge's own interpretation of Kant's intended meaning:

"A cognition is an objective conscious representation whose actual objective validity can in principle be established by argument, by the individual with the cognition. Cognition requires an ability to argue something about a representation. Kant's dictum attributes blindness to intuitions relative to obtaining cognition, in this demanding sense." (2010 p. 155)

What this suggests is that to be 'blind' is not to lack content, not even to lack content which singularly represents, it is to fail to be a cognition: a form of conceptual content which reflects a self-conscious understanding—an ability to 'argue something'—about the relation of one's experience to an objective world.

Further illumination of such a reading is provided by McDowell's description of Evans on experience:

"What makes it intelligible, in his view, that the eyes of empirical thought are opened is not the claim that, even considered in abstraction from any connection with spontaneity [(i.e. conceptual capacities)], experiences have (non-conceptual) content. It is the claim that that content is available to spontaneity: that it is a candidate for being integrated into the conceptually organised world-view of a self-conscious thinker. I am only stressing an aspect of Evans' own view when I say that, according to him, the item that an experience is, considered in itself (in abstraction from the availability to spontaneity in virtue of which it acquires the title 'experience'), is blind." (McDowell, 1994 pp. 54-5)

This passage suggests that what makes an experience 'sighted' rather than 'blind' is 'being integrated' into a *self-conscious* experience. Such a subject might, as Burge puts it, *conceive* or *represent* mind-independent entities *as* mind-independent. Thus they will

distinguish between their perception and the way of the world—that is, they appreciate that the two might diverge, that they might be unreceptive etc. In such a way, it is thought, they become *conscious* of the distinction between general sensations—e.g. cold now, buzzing now etc.—and the *world*, or more specifically, the public particulars within the world which *cause* these sensations—e.g. arctic tundras and bees (see also Evans, 1980 p. 249). Experience thus becomes ‘sighted’ when a subject is conscious of this dichotomy; when he is not merely stumbling through a blizzard of sensations (or intuitions) described in general, subjective terms, but when he is conscious of a set of discrete *objects* in a world which extends beyond his experience—an experience to which (PT) applies. The point of (PT) is that all such experiences have a certain form: of discrete, persisting objects which constitute the world of experience. The intellectualist assertion is that to appreciate this form and to have experience which can issue in a consciousness of the distinction between one’s sensory experience and the objects which cause it we require certain conceptual capacities.

The view here is abstract and might remain rather vague, however what it suggests is that there is a distinction to be made between the *representational content* of experience and a subject’s *consciousness* of that content. A perception can be contentful but ‘blind’ in that, though it *actually* (and anti-individualistically) represents *o*, a subject is not in a position to *appreciate* it as an ‘experience’ of a discrete object describable by object-directed judgements as opposed to a mere sensation described in general terms like ‘wetness now’. If such a claim can be minimally understood then (PT) needn’t be outlining the content of experience as Burge understands it; rather, it is compatible with this reading that that content is determined independently of a subject’s consciousness of experience as such.

On this interpretation Strawson is not ‘prevaricating’ between the project of explaining conditions on representation and outlining concepts essential to our conception of an objective world. Such a schema is misleading; (PT) claims instead that this conception of the world is so ingrained that we cannot make sense of our (adult) experience without it. This remains quietist on the more technical notion of perceptual content and representation with which Burge is concerned and could be compatible with Burge’s view.

As noted, (PT) is derived from ‘Perception and its Objects’—a paper which

Burge does not discuss. Nonetheless Strawson's concern in that paper—with a conception of experience as being of an objective world—chimes with the discussions to which Burge briefly alludes when he makes his objection (e.g. Strawson, 1966 pp. 98–117). But nothing in either of these discussions should lead us to favour Burge's interpretation over that offered here. Rather it seems to me that, in each of these discussions, Strawson is very focused on the notion of 'experience' he is discussing: namely, *conscious* experience that we enjoy as a developed adult and which irrevocably employs certain concepts. To read him as *also* making statements about the notion of content-determination—in the technical sense which Burge requires for contemporary, psychological explanations—is to potentially import something into Strawson's work which is entirely beyond his view. In any event Burge has no right to adopt this wholly uncharitable reading, which commits Strawson to (BI), over a less abrasive reading which nonetheless (plausibly) preserves Strawson's concerns. As such a charge of hyper-intellectualism seems misplaced, and a charge of unduly influencing the later debate, unwarranted.

#### §4.

What of Burge's claim that Strawson's thesis leads Evans to *explicitly* adhere to (BI)? Such an accusation would be controversial at best since Evans is often seen as the champion of non-conceptual representation. As such it is unclear that he conflicts with the forms of psychological explanation offered in perceptual psychology. But Burge claims that when it comes to *singular representation*—i.e. when content is *about* an individual object—Evans is clear in stating that this does not occur at the level of perceptual representation; as such he is clearly opposed to a fundamental tenet of Burge's own theory.

For Evans perception is one way in which a subject might glean or 'absorb' information about objects in the world (other ways include testimony and memory). Perceiving objects in the world causes informational states (or informational content) in the subject's psychology—or, as Evans calls it, *Information System*—which govern our ensuing beliefs and judgements about the world (1982 pp. 121-2). Thus my perception of a red ball causes a certain informational content which leads me to the

belief ‘there is a red ball’.<sup>5</sup>

But the way in which these states represent the objects which cause them differs substantially from Burge’s similar story of perceptual representation. For Evans this informational content is ‘of or from’ an object in the same way as a photograph is described as being ‘of an object’: there is a mechanism which produces an ‘impression’ of a given scene (e.g. a red ball) and which can be assessed for accuracy insofar as the representation produced is similar to the particular which caused the representation—e.g. how far the ‘photograph’ resembles the original red ball. But, intriguingly, for Evans the *content* of such a representation can be specified in an ‘open sentence structure’ which does not refer to the particular object in question:

“Notice that I have explained the sense in which a photograph is of an object, or objects, without presupposing that a specification of its *content* must make reference to that object, or those objects.” (Evans, 1982 p. 125)

“We see here, the need for a distinction between, on the one hand, an *a*-representation (i.e. a species of particular-representation, in a specification of whose content mention of *a* would figure: something which represents, and misrepresents, *a*) and, on the other, something which, without being an *a*-representation, is a representation of *a*.” (footnote *ibid.*)

As Burge notes, these passages suggest that, even though Evans allows for some form of non-conceptual representation he rejects singular representation of individual objects: “an informational state can be *of a* without having a singular content that represents (or misrepresents) *a*. [...] *a* is not singularly represented” (Burge, 2010a p. 184).

Evans thus rejects a key feature of Burge’s anti-individualist account of perceptual representation: for him the representational content arising from causal contact with a particular is neutral as to the object represented. Suppose *a* and *b* are numerically distinct but otherwise identical red balls. For Evans the representational content arising from perception of *a* and *b* can be expressed thus: *a*→Rx $B_x$ , and *b*→Rx $B_x$ . Even though the objects perceived are distinct the informational content which arises is qualitatively identical—both are red balls and are represented as such. In contrast, for Burge, the representational contents of a perception of *a* and *b* will differ signifi-

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<sup>5</sup> Though the states themselves are *independent* of such beliefs—i.e. they have the same representational content (e.g. of a red ball) whether or not the subject *believes* there to be such an object (1982 p. 123).

cantly:  $a \rightarrow RaBa$  and  $b \rightarrow RbBb$ . Though both are represented as red balls (the ‘general’ elements of the representation are similar) the representations comprise a singular element which represents a *particular* red ball.

In adopting such a theory of informational content it might be thought incontrovertible that Evans commits to (BI): in claiming that the belief-independent, informational content arising from perception fails to singularly represent he effectively reserves singular representation of particular objects to intentional thought. However it is unclear that he thereby comes into conflict with some of the central tenets of perceptual psychology as Burge defines them: though he doesn’t think perception singularly represents Evans is not guilty of claiming that perception is *not* representational and as such does not obviously conflict with Burge’s claim that perception is representational.

Similarly Evans’ theory need not conflict with Burge’s anti-individualist view of the formation of perceptual attributives—the ‘general’ elements of perceptual states. As Burge describes it such attributives are formed through interaction with the kinds of the natural world: creatures of a given species *develop* certain representational kinds which further generations inherit; further, as Burge claims, such a view is ‘presupposed’ by perceptual psychology (2005 p. 9) (2010a pp. 98-101). But, since Evans allows that perceptual representations employ general elements—i.e. elements also employed in other perceptual representations—and since he never gives his own explanation of their origin, there seems no reason to think that he couldn’t adopt Burge’s anti-individualist account.

So far Evans’ only crime, in committing to (BI), is conflicting with one of Burge’s central claims about perception: that perception singularly represents the object one perceives. He does not *obviously* seem to run afoul of any of the claims Burge sees as central to perceptual psychology. Perhaps this will be seen as the place at which neo-Kantian intellectualism should be defended; certainly that is Burge’s view. However, given the ambiguity in Strawson (discussed in §3), the significance of this disagreement can be questioned; for it could be that Evans is capable of abandoning this commitment given the right motivation and the neo-Kantian view of perception can be brought into line with Burge’s preferred account.

It is hard to see what turns on Evans’ conception of informational content. Seemingly the story of how informational content governs our ensuing judgements

could remain the same if the content were specified as *RaBa*. Similarly, as §3 made clear, Strawson's discussion of perceptual experience seems amply explained within a theory like Burge's. Consequently Burge's antipathy towards the neo-Kantians for committing to (BI) seems strangely misplaced: such a commitment—so far as it is manifest—could be abandoned without much fuss.

However, as I will show in chapter two, there is a significant conflict between Burge and the neo-Kantians over the matter of singular thought—thought about an object (for our purposes, a physical object). As the next chapter will show, both Strawson and Evans commit to a view of singular thought which requires similarly advanced cognitive capacities: a view which Burge's own theory opposes. A commitment to (BI) could become a significant source of conflict, insofar as it is a necessary commitment if one is to hold this ‘intellectualist’ view of singular thought. If it were shown that either Strawson or Evans holds this view of thought because of a commitment to (BI)—perhaps, a commitment to Evans' account of informational content—then a defence of any theory derived from Strawson and Evans may require a defence of this principle. However if it could be shown that their theories (or that a theory derived from them) need not rely on such a principle then it is clear that a defence of (BI) would not be needed and Burge's main objection is misplaced. In order to settle this question, I will turn to Strawson's and Evans' accounts of singular thought.

# 2

In this chapter I move from a focus on perceptual representation to the differing approaches Burge and the neo-Kantians take to *singular thought*. Like perceptual representation singular thought can be a mental representation of the physical world. However unlike perception, which was construed as non-conceptual, singular thought is taken to be a representation essentially composed of conceptual content. Thus Burge often claims that, if a belief is to be attributed to a creature, they must show the capacity for some form of conceptual *inference* often utilising information from perceptual contact (2010b p. 45; Burge, 2010a, 2003 p. 519). For ease of discussion—rather than a very substantive metaphysical commitment—I will speak of beliefs as essentially *propositionally structured*. Within such a propositional structure, singular thought is understood to singularly represent an individual object and to attribute a general element—e.g. ‘*o* is *F*’. It differs from perception, however, primarily in the fact that this general attributive, *F*, is what I’ll refer to as a *conceptual attributive*: a general attributive which is conceptual.<sup>6</sup>

The last chapter ended with the question of whether (BI) was a necessary or at least significant commitment in a characterisation of what I’ve called neo-Kantian intellectualism. An affirmative answer would mean that a defence of neo-Kantian intellectualism must defend this commitment; a negative answer on the other hand could show that Strawson’s and Evans’ theories (or an account based upon them) can be defended independently of it. This means that a distinctly neo-Kantian theory of singular thought would be compatible with Burge’s theory of perception.

The answer to the above question will thus rely on comparing and explaining the differing approaches to singular thought adopted by Burge and the neo-Kantians. By

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<sup>6</sup> For now I will take the idea of a ‘conceptual attributive’ as a primitive. Further discussion and elucidation of this idea can be found in chapter four.

revealing the assumptions which lead Strawson and Evans to commit to a distinctly ‘intellectualist’ view we will be able to see whether they must appeal to a commitment to (BI) in order to either substantiate or defend their intellectualist accounts. In §1 I’ll illustrate that both Strawson and Evans commit to an intellectually demanding account of singular thought under which thinking subjects must possess the capacities required to conceive of objects, as per (PT). Though I’ll claim that they both commit to a similar, broad requirement I will largely focus on Evans’ discussion as not only is it more detailed but the concerns highlighted in the previous chapter seem closer to the surface. In §2 I will show how this commitment leads to a demanding account of demonstrative thought—i.e. thought about objects we’re currently perceiving. In §3 I will show that Burge differs substantially in his own account of singular thought and will address the question of whether this difference depends on either Strawson or Evans adopting (BI).

## §1.

Both Strawson and Evans are famous for committing to what is often called *Russell’s Principle*. In this section I will go through the assumptions and arguments which lead *both* Strawson and Evans to commit to a version of this principle. (As my task in this chapter is to explain the commitments and character of this view of singular thought, a detailed assessment of these arguments must be postponed to chapter three.)

Loosely construed Russell’s Principle could be described by the idea that, to think of an object,  $o$ , a subject,  $s$ , must ‘know which’ object  $o$  is. As Evans notes, this principle is hard to elucidate (1982 p. 89) however it can be roughly understood (as it is by him and Strawson) as the idea that, in thinking of  $o$ ,  $s$  is able to discriminate or ‘single out’  $o$  from other, relevantly similar candidates—i.e.  $s$  knows that his thought is about  $o$  and not another object,  $a$ . Thus ‘know which’ here references a subject’s ability to uniquely identify the object of their thought.

Like Russell’s original formulation Strawson seemed to believe that, on hearing a speaker refer to an object with the utterance ‘that is  $o$ ’,  $s$  could ‘know which’ object  $o$  is through ‘acquaintance’, or—for Strawson, if not Russell—when one could “sensibly discriminate, the particular being referred to, knowing that it is that particular”

(1959 p. 18). In non-demonstrative cases Strawson believes that a subject should also be in a position to know which object *o* is:

“even though the particular in question cannot itself be demonstratively identified, it may be identified by a description which relates it uniquely to another particular which can be demonstratively identified.” (1959 p. 21)

In showing that subjects know which object *o* is across both demonstrative and non-demonstrative cases Strawson can be seen as implicitly endorsing the idea that thought about *o*—or reference *to o*—requires the subject to fulfil a ‘know-which’ condition.<sup>7</sup> Evans is more explicit on this point and offers perhaps a clearer elucidation of what he takes the principle to be:

“I shall suppose that the knowledge which it requires is what might be called *discriminating knowledge*: the subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgement from all other things.” (1982 p. 89)

Such a principle immediately looks a demanding, and potentially intellectualist condition on singular thought: a ‘capacity to distinguish *o*’ might require highly developed, cognitive capacities. But to provide a further elucidation of the principle, and to see whether it is a distinctly intellectualist theory, it is necessary to ask *why* Strawson and Evans committed to such a requirement.

To do this we will need to depart from Strawson’s discussion. Although he clearly commits to a ‘know-which’ requirement the reasoning and assumptions behind such a commitment get a much fuller exposition in Evans. Consequently it is that to which I will turn to discern why such a principle is adopted. Evans’ reasons for committing to Russell’s Principle and arguments for that principle are easily discernable once he is read as making a latent assumption: that, to have a thought, a subject must *understand* the content of that thought; hence a thought ‘*a* is *F*’, attributed to a subject, manifests both “his understanding of *a* and his understanding of *F*” (1982 p. 101). Another way of putting this is to say that, to have a thought, a subject must understand what it would be for that thought to be true (Evans, 1982 p. 105; McDowell, 1990 p. 256). That is, a subject must understand what it would be for the world to

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<sup>7</sup> Strawson suggests that *reference* to *o* within speaker-hearer identification can be put on a par with *thought about o* (1959 p. 61). Though it is not clear that either Evans or Burge would conflate speaker-hearer identification and reference in this way they all seem to agree that the conditions placed on a subject *referring to o* are also the conditions for entertaining thought about *o*.

contain a particular object,  $a$ , which is  $F$  (crucially for Evans, this is not equivalent to the claim that it must be possible for a subject to *verify* that his thought is true; see 1982, p.94).

One of the consequences of this assumption of Evans' is his introduction of what he calls the *Generality Constraint*. This states that, just as understanding the sentence ' $a$  is  $F$ ' manifests the ability to refer to  $a$  in other sentences and to describe other objects as  $F$ , having the thought ' $a$  is  $F$ ' *must* manifest the ability to think indefinitely many ' $a$ '-thoughts and indefinitely many ' $is F$ '-thoughts (1982 pp. 100-5). Understanding a thought, for Evans, thus consists in the possession of certain capacities; to see why I will go through each of these supposed capacities in turn and show how they relate to Evans' central assumption.

Clearly, understanding ' $a$  is  $F$ ' requires what we might call 'possession of the concept  $F$ '. But, for Evans, this means not only knowing what it would be for  $a$  to be  $F$  (thus knowing what it would be for a thought or sentence ' $a$  is  $F$ ' to be true), but knowing what it would be for *any* object to  $F$ :<sup>8</sup>

“any thought which we can interpret as having the content *that a is F* involves the exercise of an ability—knowledge of what it is for something to be  $F$ —which can be exercised in indefinitely many distinct thoughts, and would be exercised in, for instance, the thought that  $b$  is  $F$ .” (1982 p. 103)

To think of some object as  $F$  I have to know what it would be for that object to instantiate the conditions of  $F$ -ness. Perhaps that is analytic (given Evans' assumption) but the thought here is that I must *also* know that the concept—e.g. of happiness—is not tied to *one individual* for its conditions of instantiation. Even if one would never apply the concept to another individual (e.g. imagine one man (John) is the *only* happy individual in existence) the *understanding* of what makes that attribution true of *John* is the understanding of what would make the attribution true of *any other* (happy) individual.

This picture of concept-possession might seem intuitive, however it becomes less clear why the Generality Constraint applies equally to thoughts about individual objects: why should one thought ' $a$  is  $F$ ' imply that I can think of  $a$  in indefinitely many thoughts (e.g. ' $a$  is  $G$ ' 1982, pp. 103-4)? The reason Evans had for thinking this

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<sup>8</sup> This, of course, is restricted only to objects of which it is *possible* to be  $F$ : though possession of the concept 'Square' might enable indefinitely many thoughts of square individuals, it can never enable a thought of an individual square circle.

also shows us why his assumption—that having a thought ‘*a* is *F*’ requires understanding what it would be for this to be true—entails a ‘know-which’ condition. For to understand what it would be for ‘*a* is *F*’ to be true requires, not just thinking of *any* object as *F*, but of thinking of a *specified* object, *a*, as *F*. Unlike the thought ‘ $\exists x) x \text{ is } F$ ’, ‘*a* is *F*’ will *only* be made true by the particular object in question being *F*; hence, to understand what it would be for ‘*a* is *F*’ to be true a subject would have to know what it would be for the particular object in question, *a*, to be *F*. For example to know what it is for the sentence ‘John is a happy man’ to be true, I cannot *only* know what it is for a man (any man) to be happy, I have to know what it is for *John* to be happy. This implies that I must know what it is for my thought to be *about* John—and not some other object, like Harry—in the first place: if I did not possess this knowledge—if I were unable to say whether my ‘thought’ were about John or Harry<sup>9</sup>—then I would not really know what it would be for my thought to be true for I would not *know* which individual must be happy.

Thus, so Evans claims, any thought about John must manifest a *way* or means of thinking of John—e.g. demonstratively as ‘that man’ (in front of me) or under a unique description ‘the only happy man’—which, for Evans, roughly corresponds to a Fregean sense (1982 p. 104). My way of thinking of John—which enables me to *know* that my thought concerns John—must be such that it discriminates John from all other possible objects of thought. It must certainly discriminate him from relevantly similar objects, like Harry, (such that I can know my thought is about John and not Harry) but, in so doing, discriminates John from seemingly irrelevant objects like chairs and tables—‘that man’ and ‘the only happy man’ seem to automatically exclude non-men objects. This seemingly satisfies the Generality Constraint because whatever means we have of thinking of John at one particular time constitutes a means of thinking of John at any time—e.g. as ‘the only happy man (at that time)’ or a memory of ‘that man’ at that time. For Evans such a means constitutes an *Idea* of *a*—“something which makes it possible for a subject to think of an object in a series of indefinitely many thoughts” (1982 p. 104).

So much for how Evans’ central assumption leads to the requirement that we have to know which object *a* is, if we’re to entertain a singular thought about *a*. However one further factor in understanding a thought like ‘*a* is *F*’, for Evans, is knowing

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<sup>9</sup> For Evans it is unclear whether this kind of indecision constitutes any thought at all (1982 p. 115).

the *Fundamental Ground of Difference* for the type of object  $a$  is. To close this section I will therefore discuss Evans' notion of a *Fundamental Level of Thought* and how it relates to a Know-which condition.

Evans implies that we can distinguish between different *types* of objects as well as between different individuals of the same type: thus we will be able to distinguish numbers from colours as well as differentiate between *individuals* of each sort. In identifying each ground of difference we thereby distinguish that object from all others:

“one has a *fundamental Idea* of an object if one thinks of it as the possessor of the fundamental ground of difference which it in fact possesses. (Such an Idea constitutes, by definition, distinguishing knowledge of the object, since the object is differentiated from all other objects by this fact.)” (1982 p. 107)

Grounds of difference for physical, spatio-temporal objects (the type of objects of concern here) will consist in identifying the spatio-temporal location of that object, as well as identifying the *kind* of object that it is. Thus, says Evans: “what differentiates a statue from every other thing at a time is given by citing (i) the position which it occupies at that time and (ii) the fact that it is a statue” (*ibid.*).<sup>10</sup> It will be recalled from chapter one that an object was ‘individuated’ by (broadly) distinguishing the boundaries of certain property instances—i.e. distinguishing the place where snow ends and mud begins allows us to distinguish a *patch* of snow. Having identified these individuals we discern their spatial position (at time  $t$ ) by the spatial relations they bear to other individuals around them. This location is sufficient to discriminate them from *all* other objects because no other object (of the same type) could simultaneously occupy the same position. Thus if I am in a position to discern (i) and (ii) for  $a$  (through what Evans calls an *information-link* with  $a$ ) then I know which object it is because I can see that it is the only *F*-object which occupies *that* position—i.e. that relation to other property-instances.

It is not necessary to have such a Fundamental Idea in order to satisfy a Know-which condition and think about an object—for example, I can think of an object under the description ‘the greatest living philosopher’ (assuming there can only be one) without knowing its spatial coordinates at the time of my thought. Yet Evans is keen to emphasise that thinking a thought about an object requires thinking of it as

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<sup>10</sup> Evans uses (i) and (ii) to avoid the apparent counterexample of how a statue *and* a lump of clay could occupy the same spatio-temporal position.

the *type* of object it is and therefore thinking of it as distinguished from other objects in certain fundamental ways. Thus when thinking of spatio-temporal objects (such as philosophers) in a non-fundamental way—i.e. without knowing their location—a subject must be aware of what a fundamental Idea of that object would be: “every thought not of this level is conceived to be made true by the truth of thoughts which are of this level” (1982 p. 112). For example, to think of ‘the greatest living philosopher’ without *knowing* his fundamental ground of difference at the time, I must conceive that there is some object, somewhere, which is *distinguished* from all others by i) his spatial position at that time and ii) the fact that he is a person, and who *satisfies* the description given.

Why might it be that thinking of an object requires conceiving of it as possessing *some* fundamental ground of difference (of objects of that type)? Again this seems entailed by Evans’ assumption that having a thought requires understanding that thought. We have seen that such understanding requires knowing what it is for my thought to be about *a* (and not another object). But, before I so discriminate *a*, I need to conceive of *a* as *discriminable* in the first place—i.e. I need to conceive of it as the sort of object which can be differentiated from others. All this gets us as far as supposing that *a* has *some* kind of fundamental ground of difference—i.e. that some fact about *a* is such that knowing that fact would allow us to distinguish *a* from other objects of that sort (where ‘sort’ is something as general as spatio-temporal). But if we think that *a* is a spatio-temporal object (as we might do when we use a description like ‘the greatest living philosopher’) then we *know* what ground of difference it must possess—i.e. we know that it will be the only object of a certain sort occupying a certain spatio-temporal location.<sup>11</sup> Thus all thoughts purportedly about physical objects must be thoughts about an object which is conceived to be discriminable in these fundamental ways.

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<sup>11</sup> Evans is not clear whether it is possible to be neutral as to the sort of object one picks out—i.e. spatio-temporal, abstract etc. Thus it is unclear whether that a description like ‘the prettiest thing’—which arguably might pick out a physical or abstract object—could issue in a thought about that thing, despite its fundamental type being unknown.

## §2.

Thus, for Evans, thought about  $a$  requires understanding what it would be for that thought to be true which, in turn, demands both that the subject is able to discriminate  $a$  and that they think of  $a$  as having some fundamental ground of difference—i.e. as an object which is discriminated in a certain way. To show why and how this generates an explicitly *intellectualist* condition on singular thought I will discuss its application in one sphere of object-directed thought: demonstrative thought about objects which we are currently perceiving. Because such cases seemingly manifest a ‘direct’ means of reference—i.e. an object can be represented in content specified by ‘*that object*’—they are perhaps the simplest way in which a subject might conceptually represent the world around them—as opposed to, say, thought which relies on linguistic capacities, such as description-based thought. As such the differences in their theories of demonstrative thought will reveal the deep disparity between Burge’s theory of singular thought and that of the neo-Kantians.

Demonstrative identification—i.e. sensible discrimination or perception of  $o$ —affords discriminating knowledge because it puts us in a position to *directly* discern both (i) and (ii) (discussed in §1). However there is an ambiguity in what it is to discern (i)—i.e. in what it is for the subject to spatially locate the object. For Evans distinguishes between *conceptual spatial thinking* and a means of *non-conceptual spatial location*. The latter is what he calls location in ‘*egocentric space*’ and location in *objective* or *absolute space*. While he sometimes speaks of them as two types of ‘Space’ they are in fact two ways a *subject* has of identifying places in the *same space*, rather than a means of identifying two different types of spatial-location (see also McDowell, 1990 p. 256).<sup>12</sup>

To locate a place,  $p$ , *egocentrically* is to locate it in relation to oneself or one’s body. The subject becomes the central figure in regard to which places are located by such phrases as ‘ $p$  is in front’, ‘behind’, ‘to the left’ etc. (Evans, 1982 p. 153). As such egocentric locations reference only a subject’s body. Such purely egocentric locations won’t do for absolute, or objective location. To locate absolutely is to locate an object in such a way that it is related, not only to oneself at a given time, but to other objects and places *at that time* (i.e. simultaneously) (1982 p. 151). Consider this distinction with

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<sup>12</sup> As such use of terms like ‘absolute space’ bear no relation to a notion of ‘absolute space’ in the physical sciences. Rather they index a way the subject has of relating himself to his environment.

the following example: relating the kitchen and the bedroom in a house. Standing in the kitchen I can locate the bedroom egocentrically with the assertion ‘it is above’, for it is true that the bedroom is above *me* at that time. However this sentence could also describe the *absolute* relation of the kitchen and bedroom; for it could assert that the bedroom is above the kitchen in a way which is independent of my position (it is true at *t* whether or not I am below the bedroom at *t*). Though I can, of course locate the bedroom egocentrically (‘the bedrom is above me’) while *simultaneously* locating it absolutely—i.e. think that it bears a relation to other places independently of its relation to myself.

Importantly, when I do conceive of *p* as located non-egocentrically I am able to locate it in a way which can index its relations to distinct, sometimes, unobserved places in the environment. Thus an ‘objective map’ of an area is that which relates several places at one moment, independently of the subject’s own position (*ibid.*). When its location is freed of its relation to me, the bedroom can also be located in relation to the bathroom, the hall landing or the house next door in a spatial network which *also* relates these things independently of *their* relation to the bedroom. Thus absolute location becomes a spatial network which can encompass all (at least physical) objects which could be the objects of experience. Knowledge of an ‘objective map’ or the spatial location of distinct places in a given area (at a given time) allows the subject to orientate himself in relation to a series of objects on the recognition of just one:

“Someone who has a cognitive map of Oxford for example, must be able to contemplate the imposition of the map in the course of his travels (perhaps in a very dense fog). ‘If I am here, midway between Balliol and the Bodleian then that must be Trinity and so the High must be down there.’” (1982 p. 162)

In this way a subject is able to locate *p* egocentrically but impose his objective map upon that location to work out where he stands in relation to other places which he can’t locate egocentrically.

This is not to say that subjects couldn’t guide themselves, even in a complicated route, purely egocentrically. I might, for example, remember a route such that I know that if I keep *X* on my right and walk twenty paces I will see *Y* appear to my left. But, as Evans stresses, *pure* egocentric location is often a non-conceptual activity (1982 p. 155); it is manifested merely in a subject’s reaction to a given stimulus (e.g. my run-

ning from a danger close to me) and even in more calculated activities (e.g. rats which could relocate a target in different conditions). Absolute location enables us to think, not just that  $Y$  will appear if I perform certain actions, but that, irrespective of my actions  $Y$  is *related* to  $X$  in a certain way. But this kind of spatial *thinking* is, as I will follow Evans in assuming, a cognitive, conceptual activity. It is not a mere reaction to immediate stimuli but a location of  $p$  within a stable environment which contains all other physical entities conceived to be in the world. Locating  $p$  in absolute space is thus, for Evans, manifesting a self-conscious understanding that the subject is able to move through a world which is related, largely independently of his own movements—"he must have an idea of himself as one object among others" (1982 p. 163). It thus becomes a space in which both he and *other subjects* can identify places with a *common* spatial location, independent of their relation to any *one* subject at *one* time. As such, a conception of absolute space requires the capability for complex processing and conceptualisation which (so it is assumed here) is impossible for creatures who are cognitively less developed than adult humans.

At this point we may want to question whether this dichotomy exhausts the conceptions of space available to us. Perhaps, we might think, there is a third conception, somewhere between the two which might relate the kitchen to the bedroom, independently of the subject's position, but without relating either room to other places—i.e. the hall, the house next door etc. In this way the spatial relation between the kitchen and bedroom is isolated from their spatial relations to other objects.

Such a conception seems perfectly coherent however what might be questioned is how far it reflects the way we *actually* think about spatially located objects. The claim that absolute space relates all objects in one spatial network need not mean that, for every object we locate within this network, we actively consider *all* of the relations it must bear to other objects; instead the only relation which may be salient to us (the only one we may *actively* consider) is its' relation to another object in the environment. However it does mean that we conceive of such objects as *potentially* related to other (perhaps currently unseen) objects and that such relations form a background to the object's conceived location. A conception of space which *isolates* the spatial relation of two (seen) objects precludes conceiving of such a background; to begin to do so would be to conceive of an object's spatial location in another way. But it is hard to see why we should ever need to conceive of objects in such isolation: it seems to bear

little relation to our means of navigating and it might be unclear why such a conception should be required. In what follows then I will largely ignore such alternative conceptions of space; not only do I take the absolute/egocentric distinction to adequately describe our (normal) spatial conceptions, it is unclear why a third account should be adopted.

With this distinction in mind it is necessary to ask which form of spatial location is required to identify the fundamental ground of difference of a (presently perceived) spatio-temporal object. Evans implies that, though one forms an Idea of  $o$  (a conception which satisfies the Generality Constraint) *primarily* through an egocentric form of location, its position in absolute space is still important:

“One has an adequate Idea in virtue of the existence of an information-link between oneself and the object, which enables one to locate that object in egocentric space. (That the Idea is adequate depends on one’s ability to relate egocentric space to public space.)” (1982 p. 173)

Recall that an Idea is a way or means of thinking of an object which satisfies Evans’ know-which condition. Ostensibly it may seem that, at a certain time,  $t$ , the egocentric location of  $o$  is sufficient to enable us to identify its fundamental ground of difference and thus have an Idea of  $o$ : for no other entity of the same type could occupy the same spatial relation to my body at  $t$ . However Evans suggests that an ‘adequate Idea’ depends upon orientating the egocentric location in terms of a position in absolute space, or on an ‘objective map’.

It is difficult to know exactly what Evans means by ‘adequate Idea’. Though it suggests something about the sufficiency of an Idea—and thus the ability to think of  $o$  at all—he explicitly defines it as the ability to impose a conception of absolute space on the identification of a place in egocentric space—i.e. the ability to locate something as *there* (to my left) and *also* conceive of it as related to all other (spatial) objects (1982 p. 162 and p. 168). As such the ‘adequacy’ of an Idea may not indict the *sufficiency* of egocentric location in enabling thought about  $o$ . However further comments suggest that Evans took this adequacy to be necessary to determine (i)—i.e.  $o$ ’s spatio-temporal location—which *could* impact our ability to demonstratively identify and thus think about a spatio-temporal particular. In explaining why a current information-link enables identification he says:

"the subject will know, or will be able to discover, upon the basis of that [information-]link, where the object is. Given the subject's general knowledge of what makes propositions of the form ' $\pi = p$ ' true, for arbitrary  $\pi$  [...] and given that he has located, or is able to locate, the object in his egocentric space, he can be said to know what it is for 'This=the object at  $\pi$  now' to be true." (1982 p. 170)

Here ' $p$ ' is a position in egocentric space (*ibid.*) and ' $\pi$ ' is a 'fundamental' or 'holistic' identification of a place (1982 p. 162)—in other words, for Evans, a position in absolute space, which can be related to all other positions in the same spatial network (1982 p. 151). What this passage then suggests is that an awareness of the object's relation to *me* (an egocentric location) must also be related to an absolute spatial framework in order to know what it is for  $o$  to be the demonstratively identified object. Thus it seems that absolute identification is required in order to enable object-directed thought; indeed Evans expresses scepticism as to whether spatial location could be *reduced* merely to egocentric location (1982 pp. 172-3).

Evans is decidedly unclear on whether it would *ever* be possible to think about (or singularly represent) an object which was located *purely* egocentrically—i.e. solely in relation to myself, without conceiving of it as also related to other objects in an absolute spatial framework. However in the passage quoted and in the act of labelling an absolute location an 'adequate Idea' he does seem keen to discourage us from thinking so. Indeed, if the conception of an egocentric location is interpreted a certain way, it seems we can provide an argument against the idea that we could ever think about an object located purely egocentrically.

It should be borne in mind that, for Evans, an Idea of an *object a* requires *two* things: not only must we discriminate *a* from all other (spatio-temporal) particulars, we must be able to conceive of *a* as a particular of a certain type and a particular to be so discriminated in the first place—"a[n] Idea of an object is part of a conception of a world of such objects" (1982 p. 106). What this means is that in conceiving of *a* as a certain sort of particular—i.e. a spatio-temporal object—I must conceive of it as such that it could be distinguished from other (possible or actual) particulars of that type; any Idea of *a* must then be part of a conception of a world which *could* contain other objects *like a* but not *identical to a*.

*Pure* egocentric location—i.e. a location which *only* relates *o* to the subject's body and does not *also* conceive of it within absolute space—is often described in a way

which ties it to behavioural output or subjective considerations. As Evans notes, perception of a sound, or object can—in most cases—immediately allow us to discern *where* it is in relation to our bodies: when we hear a sound in a non-echoey or distorting environment we do not *calculate* where, for example, we would have to turn to face the direction of the sound, rather such a reaction is immediate (1985 p. 383). Such *direct* apprehension of an object's egocentric location is possible, so Evans seems to suggest, because its (potential) affect on *behaviour* makes the spatial location a salient feature of an informational state:

“the complex property of auditory input which codes the direction of sound, acquires a spatial *content* for an organism by being linked with behavioural output in an advantageous way.” (1985 p. 385)

However information states which are essentially tied to behaviour may not, necessarily, transfer into thoughts which singularly represent physical objects. Such states are tied to behaviour *at a given time*, towards a certain stimulus; consequently they may only indicate an *episodic* or ‘passing acquaintance’ with an object, and may not manifest the capacity to think of *o* in other thoughts, necessary to satisfy the Generality Constraint. In this way locating something *there*, and thinking of it *only* as the stimulus to action, need not require thinking of it as a discriminable object which possesses a certain fundamental ground of difference and which is thought of in a certain way.

To understand what it might be to be in an information-state which could ‘go beyond’ such a passing acquaintance we must examine Evans’ idea of a *Dispositional Connection* to a place (understood here, as per chapter one, as a position in space distinguished by the presence of an object). We maintain such a connection when we recognise information from that place as bearing on the thoughts we have about it and the actions we perform (towards it). As Evans notes:

“It is difficult to see how we could credit a subject with a thought about *here* if he did not appreciate the relevance of any perceptions he might have to the truth value and consequences of the thought, and did not recognise its implications for action. (consider, for instance, a thought like ‘There’s a fire here’).” (1982 pp. 161-2)

But, crucially, we can bear this kind of connection to a place (and, analogously, towards an object) without maintaining a current information-link (perception). Evans’

example involves a subject who has placed a bottle of whiskey ‘beside his bed’ and is still able to think of that place (and the whiskey) in the dark when, presumably, he has no perception of that object (*ibid.*). From this setup it may be unclear whether the subject is continuing to locate the object egocentrically—i.e. because he saw it *there* (to my left) he continues to think of it as *there* when he cannot see it. However the element of darkness (let’s say pitch-blackness) in this example means that it would be very easy for the subject to ‘lose track’ of the egocentric direction of the bottle. Despite this, it seems he should be able to maintain a dispositional connection to this object—i.e. think about an object based on information he receives from it or the world; for example, if he hears the bedside table jar he should be able to think ‘I hope the whiskey is all right’.

Thus, while Evans’ discussion is rather unclear on this point, his exposition of a dispositional connection, coupled with the point that an Idea of *a* requires conceiving of it as a discriminable particular, seems to imply that subjects should be able to *reidentify* an object and place (as the *same* as one they perceived) after a period of non-observation, without solely utilising its relation to their own bodies (because the subject could easily lose track of this but still must think of the bottle). He seems to require that the subject think of the object’s spatial location as independent of its relation to them at a given time: only then can a subject conceive of the object as something which *can* persist irrespective of its relation to the subject. A system of spatial relations (e.g. between the whiskey and the bedside table) which is independent of the subject’s location at any given *t* is what was called an *absolute location*: it requires thinking of the object as related to other objects, independently of a relation to the subject. (Given our conception of space, it further requires that *all* objects are thought to be related in a unified spatial framework.)

It is this line of thought which reveals the possible limitations of a *purely egocentric* location of objects. A pure egocentric location is essentially connected to the subject’s *reaction* to a *stimulus* in the environment, as such it manifests only a fleeting connection—a connection which lasts so long as the stimulus influences this episode of behaviour. But, as was revealed by Evans’ discussion of a fundamental level of thought, understanding a thought like ‘*o* is *F*’ requires, not merely understanding what makes a thought about an *individual* object, *o*, but requires conceiving of *o* as discriminable in

the first place. If conceived to be a physical object it must be thought to be discriminable in certain fundamental ways.

Conceiving of  $o$  as discriminable in these fundamental ways relates to chapter one where it was claimed that discreteness is an ineliminable part of our conception of physical objects. But another part of this conception is that objects are thought of as essentially distinct from a subject's experience of them—i.e. they could exist in the absence of such experience; as Evans puts it: “it is not thoughts about the experience which matter, but thoughts about the world” (1982 p. 158). But, given that it is tied to the reactions and needs of the subject it is not clear that mere egocentric location manifests an *understanding* of what it is for a thought ‘ $o$  is  $F$ ’ to be about an object. Understanding this requires understanding that a worldly object is distinct from a subject’s reaction: one can only think of an object as something which can be the object of *other* (later) thoughts (of the same subject) if one understands that it is not essentially tied to one’s behaviour on a given occasion.

Evans’ discussion has thus revealed that an information-link can directly present the egocentric location of  $o$ , putting us in a position to discern its’ fundamental ground of difference which enables *thought* about  $o$  as long as we can conceive of it as occupying a position in absolute space. But questions still remain. For one thing, while it’s plausible that an information-link can ‘immediately’ reveal  $o$ ’s egocentric location with some accuracy it is hard to see how (or why) we should be able to discern  $o$ ’s location relative to all other objects. On this reading  $s$  could not think of  $o$  if he were lost and unable to relate it to other landmarks within a cognitive map (imagine, for example, if he came across  $o$  in the featureless arctic tundra encountered in chapter one). A weaker reading, however, does not have this consequence, for it only requires  $s$  to conceive of  $o$  as occupying a place—namely the place he can *see* that it occupies—in absolute space, even if he can’t consciously relate that place to everything else; what is required is simply the awareness that  $o$  *must be* so related somehow and that a *route* could be traced from  $o$  to other landmarks in objective space. Such a conception seems sufficient satisfy the requirements for an adequate Idea of  $o$  (thinking of  $o$  as an object and identifying the fundamental ground of difference). (Indeed it seems this is the reading Evans intends; see 1982 p. 172 and McDowell, 1990 p. 256.)

A further question concerns the egocentric location of  $o$ . For there will be some cases where an information-link does not directly reveal its *actual* location; consider,

for example, if  $s$  sees  $o$  through distorting spectacles, or a thermal haze which causes  $o$  to be presented as 1m to the left of where it actually is (this example is from Peacocke, 1991). Yet, as Peacocke notes, Evans does not require that an information-link present the *actual* location of  $o$ . Rather an information-link, in Evans' terms, should *enable* the subject to discern  $o$ 's *actual* location, even if it doesn't always immediately reveal it (1982 p. 172). As Peacocke describes this:

“The subject [...] can exploit his information-link with [ $\emptyset$ ] by using his perceptual experience to guide him into a closer position where he does correctly locate  $o$ .”  
(1991 p. 125)

However, we must be careful in understanding the role of information-links here for it is possible that this passage from Peacocke might underplay their significance. As it stands information-links provide a (potentially) indirect guide through which a subject can infer or navigate themselves to  $o$ 's location. Yet Evans could well have thought that information-links were still a *direct* link to  $o$ —i.e. something which puts the subject in direct contact with  $o$ —and that such contact will (usually) be sufficient to discern  $o$ 's location. Another reading of Peacocke, which might fit better with Evans, is that an information-link is like a *beacon*—or a direct pathway between  $s$  and  $o$ —through which  $s$  is afforded an access which can directly influence his behaviour and information state in respect of this stimulus. Though perception of  $o$  may not simply *reveal*  $o$ 's location the thought here is that this information-link will allow a subject to adapt their *behaviour* with respect to  $o$ —e.g. if  $o$  were on fire they would run away. A subject can locate  $o$  insofar as he is so *aware* of its presence that he could *use* the information-link to find  $o$ .

Thus we can formulate a more specific requirement which, for Evans, must be met to demonstratively identify  $o$  and thereby fulfil the ‘know-which’ requirement:

(RP): (For all objects  $o$  and all thinking subjects  $s$ )  $s$  can singularly represent  $o$  in demonstrative thought only if  $s$  is in a position to determine  $o$ 's *actual* egocentric location and relate this to an absolute spatial network.

‘Being in a position to determine  $o$ 's actual location’ means having a ‘suitable’ information-link with  $o$ : an information-link which can act to afford knowledge of  $o$ 's actual location. An information-link affords this when subjects can *use* it to guide them-

selves to *o*; in this way it acts as a ‘beacon’ or path (though, as chapter three will show, not all information-links act in this way). (RP) is restricted to *demonstrative* thought—thought about objects one *is* perceiving, or is remembering having perceived. In this way it is only a variant of the more general requirement of Russell’s Principle and does not govern, say, a discrimination of an object via a description.

Given (RP) and the discussion of this section we are now in a position to define the intellectualism which can be reasonably attributed to both Strawson and Evans. As Evans’ discussion has shown, demonstrative thought about an object requires conceiving of it as within absolute space. Further, when we recall Strawson’s discussion—that non-demonstrative identification of an object requires (spatially) relating it to an object one *can* demonstratively identify—this too seems to depend on relating both (currently) observed and unobserved objects in one spatial framework. Thus though Strawson does not provide as extensive a discussion as Evans’ on demonstrative identification, we can assume that he too would require subjects to conceive of objects as within absolute space.

### §3.

This, neo-Kantian, conception clearly requires highly advanced cognitive capacities: not only to understand what it is for an object to exist in absolute space, but what it is for a thought to be ‘true’. Such capacities are thought to be possessed only by developed human beings and not, say ‘lower’ animals like apes or less developed humans like infants. It is here where a clear conflict arises with Burge who is happy even to *assume* that such subjects enjoy singular thought (2003 p. 519), (2010a p. 162).

The first question to be pursued in outlining Burge’s theory is *how* he is able to make this assumption in his theory of singular thought. It should be clarified that Burge does agree that thoughts are essentially conceptual: not only does he claim that attribution of thought requires “a capacity for inference—for truth-preserving propositional transitions” (*ibid.*) which are taken to be conceptual activities, but he accepts that they can be propositionally structured, a composition he explicitly reserves for conceptual content (2010a. p. 36). Further he does not conceive of thought as subpersonal, or modular, rather it is an activity of the whole individual (2003 p. 519). In attributing thought to animals Burge is thus claiming that such creatures are capa-

ble of holding conceptual, propositional attitudes towards objects in their environments. Since the most intuitive cases of this will be those where the object of their thought is one which they currently perceive I will continue to phrase the discussion in terms of demonstrative thought.

Burge's theory of perception clearly influences his thought that animals can be attributed demonstrative thoughts. Because singular representation occurs in non-conceptual perceptual content he claims that singular referring thoughts can be posited (for those creatures capable of thought) providing such representation is thought to be preserved between the two mental processes. As he describes it:

“The most salient aspects of this element in the transition [from perception to thought] is the association of concepts with perceptual classifications and the association of demonstrative elements in the propositional representation with some of the singular, context-dependent elements in the perceptual representation. When the transition goes well, singular reference is preserved[.]” (2003 p. 541)

With this theory Burge is not only claiming that we can preserve all or most of the information encoded in a perceptual experience, he is also claiming that we can preserve its representational features, specifically the *object* that perception represents. In chapter one it was seen that Burge's theory of perceptual content claims that there is a context-bound singular element, anti-individualistically determined by causal interaction with a particular object in the world. If singular elements are preserved in a transition from perception to thought then the object which causes the (singular) perceptual content will be the object the thought is about since it will determine the singular element of thought-content. As such Burge claims that the representational contents of thought (but, importantly, not the *states*) will differ depending on whether the object which causes the perception (and thus thought) is a real object (say, a real tomato) or a fake (2005 p. 34). Thought about in this way it is tempting to read Burge's theory of thought as an extension of his anti-individualist theory of content-determination: the content of a belief is constitutively determined by causal contact with the external environment.

In this way Burge propounds a species of a view called the *Photograph Model* which Evans opposes. This is a type of theory of thought-attribution in which “the causal antecedents of the information involved in a mental state [...] are claimed to be

sufficient to determine which object the state concerns” (1982 p. 78). For example say I perceive one tomato, *a*, at place *p*, time *t<sub>1</sub>*; then, at a later time *t<sub>2</sub>*, I perceive an indistinguishable tomato, *b*, also at *p*. Now imagine that I lose my memory of the first tomato meaning that when I think back and come to believe ‘*that tomato I saw was red*’ the information in the memory derives solely from *b*.<sup>13</sup> According to Evans the subject is in no position to distinguish between the two tomatoes and thus would not know what it is for his thought to be about *b* rather than *a*—thus, he could not be said to have a referential thought. However, the Photograph Model—and Burge’s theory—would conclude that, since the information (memory) is derived from *b* and since this causes the ensuing thought—about ‘*that tomato I saw*’—the thought can be said to ‘be about’ or singularly represent the relevant object.

It might be thought that Evans’ theory of informational content (under which the informational content of the perceptions would be the same *Tx*) influences his response. Were he to adopt Burge’s view he would admit that the singular aspect of the perceptual content would be different in each case—it would represent the tomato which caused it: *Ta* or *Tb*. On this view he may still deny that the *subject* is in any position to distinguish between the two tomatoes, but he may find it harder to claim that the subject is in no position to *think* of the tomato on which his memory is based. If my memory *represents b* then it might be thought right to say I should be able to think of *b*—that the singular elements ‘transfer’ between mental representations.

But Evans’ actual objection to the Photograph model does not invoke this model of informational content. He claims we cannot think of *b* here because, admitting that a causal link is sufficient to enable object-directed thought “subverts the very logic or grammar of the concept of knowing what it is for it to be true [that *b* is red]” (1982 p. 116). What he means is that, in being unable to identify anything which would distinguish *b* from *a*, I cannot be thought to have the *capacity* to discriminate it from all other things. Though I can distinguish *b* from everything not at *p* at the time I remember seeing it, I have no information which will distinguish it from the indistinguishable *a*, seen previously. As such I cannot be said to have an Idea of *b*, based on this memory—i.e. this memory does not provide a *means* of thinking about it in indefinitely many thoughts. But if I am unable to discriminate in this way then, claims

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<sup>13</sup> This case is structurally identical to Evans’ Baker-case (1982 p. 78) and the two, indistinguishable steel balls (1982 p. 90).

Evans, I cannot know what it is for my thought '*that tomato was red*' to be true for I do not know *which* individual would have to be red.

This objection obtains whatever theory of content we adopt; what is essential to it is Evans' central assumption—that to have a thought a subject must understand what it is for that thought to be true. It is this assumption which underpins Evans' theory of singular thought, not his conception of informational content. Perhaps Evans thought that an open sentence structure was sufficient to perform the psychological explanations required and saw no reason to enhance it. But, if Burge can provide independent motivation for his theory of perception, Evans seems perfectly able to adapt to this yet still oppose the Photograph Model when it comes to singular thought: even if perception singularly represents there is no further motivation to say that this singular element is *preserved* between representations—especially if Evans maintains his central assumption.

We are now in a position to answer the question which initiated this chapter: does a defence of Strawson and Evans' intellectualist theories of mental representation (or a theory based upon them) require defending the principle (BI)? If Strawson's discussion of perception is interpreted a certain way, and if Evans' account of informational content is to be defended to the letter then (BI) must be upheld. However this chapter has shown that it is difficult to discern the wider significance of (BI) in other aspects of Evans' (or Strawson's) theory of mental representation—i.e. its impact on their theories of singular thought. Not only does this theory of thought seem to come into genuine conflict with Burge's own, it also seems that it could incorporate the main points of his theory of perception at the expense of (BI). Thus it does not seem that neo-Kantian intellectualism should be dismissed because Evans commits to (BI); nor does it seem that a defence of a specifically 'neo-Kantian intellectualism' need wed itself to upholding (BI). Despite Evans' endorsement this commitment seems disposable and, if Burge is to be believed, ultimately problematic.

Consequently to defend neo-Kantian intellectualism, I will not seek to defend a commitment to (BI): it seems such a commitment could be relinquished in the face of Burge's theory of perception while a conflicting theory of singular thought could be maintained, based on Evans' assumption that having a thought requires understanding what it would be for that to be true.

The neo-Kantian principle which I will now look to defend concerns the condi-

tions both Strawson and Evans place on having thought about a particular object. As §2 showed, Evans believed that thinking of an object requires locating it within ‘absolute space’—a form of location assumed to require reasonably advanced cognitive capacities. If objects are conceived to be spatially related to other objects, independently of their relation to the subject (indeed, if the subject is conceived to be one object among others, 1982 p. 176), then it is clear that the subject must be capable of thinking of the world as somewhat distinct and independent of his own relation to it. Thus it might be possible to formulate a principle which characterises neo-Kantian intellectualism like (BI) only restricted to representation in conceptual thought. The principle, which I will call *Narrow Intellectualism* (NI), can be put as follows:

(NI): (For *all* physical objects,  $o$ , and all thinking subjects  $s$ )  $S$  cannot represent  $o$  in conceptual thought unless he can conceive of  $o$  as a discrete particular existing independently of his experience.

However, although there is manifestly a link between conceiving of  $o$  as independent of my experience and being able to locate  $o$  within an absolute spatial framework, a more exact formulation of (NI) can be developed:

(NI\*): (For all objects  $o$  and all thinking subjects  $s$ )  $s$  can singularly represent  $o$  in thought only if  $s$  conceives of  $o$  as located in an ‘absolute’ spatial network.

This latter formulation is what I take to be the canonical formulation of the intellectualist principle common to Strawson and Evans. Like (BI) this is an intellectualist principle because it is assumed that conceiving of objects as within a unified spatial network requires advanced cognitive capacities. However, unlike (BI) this principle does not extend to *all* mental representation of  $o$ , but only to conceptual *thought* which singularly represents  $o$ ; as such (NI) need not conflict with Burge’s theory of perception.

The assumption which leads Evans to adopt (RP) and, ultimately, (NI\*) is the idea that, to have a thought, subjects must understand what it is for that thought to be true. Evans took this assumption to be a deeply intuitive claim which nobody would wish to deny. However it is clear that, in adopting a version of the Photograph Model

Burge is rejecting such an assumption: for him, a subject entertaining representational content which singularly represents a particular object need not understand what it would be for that thought to be true. In consequence he needn't claim, like Evans, that a subject must conceive of objects as objective or located in absolute space in order to entertain thought about them. As such he can deny that entertaining singular thought requires possessing advanced cognitive capacities which only adult humans are thought to possess. His view can be expressed in the following principle, *Anti-Intellectualism* (AI):

- (AI): To entertain singular thought about *o* a subject must have the basic capacity to employ conceptual attributives, however such an ability does not require the possession of advanced intellectual capacities.

Given that conceiving of objects in absolute space is assumed to require advanced cognitive capacities (AI) is clearly incompatible with (NI\*). Burge is able to commit to an anti-intellectualism because he rejects Evans' central assumption that a subject's having a thought entails that they understand what it would be for that thought to be true. In the next chapter I will examine objections to this assumption—and Evans' ensuing commitment to (RP)—to see whether (NI\*) can stand up to the challenge posed by (AI).

# 3

The question which I will now pursue is whether Burge's anti-intellectualism regarding object-directed thought provides a significant challenge to a distinctly 'neo-Kantian' intellectualism, defined as (NI\*). More specifically we might ask whether there is anything to be gained from maintaining an interest in Strawson's and Evans' discussions of mental representation in the light of Burge's rival theory and objections.

The next chapter will be concerned with Burge's specific reasons for rejecting intellectualist theories and preferring (AI). In this chapter however I will address a more general concern with Strawson's and Evans' views of singular thought: the idea that (RP) is far too demanding as a constraint on this kind of representation. Just as Burge thought it a disadvantage that Strawson and Evans seemed to commit to (BI), it may be thought impossible to defend (NI\*) if it requires a commitment to Russell's Principle. Thus we might wonder whether, if (RP) must be abandoned, Evans' and Strawson's accounts immediately lose their interest and Burge loses his neo-Kantian rival.

In §1 I'll examine a cogent counterexample to *Russell's Principle* and explain why it seems to show it to be too strong. In §2 I'll outline and endorse a weakening of the neo-Kantian view explored in Peacocke (1983) which avoids the counterexample discussed. To close, §3, I'll explain why this weakened version retains many of the concerns which the previous two chapters have shown to be central to the discussions of both Strawson and Evans. In retaining this focus, I'll claim, even a non-(RP) account of singular thought can be considered a distinctly neo-Kantian theory.

## §1.

It was seen in chapter two that Evans' commitment to Russell's Principle can be opposed by a theory which, like Burge's, claims that a perceptual relation to an object,  $o$ , is sufficient—in the absence of a capacity to discriminate  $o$ —to enable thought about  $o$ . Here I will discuss a case from Peacocke which lends weight to such a view:

“we can imagine at some fairground stand an apple, seen in a mirror which is amongst various other moving mirrors: the set-up may be so complicated that it is beyond the subject to locate that apple in egocentric space. But it seems he can still think about it, wonder where it is now and so forth. It is true that [...] the presented object has an (approximate) apparent location, or at least direction, in egocentric space: but this can hardly suffice to fulfil the requirement of knowledge, or the ability to attain it, which Evans gave.” (1983 p. 171)

Because of the disorientating effect of the moving mirrors there is an understanding of this case in which the subject (call him  $s$ ) cannot discern the spatial location of the apple—i.e. the information-link with the apple does not put  $s$  in a position to determine the apple's location, as (RP) demands.

As Peacocke notes, this must be handled with care: for the subject's ability to trace a route to  $o$  (his ‘being in a position’ to do so) using this information-link depends, in some degree, upon his understanding of the mechanism by which  $o$  is presented to him. Evans claims that we can demonstratively refer to a man we hear on the radio or see on the TV because, even though this information-link does not reveal his actual location, a (broad) understanding of the mechanism involved allows us to discern that some object (located somewhere, at least one time)<sup>14</sup> is causally responsible for the information-link (1982 p. 149). However, where this broad understanding of the mechanism is lacking (or is incorrect)—where, for example,  $s$  thinks the man is *inside* the radio or TV—the information-link does not put  $s$  in a position to discern  $o$ 's location: the information-link, combined with  $s$ 's poor understanding of the mechanism, will lead  $s$  to trace a route to a location where  $o$  is not to be found (1982 p. 150).

Plausibly (RP) does not apply to the cases of radio and TV (because those mediums may never put us in a position to discern  $o$ 's egocentric location); however Ev-

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<sup>14</sup> Recall that, though Evans does not think we have to *know* an object's Fundamental Ground of difference, we do have to conceive of it as possessing one.

ans' treatment of them does provide a means to understand how the Apple-case could contravene (RP). As Peacocke says, if *s* is not aware that he is seeing a *reflection* of *o* then this information-link, combined with his poor understanding of the mechanism by which it is presented, will lead *s* to trace a route to a location where *o* is not to be found—i.e. a mirror (Peacocke, 1991 p. 125 footnote 2). Far from putting *s* in a position to discern *o*'s actual egocentric location, this information-link can only put *s* in a position to *wrongly* locate *o* (due to his poor understanding of the mechanism).

Nonetheless it is still possible to maintain that this confused *s* is still able to enjoy thought about *o*. Perhaps Evans could concede that it will *seem* to *s* just as if he enjoys thought about some *o*, or that it would be natural to *describe s* as doing so (1982 p. 90); however he may object that this thought is illusory<sup>15</sup> or this ‘natural description’ is misleading. What we need then is some reason to say that *s*'s thought *genuinely* represents *o* and cannot be based on an illusion or loose talk.

One reason to deny these Evansian responses is that, plausibly, *s* could be said to be in a position to *know* something about *o*—e.g. that it is a green apple.<sup>16</sup> In many cases it is intuitive to say that *s*'s having seen *o* is sufficient to explain his knowledge about *o*: it is a source of access which (reliably) reveals information about *o* that would allow him to, for example, track the truth of a belief about *o* through relevant possible worlds. In this case, despite *s* only seeing a reflection of *o* (and his ignorance of this), it is plausible to think that this information-link still affords sufficient access for knowledge about *o*; for example, it allows him to track the truth of beliefs—were *o* red he would not believe that *o* is green etc.

Since we might think that knowledge about *o* requires genuine (and not illusory) belief about *o* this intuition may lead us to dispute the Evansian claim that *s* cannot think about *o* in this case. Allowing that *s* knows about *o* thus contravenes (RP) and a commitment to Russell's Principle. Of course Evans would object that accepting this intuition (that *s* is in a position to know) and allowing this counterexample means denying that, in order to have a thought, a subject must know what it is for his thought to be true. Since he cannot discriminate *o* (because he is not in a position to discern its

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<sup>15</sup> Thereby denying the transparency of mental states (see McDowell, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> This point was inspired by an unpublished discussion from Dr. Rory Madden in which he claims that the attribution of reference to a subject should put them in a position to *know* something about the object.

actual location) he does not know which object must be green in order for his thought '*o* is green' to be true.

Evans clearly believed that this consequence would deter people from accepting such counterexamples, yet it is unclear to me that this consideration should prevent us from saying that *s* is in a position to know something about *o*. It seems to tally well with our understanding of what affords knowledge about the world that *s*'s information-link with *o* (despite his ignorance that he sees a reflection) allows him to know—and therefore genuinely believe—that *o* is green and not red. Evans' clear endorsement of the requirement that a subject must understand what it would be for their thought to be true seems insufficient to dispel this strong intuition of *s*'s knowledge.

In the absence of a theoretical motivation for Evans' condition it becomes unclear why we should favour (RP) over a less complex explanation: that *s* saw *o* and that such perceptual contact is (often, at least) sufficient to put *s* in a position to entertain thought about *o*. Such an account would dispense with the idea that *s* had to (have the capacity to) discriminate *o* from all other objects and, as such, would abandon Russell's Principle and (RP). My point here is that this simple, causal account is *prima facie* preferable to Russell's Principle and is not something to which Evans' discussion can offer a feasible reply.

## §2.

The cogency of this counterexample shows that Evans' central assumption (that *s* should understand what it would be for his thought to be true) is not a self-evident truth and, therefore, that a commitment to a 'know-which' condition is not contained within our conception of what it is to have an object-directed thought. Rather this counterexample suggests that an (appropriate) psychological link with *o*—e.g. perception of *o*—is sufficient to enable thought about *o* even though the subject does not possess discriminating knowledge. However it would be premature to think that this shows the truth of (AI) over an intellectualist account of singular thought—i.e. an account which claims that subjects must possess advanced cognitive capacities if they are to entertain singular thought. One consideration in favour of this, as I will show in this section, is that this 'causal' account is compatible with such an intellectualist account.

Recall that Evans believed any thought about an object had to conceive of that object as discriminable in certain fundamental ways—i.e. as possessing a fundamental ground of difference appropriate to an object of that type. Thus any thought about a spatio-temporal object must conceive of it as being the only object of a certain sort (e.g. a statue) occupying a spatio-temporal position. Importantly this doesn't mean that a subject should, consciously, entertain a thought of the form ' $o$  is distinguished from everything else by fact- $x$ '; after all, when I look at a perceptually presented apple I don't consciously think that there is some feature which will discriminate it from all other apples, nor do I think that I must be aware of this in order to entertain thoughts about it. Rather Evans' point was only that, as I come to understand what it would be for my thought to be true I thereby come to understand what would make  $o$  discriminable in the first place. Crucially, as was clear in the previous chapter, Evans did not think this was an explicitly *conscious* mental exercise: it was simply part of the mental process which determined that content represents an object in the first place. It is part of our conception of an object—and therefore our understanding an object-directed thought—that it is a discrete particular distinguished in certain, fundamental ways.

Clearly, for Evans, this was connected to his—now discredited—assumption that having a thought required understanding what it would be for that thought to be true. Though it is denied that singularly representing  $o$  requires knowing what it would be for that thought to be about  $o$  (entailed by Evans' assumption), other elements of Evans' picture can still be maintained. Perhaps it is true that  $s$  is not able to discriminate  $o$  from all other things however he may yet be able to understand that his thought is about a certain type of object—e.g. a spatio-temporal, physical object—and, in having this minimal understanding, will understand what it is for there to *be* such an object in the first place—i.e. he will conceive of that object (the object of his thought or which he even *believes* to exist) as discriminable in certain, fundamental ways. As Peacocke attests:

“In examples in which a thinker is perceptually presented with an object but is unable to locate it in either egocentric or public space, he must still suppose that it has some fundamental identification. To come to believe it has none is to come to believe that there is no such presented object.” (1983 p. 173)

The claim here is that, while  $s$  does not have to understand what it is for his thought to be about  $o$  (and not another object), he does have to understand what it is for his thought to be about a (broad) *type* of object. Evans' own discussion of the 'fundamental level of thought' was explicitly concerned with the broad category of spatio-temporal objects (though there will be fundamental grounds of difference for any kind of object, like colours and numbers); what this account requires is that, to have an object-directed thought—a thought which singularly represents the worldly object they perceive—a subject must understand what it is for their thought to be *about* such an object in the first place. As the discussions of the previous two chapters have shown, conceiving of worldly objects plausibly requires conceiving of them as discrete, propertied particulars which exist independently of a subject's experience of them. Thus, on this view, having a thought about a worldly object requires conceiving of them as discrete—and therefore distinguishable in certain fundamental ways—as well as independent of experience.

Such an account wouldn't necessarily reduce to Burge's anti-individualist view that this causal contact is sufficient to constitutively determine  $s$ 's thought-content such that it singularly represents  $o$ . For even though we may deny Evans' more stringent conditions on singular thought, we could still demand that object-directed thought manifest a deep level of understanding and a consciousness of mind's relation to world which Burge's theory ignores. *Contra* Evans this weakened intellectualist account would claim that subjects do not need to know *which* object their thought concerns—i.e. would not need to discriminate it from all others—and therefore do not have to meet his stringent condition that they know what it would be for their thoughts to be true. However, *contra* Burge such an intellectualism would claim that a subject only has the capacity to think about an object with which they are perceptually related when they are (broadly) capable of *understanding* object-directed thought.

An account of this type would be compatible with the claim that a suitable causal relation to  $o$ —such as seeing  $o$ —can be sufficient to enable thought about  $o$ : such a relation makes a subject *aware* of  $o$  which he is able to think about only if he understands  $o$  to be a discrete object distinct from his own experience. However, one obvious objection at this point is that this intellectualist requirement destroys some of the simplicity and intuitiveness of the causal story: after all, when you ask anyone (from a developed human adult to a linguistic child) *how* they are thinking about  $o$  the explana-

tion (if there is one) is unlikely to include reference to a capacity to discriminate between ‘objects and subjective sensations’ and ‘an awareness of  $o$  as a discrete and discriminable individual’. Such a fact might be taken as a basis on which to reject the intellectualist demand that thought about  $o$  manifests an understanding of what it is for a thought to be about an object.

However this would by a rather myopic appraisal. What might tempt us to say that these subjects think about  $o$  but *don't* manifest an understanding of what it is to be an object is the fact that they don't feel it necessary to *explain* what an object is, or why their thought is about that and not a sensation (see chapter one). Yet, such an objection is flawed: it seems right to say that an ability to explain, say, the meaning of a proposition  $p$  manifests an understanding of  $p$ , but just because the desired explanation of what makes  $o$  an object is not forthcoming—or is not commonsensical—does not mean that subjects are *unable*, or that such an understanding is redundant in their having a thought about  $o$ . What Evans' insight makes clear is that we do not have to consciously inform ourselves that ' $o$  is discriminable from all other things'; rather, his point was that thought about  $o$  necessarily manifests a *latent* understanding of what makes  $o$  an object—i.e. that it is discriminable. Similarly this view claims that thought about  $o$  will manifest, not just the latent understanding that  $o$  is a discrete (and therefore discriminable) particular, but that  $o$  is *independent* of experience—a similarly deep-seated commitment in our conception of objects if Strawson's analysis (given in ch.1 §1) is to be believed. The point is that, if they enjoy object-directed thought, a subject will—‘on some level’—be able to answer the question ‘what makes your thought about  $o$  and not your subjective sensation of  $o$ -ness?'; to do so will mean appealing to the notions of discreteness and independence which chapter one showed were considered (by Strawson) integral to our conception of worldly objects.

However this account could be subject to the following regress objection:

1. To understand ‘ $o$  is  $F$ ’  $s$  must know what it would be for the world to contain an object,  $o$ .
2. To know what it would be for the world to contain an object  $o$ ,  $s$  must understand the conditions for something being an object.
3. To understand the conditions for something being an object  $s$  must understand the conditions for the conditions of understanding something's being an object.

4. To understand the conditions of the conditions for understanding something's being an object  $s$  must understand the conditions for the conditions for the conditions of understanding something's being an object etc.

Both (1) and (2) must be admitted by this new intellectualist theory: (1) states the requirement that  $s$  must understand what it is for the world to contain some object which is  $F$  if he is to have the thought ' $o$  is  $F$ ' and (2) expresses the resulting claim (as per the discussion of Evans in chapter two) that understanding such a thought is understanding the conditions something must meet if it is to be an object—i.e. being distinct from a subject's experiences, reidentifiable etc. Thus it seems right to say that if a subject must understand what it would be for the world to contain an object which is  $F$  he must understand what *makes* something an object. The regress is generated by allowing that (3) follows from (2). What this suggests is that, to understand what it is for something to *be* an object  $s$  must understand what it is to understand that something is an object. If (3) follows from (2) then (4) must follow from (3) and a regress ensues.

However there seems little reason to grant that (3) follows from (2). It seems perfectly coherent to say that a subject understands something—or indeed that it is a *condition* of his entertaining, say, a thought or proposition that he understands—without thereby admitting that he understands the conditions on his *understanding*. A subject can understand a proposition (e.g. successfully use it (as intended) in communication) by knowing what each of the terms mean, and how they fit in a syntactic structure, but he does not have to *know* this in order to understand (and successfully utilise) the proposition: he merely has to use it in the way he does! Likewise a subject who understands his thought in the sense under discussion must understand what makes something an object—and therefore what would make his object-directed thought true of the world—however he would not have to understand *how* he understands. Just as the language-user can be said to understand the proposition he employs without ‘understanding how it is he understands’, a thinker can understand his thought without having to understand how he understands. By rejecting this (rather absurd) premise we can avoid the regress whilst maintaining the weakened intellectualist theory.

The fact that a different intellectualist theory (indeed, a weakened version of Ev-

ans' account) is compatible with the causal-account discussed in §1 perhaps shows that a rejection of (RP) is rather inconclusive in settling the debate between intellectualist and anti-intellectualist accounts. Instead I propose to turn to that question in the following chapter. But I will close this one by showing that, despite the rejection of (RP), the question of whether neo-Kantian intellectualism can be defended is still a live one.

### §3.

This suggestion of a new intellectualist theory claims that, though they do not need a capacity to discriminate  $\sigma$ , subjects do have to understand what it would be for their thought to be about an object in the first place—i.e. to think  $Fa$  they must know what it would be for there to be *an object* (if not specifically  $a$ ) which is  $F$ . It was claimed that this requires subjects to conceive of objects as, not only discrete particulars, but as independent of their experience of them: as chapter one claimed, these are two, ineliminable features of our conception of objects (at least the objects we conceive to exist in the physical world).

In that chapter it was also suggested that a distinction can be made between two forms of description of experience (or, in this case, of thought). So-called ‘sensation-speak’ described an encounter with an object using merely general features like ‘roundness and redness’ (to describe a red ball), without mentioning the discriminable object itself. Conversely object-directed descriptions essentially make reference to such a particular and, it was claimed, can be understood only when the subject can conceive of that object as distinct from themselves—only then can it be a discrete, independent object. Thus in elucidating what it is for a subject to understand object-directed thought we might think it necessary that they be able to discern the difference between these two types of description of thought—i.e. they should know the difference between an object-directed characterisation (which singularly represents  $\sigma$ ) and non-object-directed characterisation (which does not).

As was seen in the previous chapter, Evans thought that the *mark* of object-involving thought cannot be spelled out in purely egocentric terms. As defined, egocentric location is made in terms of the (spatial) relation of an object to a subject’s own body. While this can be in tandem with an absolute location—i.e. we can think

of an object both as located relative to ourselves *and* as related to all other physical objects—a *purely egocentric* location, according to Evans, does not manifest an understanding of object-involving thought. Importantly Evans’ point can be construed, not just as applying to his own Russell’s Principle, but to the distinction between ‘*o* is green’ and ‘there is greenness’—a distinction even the weakened intellectualist theory requires subjects to understand.

States which located a stimulus *purely egocentrically* were seen to be tied to behaviour: a subject’s response to a stimulus on a given occasion. As such they were taken to manifest a merely episodic connection to the source of the stimulation—the object—because they were essentially tied to a subject’s position and reaction at one given time. To have experience which manifests an understanding of what it is for the thought ‘*o* is *F*’ to be an object-directed thought subjects need to understand what it is for the world to contain *an object* rather than a *sensation* which has an episodic affect on behaviour. The difference here is taken to lie in the fact that an object is *distinct* from the subject in that its’ existence is not dependent on the subject’s experience of it and (as we conceive of it at least) it can *persist* outside of observation (see chapter one). To manifest such an understanding subjects must have a ‘dispositional connection’: an ability to think of objects in the absence of (current) information-links with that object.

Such a distinction can be applied to the need to distinguish between ‘*o* is green’ and ‘there is greenness’. Object-directed thought can be distinguished precisely by the fact that, in having this thought, a subject implicitly understands what it is for the world to contain an object as something which can persist outside of one experience. In this way he can have a dispositional connection since, in distinguishing the object from one experience of it, he is able to think of it even in the absence of a (current) information-link. As chapter two makes clear, this requires locating *o* in a way which extends beyond its’ relation to a subject at a given time and thus requires locating it in an absolute spatial framework.

Consequently, thinking along lines inspired by Strawson and Evans, attributing the thought ‘*o* is green’ to a subject is implicitly attributing the ability to think of that object in abstraction from his own relation to it. In so doing we are attributing the ability to conceive of that object as located in an absolute spatial network—exactly the same general principle (NI\*) which was entailed by (RP).

This should make clear that the possibility of a new intellectualist position still retains some of the main features of Strawson's and Evans' discussions. In chapter one it was seen that both Strawson and Evans seemed concerned with a certain conscious experience in which objective, discrete entities (physical objects) were the essential constituents. Though it was left reasonably obscure what such a consciousness might really amount to, this thesis (labelled (PT)) was seen to require intensive conceptual capabilities, including the ability to conceive of objects as independent of experience. In chapter two it was shown that both Strawson and Evans seemed to think these capabilities underlined singular thought. Such thought, they believed, was impossible for creatures who were not conscious of the distinction between their experience and the world (or objects) of that experience.

Though we have rejected a seemingly central feature of their views on singular thought—Russell's Principle—the weakened intellectualism outlined here has preserved this concern with what might be called ‘objective thought’. It agrees with Strawson and Evans that thought manifests a deep understanding of mind’s relation to world. Consequently it might be claimed that the account discussed here preserves one of the primary concerns of both Strawson and Evans: how a subject’s conception of themselves as a perspective on an objective world influences and distinguishes their mental life (and content).

My goal here has not necessarily been to motivate endorsement of this intellectualist view; indeed, it is not the goal of this thesis to determine whether or not such an account is correct. What I have attempted to show is that this view is (*prima facie*) a coherent and defensible account of singular thought. This is sufficient to show that a specifically neo-Kantian intellectualism—an intellectualism based on the discussion of Strawson and Evans—is a tenable position even when divorced from a commitment to Russell’s Principle.

For the rest of this thesis then I will assume that the account discussed in §2 is at least a *prima facie* viable account of singular thought which entails a distinctive neo-Kantian principle: Narrow Intellectualism. The mere rejection of Russell’s Principle, and the considerations which prompted it, have not been sufficient to either establish Burge’s preferred theory or to show neo-Kantianism to be wholly defunct. The question which I will pursue in the next chapter, and which will conclude the thesis, is whether Burge can offer any conclusive consideration in favour of abandoning (NI\*).

# 4

The situation so far is the following: chapter one showed that Burge's objection to the neo-Kantians—that they 'hyperintellectualised' perception—could not dispel a resurgence of a 'neo-Kantian intellectualism'; the reason for this was that an intellectualism could be developed which accepted Burge's theory of perception (and rejected Evans' account of informational content) but conflicted with his (Burge's) account of singular thought. Importantly, while Burge claims that, to enjoy singular thought, subjects only need to employ conceptual attributives in a singular representation (a capacity which he thinks can be attributed to 'lower' animals like apes) a neo-Kantian theory, defined by (NI\*), stipulates that subjects require more advanced cognitive capacities, such as the capacity to locate objects in absolute space.

In this chapter I will examine Burge's general objections to intellectualism and seek to determine whether they pose any problems for a potential neo-Kantian account, such as that suggested in chapter three. To begin, in §1, I will set out the two positions, based on the discussion in previous chapters and on a more detailed exposition of Burge's view. I will also outline the objections upon which Burge resists intellectualism and present the challenge which he has formulated. In §2 and §3 I will examine two objections which can be made to intellectualism based on Burge's position, as explicated in §1.

## §1.

The discussion of Burge's representationalist theory of perception in chapter one revealed that he takes perception to consist in both singular and general elements. The representation of some (physical) object *o* requires 'singular reference' which 'picks it

out' and a more general attributive which represents *o* as some way—e.g. *o* is green. But, though Burge believes perception would represent *o* as green, he believes it neither employs concepts nor is structured propositionally; instead propositional structure and employment of so-called ‘conceptual content’ is reserved for other representations, such as thought. But since both serve to ‘pick out’ an entity and apply a general attributive—i.e. which can be applied to more than one particular—the distinction between perceptual and *conceptual* representation lies, for Burge, in the attributives employed.

Perceptual attributives are general in that they can be applied to more than one object in more than one perceptual context. Thus both *a*, seen at time *t*, and *b*, seen at later time *t*, can be perceptually represented as *F*; in a similar way to Evans’ Generality Constraint the attributive *F* is ‘ability-general’ in that the subject is capable of *using* it in multifarious representations (Burge, 2009 p. 259). However these general perceptual attributives are, Burge says, *limited* to singular, context-dependent applications: while the subject is able to *use* them in many representations, any *single* use will represent a given particular (or given plurality of particulars) in one perspectival context—i.e. as it is seen from the (physical) perspective of one observer, at one time. For Burge two representations of the same object, *a*, can differ in context—e.g. if *a* is seen from a different angle or under different circumstances—and the representations thus distinguished according to the context-bound *application* of the attributives involved. Thus any one perceptual representation, ‘*a* is *F*’, constitutes a context-bound application of *F*: an application which represents *a* under a certain mode of presentation, tied to the perspective of the subject at the time of perception. (The ability to perceive the same object (or property) as the *same* as one previously represented is what Burge calls a ‘*Perceptual Constancy*’ (2009 p. 250 and 2010a p. 408))

Effectively Burge is claiming that a *perceptual* representation of *o* is always a representation which reflects contingent facts about *how* the object was seen at the time of perception. Conceptual attributives can thus be distinguished from perceptual attributives in that they do not reflect just one ‘way of seeing’ *o* but are able to represent *o* in a way which can abstract from any one context: “[n]ot all occurrences of conceptual attributives accompany and guide contextual singular applications [...] or are part of a primary way (or indeed any way) of contextually referring to a particular” (2010a p. 541). As such they function in a way which Burge calls *purely predicational*. Creatures

who employ these attributives are creatures who entertain distinctly conceptual thought:

“In determining that the representational content of an individual’s psychological state is *propositional* [(conceptual)], one must find an attributive in the content that has a purely predicative role.” (2010b p. 44)

Burge suggests three ways in which conceptual attributives differ from perceptual representations: first, such attributives can be employed in universal (rather than singular) representations, e.g. ‘every planet is a body’ rather than ‘that (perceived)  $o$  is a body’ (2010b p. 42). Second, as Burge puts it, the attributive can “function predicatively, as part of a larger attribution, while not itself making any attribution at all” (*ibid.*). The types of attribution he has in mind here are negative claims, e.g. ‘that (perceived)  $o$  is not a body’, hypothetical or conditional claims like ‘if that (perceived)  $o$  is a body, it’s far away’ and disjunctive, or non-committal claims such as ‘that (perceived)  $o$  is either a body or a shadow’. Each of these claims has a referent,  $o$ , and functions to (potentially) attribute a property to  $o$ ; yet, unlike the simple ‘representation as’ in perceptual representation, none of these formulations actively represents  $o$  as having a certain property. Third, and finally, in a combination of the first two forms, conceptual attributives can function in universal, negative claims like ‘it is not the case that any non-spatial entity is a body’ (2010b p. 43).

Each of these forms of representation marks, as Burge puts it, a ‘freedom from the here and now’ (2010a p. 542). What he means is that, even though they may refer to one particular, none of these forms of representation are *necessarily* tied to representing it under in one context—e.g. as I perceived it at  $t$ ,—or even in a way which is *veridical* (or true) of the object. Thus a representation can be neutral as to what  $o$  is represented as—e.g. hypothetical statements like ‘if  $o$  is a body then it’s far away’. Further  $o$  could be represented in a universally quantified representation—e.g. everything like  $o$  is a body—without the attributive ‘body’ applying to one, particular, mode of presentation (i.e. context of perceiving)  $o$ .

Given this line of thought it might be that one of the most intuitive features of a conceptual attributive is the fact that it is used in a representation which allows a subject to abstract from the actual scene they are presented with (perceive) and employ a form of thought which applies, not just to that situation, but to many others. What we might take to be the hallmark of the conceptual then is the *generality* of application

of the representations in which they might be used: hypotheticals, universals and logical truths can each be distinguished by the fact that they ‘go beyond’ the facts of a *specific* (perceived) situation to either represent something which neither represents that situation *as G* nor *not-G* (e.g. hypotheticals) or which apply to other, similar situations (in the case of universals and abstract rules). When a singular representation ‘*o* is *F*’ displays this sort of generality it seems the attributive *F* must be conceptual and the representation can be said to be a thought.

As noted Burge’s anti-intellectualism differs from (NI) in that it claims conceptual representation of *o* can come about in creatures which are incapable of conceiving of *o* as within absolute space. In such a way Burge and the neo-Kantians have very different conceptions of the type of creature to whom singular propositional attitudes can be attributed. Thus Evans seems to restrict the examples in his theory of thought-attribution to subjects who are (supposedly advanced) language-users while Burge is happy to even *assume* (in places) that propositional attitudes can be entertained by non-linguistic creatures, such as apes (2003 p. 519).

This difference does not, I think, reveal that the neo-Kantians were dismissive of data from developmental psychology or other scientific fields; several passages and discussions by Evans, for example, show a knowledge of and respect for such disciplines (e.g. Evans 1985 and 1982 p. 156). Rather the divergence can be seen as two ways to understand the *concept* of singular thought—its usage in psychological attribution and in helping us understand the cognitive architecture of other subjects. The neo-Kantian conception, based largely on Evans’ discussion, reveals a concern with the understanding *human* thought is taken to manifest. This consists in a consciousness of objects as distinct from one’s experience of them and as existing in a way which does not depend upon human minds to apprehend them. In this way, they might be thought of as *Top-down* approaches: they focus on what it is to have singular thought *in our own case* (i.e. as a developed human), identify an accompanying capacity *C* (e.g. linguistic abilities, capacity to conceive of the world as objective etc.) and claim that *possession* of *C* is necessary for entertaining singular thought. Such an approach resists the idea that creatures who don’t obviously manifest *C* might nonetheless be credited with singular thought.

Conversely, Burge seems to begin his theory with pre-linguistic humans and non-human animals who, according to him, can be conceived to entertain singular

thought. In understanding such creatures to have singular thought his commitment to (AI) is an encouragement to define singular thought based upon its presence in creatures who are not thought of as manifesting the understanding and conceptual prowess which the neo-Kantians saw as a marker of human thought. Against the neo-Kantian then Burge's theory might be thought of as a *Bottom-up* construction of the concept since it demands that we *begin* with the least developed creatures thought to be capable of singular thought and define the concept from there. Since, very often, these creatures aren't thought of as possessing *C* (for our purposes, aren't thought to be capable of locating objects in absolute space), a bottom-up approach must claim, *contra* the intellectualist, that *C* isn't necessary for singular thought.

Intellectualist theories have tended to be predominant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Burge is aware. Nonetheless, as I will now show, he believes his anti-intellectualist position is more than a match for them. His response to intellectualism is more general than an attack just on the neo-Kantian theory described in the last chapter: it can be directed at any theory which claims that, to enjoy singular thought, subjects need especially advanced cognitive capacities (e.g. linguistic capabilities). Nonetheless my question here is whether a specifically neo-Kantian version can survive and that will be the focus of my discussion.

Burge's defence of anti-intellectualism consists of three claims. The first claim stresses the *coherence* of Burge's anti-intellectualist position. Recall that Burge thought the singular elements of perception were *preserved* in the transition to singular thought (and the 'general' elements associated with conceptual attributives):

“the occurrent singular elements in perception [...] are also connected to occurrent singular elements in propositional content [...]. Both are singular demonstrative-like applications, individuated in terms of occurrent uses. The latter can take over the referents of the counterpart perceptual applications.” (2010a p. 546)

If such a picture is granted then (AI)—the claim that a (thinking) subject perceiving *o* is therefore in a position to *think about o*, regardless of his conceptualisation of *o*—is entailed. Thus the first claim we can see Burge as making is that his position is conceptually coherent. This is what I'll refer to as VIABILITY:

VIABILITY: If we grant a (global) anti-individualist account of content determination then it is easy to see *how* (AI) could be true.

VIABILITY is a fairly easy claim to make, indeed it seems an analogous claim (VIABILITY\*) could be made for a theory which commits to (NI\*). Nonetheless further claims can be made on Burge's behalf, for it is questionable whether someone like Evans can provide any motivated objections to Burge's view, given that Burge rejects the assumption that having a thought requires understanding what it would be for that thought to be true. Assuming, for a moment, that there is no cogent, intellectualist objection to (AI)—from Evans or anyone else—the following claim can be made:

LEGITIMACY: There is no reason to think that (AI) *isn't* true.

Even if this claim were true it would not, of course, automatically show that Burge's account of singular thought is correct. However it *would* show that there is no intellectualist challenge *Burge* must overcome in establishing his anti-intellectualism.

So far neither VIABILITY nor LEGITIMACY show that we have any reason to prefer Burge's anti-intellectualism over any form of intellectualism. These two claims only show that it *could* be true. To present a real challenge to his intellectualise opponents Burge must provide a *motivation* for an anti-intellectualist account. Of course, a motivation to reject intellectualist conditions such as (NI\*) does not automatically constitute an argument in favour of Burge's own anti-individualist account. However it would show that (NI\*) is false and that Burge succeeds in his debate with the neo-Kantians, consequently Burge's anti-intellectualist motivation must be overcome if neo-Kantian intellectualism is to remain a viable account of singular thought.

The first motivation claim ( $M_1$ ) asserts that both animals and young children can be attributed with propositional thought, even in the absence of the advanced intellectual capacities required to conceive of an objective world. As Burge puts it:

“there are empirical explanations that attribute propositional attitudes to higher animals and young children. They do not attribute any of the supplemental capabilities that individual representationalists [intellectualists] demanded.” (2010a p. 545)

The essence of this position is that an intellectualist understanding of singular thought is incompatible with our uses of this concept both in commonsense attributions and in scientific explanation (as Burge remarks earlier “[c]ommon sense and empirical sci-

ence supports the view that animals and young children have perceptions and beliefs about bodies” (2010a p. 162)):

- (M<sub>1</sub>): An intellectualist account of singular thought would be incompatible with (our best) commonsense and scientific uses of the concept.

If true this would surely provide compelling reason to reject an intellectualist account in favour of one which can allow for a more liberal attribution of singular thought to less developed creatures.

However, given an anti-intellectualist VIABILITY and LEGITIMACY, a further *motivation* claim can be developed. This relates back to the *Justificatory Challenge* posed by an anti-intellectualist account, which was discussed in the Introduction. The thought is that, if an anti-intellectualist theory is a coherent and viable account of mental representation (or singular thought), the intellectualist must *justify* why we should think that a more demanding condition (like (NI\*)) applies. In essence it demands that Evans substantiate his assumption (outlined in chapter two) that a subject must *understand* his thought in order to entertain it. The greatest challenge VIABILITY and LEGITIMACY can provide is the suspicion that the *Top-down* approach—which recommends the adoption of (the adult human) capacity *C* as a necessary condition on singular thought—is wholly arbitrary. There is no reason to think that the adult human is a privileged subject with regard to singular thought, and if we can ‘make sense’ of a conception which does not require subjects to possess *C* then surely there must be an argument for the claim that such possession is a necessary condition. Thus the second motivation for an anti-intellectualist account:

- (M<sub>2</sub>): We must be given reason to think that a (cognitively) more demanding condition is necessary for a subject to enjoy singular thought.

The question facing us is whether there can be a response to (M<sub>1</sub>) and (M<sub>2</sub>) which would show that (NI\*) remains a viable condition on singular thought (as noted, I take the ultimate truth of Burge’s *individual* anti-intellectualist theory to be a slightly tangential question which I will not address). In the next section I will address (M<sub>1</sub>) and in §3 I will move on to (M<sub>2</sub>).

## §2.

To begin to assess ( $M_1$ ) we should first ask what reasons we might have to think that undeveloped subjects could have singular thought. As Burge suggests, the most justifiable indication that a creature has propositional (here co-variant with conceptual) thought is the demonstration that he is capable of *inference* (2010b p. 45) (2010a p. 542). Here I will begin by showing why Burge takes inferential thought to indicate the presence of conceptual attributives and singular thought, I will then present and assess his reasons for thinking that undeveloped subjects, such as animals, manifest such capacities.

### §2.1.

In this context inference is taken to be a transition of (psychological) representations which ‘follows’ a logical rule. A transition of representations (i.e. one representation—e.g. that is dangerous—giving rise to another representation—e.g. I should run away) is taken to be a key feature in informational processing systems and explains how one mental event (e.g. perception) can lead to another (mental) event (e.g. an intention to act). An *inferential* transition can be distinguished from the mere *association* of representations. An association of representations means, broadly, that the presence of one representation causes the ‘activation or inhibition’ of another representation according to whether the subject has been *conditioned* to associate the representations in this way (see Shanks, 2006 p. 294). For example, a creature in some experimental setup might learn that pressing down a lever (LD) causes a reward to be delivered (LD+).

Conversely to call a transition ‘inferential’ is commonly to imply that there was some rule or reason behind it—e.g. to reflect the logical relations between the representations. In performing an inference (in the sense under discussion) one representation, A, gives rise to another, B, because the subject is attempting to ‘map’ the fact that A *entails* B—e.g. my reason for representing ‘o is mortal’ after ‘o is a man’ is because it is entailed (from the rule ‘all men are mortal’). One way of putting this is that a subject represents one thing and not another *because* a proposition expressing A *entails* a proposition expressing B. While an association of representations relies on the

subject associating ‘by habit’ an inferential transition relies on them associating according to a general rule.

One might think that a capacity for inferential thought reflects rationality or human-like linguistic capacities. But Burge is adamant that a creature can be capable of such thought without *understanding* or representing the abstract rules behind it. Rather understanding such thought is a ‘metarepresentational’ capacity which not all creatures capable of inference need be taken to share (2010b p. 56).

Despite this, a capacity for inference might be thought to obviously manifest a capacity for conceptual thought (and therefore for conceptual singular representation of objects): what is logical deduction if not a conceptual affair? However Burge’s claim—that a creature can infer without representing the abstract rule by which A entails B—seemingly means that otherwise unassuming transitions can count as inferences for Burge; consider his own example:

- 1) This (perceived object) *a* is not *G*.
- 2) This (perceived object) *a* is identical with that (perceived object) *b*.
- 3) That (perceived object) *b* is not *G*.

(2010a p. 543)<sup>17</sup>

Here the steps (1)-(3) indicate a transition of representations ending in the conclusion (3). It may be thought distinctly inferential because, having represented (1) and (2), the subject is able to ‘draw the conclusion’ (3): he ‘sees’ that (3) is entailed. The question however is why the ability to draw this conclusion implies that (1)-(3) are conceptual. Burge’s answer is that the “use of the attributive *G* in the inference does not depend on being tied to any particular instance of being *G*” (*ibid.*). This is to say that the use of *G* is not tied to representing any one *individual*, in any one context as *G*. I take it this is meant to show that an object, *b*, is singularly represented (in a conceptual representation) because, if *G* is used conceptually in (1)-(2) then it is used conceptually in (3).

The problem for Burge is that (1)-(3) is not emblematic of an inference as we would ordinarily understand it. The reason for this is that an extra step is required to show why (1)-(2) *entail* the conclusion (3):

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<sup>17</sup> The parentheses and use of lower case variables are my own additions.

- 1) This (perceived object)  $a$  is not  $G$ .
- 2) This (perceived object)  $a$  is identical with that (perceived object)  $b$ .
- 3') (For all objects  $x$  and  $y$ ) If  $x(\text{not-}G)$  and ( $x$  is identical to  $y$ ) then  $y(\text{not-}G)$ .
- 4') From (3'), If (perceived object)  $a$  is not  $G$  and  $a$  is identical with (perceived object)  $b$  then  $b$  is not  $G$ .
- 5') From (2) and (4'), (perceived object)  $b$  is not  $G$ .

For Burge it would be problematic if all attributions of inference required representations like (3') for it is unclear that the type of creatures he thinks capable of inference are capable of this form of abstract thought. Indeed it might be counterintuitive to suppose that all instances of inference—even in humans—required representing something as abstract and formulaic as (3'); though such representations needn't be *conscious* it is unclear that we would ever describe our everyday inferences as involving these abstract rules.

Nonetheless (1)-(3) still seems incomplete as an example of an inference and as such it is hard to understand why  $G$  is used conceptually. Based on his own explanation of what distinguishes conceptual attributives—their independence of representing an object in any perspectival context—Burge may have two reasons for saying so. Firstly  $G$  is used in a negation, which Burge took to be an example of conceptual thought. However this claim could face a plausible objection: Burge might be right to think that *perception* couldn't function to represent something as *not-G*—what would it mean, for example, to say that I *saw o as* not an apple rather than saw *o as* a pear? Instead perception seems to work to present a *positive* picture of the world, rather than a negative picture of what the world is not. But while it is easy to admit that a negative representation can't be perceptual, it does not seem necessary to say that an attributive which is not employed in perceptual representation is *conceptual*. Instead, it might be possible to conceive of non-conceptual, representational states (perhaps further on in a processing system) which employed negative representation. For example, a creature might represent, say, that there was no food in a given location or that an object close-by wasn't dangerous. Such representations may still represent an object in a context-dependent way—i.e. as it is seen in one instance of observation, from one perspective etc.—even though they represent it as *not* being some way.

Alternatively Burge might claim that one of the representations must be thought to manifest the generality indicative of conceptual representation (as discussed in §1)—i.e. a representation which does not apply to *a* or *b* as perceived in one context, but which applies to them more generally. The most plausible candidate is (2), since both (1) and (3) are singular representations of one object at one time of perception. Suppose that ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ refer to the same object, *o*, represented in two different contexts or two different occasions of perception—e.g. ‘*a*’ is *o* seen from the left at *t*, while ‘*b*’ is *o* seen from the right at *t*; (2) thus represents that the same object is referred to in each of these representational contexts. However it may remain unclear whether (2) represents this in a way which is essentially context-independent and therefore, according to Burge’s standards, conceptual. It might be thought that, since (2) represents *o* (as represented) in two, specific contexts—*a* and *b*—(2) fails to ‘transcend’ a representational context and is ‘tied’ to representing *o* in a context-dependent way. Yet further reflection could reveal this line of thought to be misguided: though (2) represents *a* and *b*, which represent *o* as seen from one particular physical position at one particular time, it does not, in fact, represent *o* as it is seen in any particular context. Rather it might be said to *relate* two context dependent representations in a way which abstracts from any representational context: it might be thought that (2) reflects that ‘*a* is identical to *b*’ *simpliciter* and not merely on one occasion of representation or within one representational context.

However, even if this claim can be allowed, it might be asked why *G*—and not merely the attributive ‘*is identical to*’—should be thought of as conceptual. If it is conceded that (2) is conceptual then it may be alleged (1) need only be non-conceptual, since it only functions to show that some object, represented in a context-dependent way (as discussed above ‘*a*’ refers to the object *o* as seen from the left at a certain time) is *not-G* (which, as previously discussed, needn’t be conceptual). Since (3) is of the same form as (1) it might be thought that it too could be non-conceptual. However, if (2) is a conceptual representation, and (2) causes the transition to (3)—as was taken to be essential to an inferential transition—then it might be thought intuitive to say that (3) (at least) is also conceptual. But this thought could be questioned: the representation ‘*b* is *not-G*’ represents an object, *o*, in a given context (seen from the right at a certain time) in a way which could be non-conceptual—there is no hint of the generality or independence of context which characterises conceptual representations.

To avoid this objection it might be necessary for Burge to show that the transition could not take place without using  $G$  as a conceptual attributive. One way of doing this may be to add another step to (1)-(3)—albeit one which avoids the abstraction of (3'):

- 1) This (perceived object)  $a$  is not  $G$ .
- 2) This (perceived object)  $a$  is identical with that (perceived object)  $b$ .
- 3'') If (perceived object)  $a$  is not  $G$  and  $a$  is identical with (perceived object)  $b$  then  $b$  is not  $G$ .
- 4'') That (perceived object)  $b$  is not  $G$ .

Here the conclusion—now (4'')—is entailed by (1)-(2) and the general rule (3''). Adding this rule as a representation in the transition not only makes it more obvious why (1)-(4'') is inferential but also, arguably, manifests a use of  $G$  as a conceptual attributive. The reason for this is that (3'') expresses the generality of a conceptual representation: it is hypothetical meaning that, schematically, it is not representing any object,  $o$ , as being any particular way in any particular context. Further, as a rule, (3''), like (2), *relates* context-dependent representations without itself being context-dependent: (3'') is true *simpliciter* and is not tied to any representation in any particular context.

If  $G$  is used conceptually in (3'') then it may be alleged that it should be thought of as conceptual in (4''). The reason for this is that it might seem slightly odd to suggest that within a transition of representations a subject could employ conceptual attributives at one stage, (3''), and yet not employ them at a later stage, (4''). Of course such an assumption could be denied, but it may not then result in the most intuitive understanding of inferential reasoning: if this necessarily employs conceptual attributives at one stage then there is no reason to think that these attributives wouldn't be preserved in later stages.

This also provides an answer to the original question of this section: why a capacity for inference might manifest the capacity for conceptual representation. The answer we can provide, based on this discussion, is that all transitions of representations which are considered ‘inferential’ will require a representation like (3'') (or perhaps, at least (2))—i.e. will require a representation which abstracts from any particular context and manifests the generality indicative of a conceptual representation. A

further question here is whether this automatically shows the capacity for singular thought—i.e. conceptual representation of individual objects. As the discussion of this section has shown, if an attributive is used conceptually at one stage of the transition—e.g. at (3``)—then it seems it will be used conceptually at later stages; however if a different attributive is used conceptually—e.g. ‘*is identical to*’ in (2)—then it seems unclear why distinct attributives at later stages should be thought of as conceptual.

Consequently Burge seems right to suppose that a capacity for inference manifests the capacity for conceptual representation. Though this does not automatically reveal that such subjects singularly represent objects in conceptual representations (since there are instances of inferences which do not necessarily suggest such singular representation) it is reasonable to suppose, as Burge seemingly does, that a capacity to represent conceptually is suggestive of a capacity to singularly represent in conceptual content, or to have object-directed thought. Now I turn to Burge’s evidence for his claim that cognitively less-developed subjects, like apes, display the capacity for such thought by showing the capacity for inference.

## §2.2.

Burge appeals to specific empirical studies to support his claim that undeveloped subjects—notably non-human animals—are capable of inferential thought. In this section I will go through these pieces of evidence in turn and indicate whether they provide sufficient support for his claim.

The first two pieces of evidence come from a range of experiments performed by Joseph Call on primate subjects—specifically a selection of twelve chimpanzees, eight gorillas, four bonobos and six orang-utans (Call, 2004 p. 234). These experiments consisted in placing food in one of two, opaque cups (complete with lids) and getting the apes to choose between them under various experimental conditions. The cups were filled behind an opaque screen (the experimenter placed his hand into each cup, though he only left food in one) before the screen was removed and the apes were required to make their choice.

In the first case (*Visual Empty*) the experimenter still filled the cups behind the screen—hence the ape was presumed to be aware that food was going into the cups—but, once the screen was removed, he lifted the lid of the empty cup and

showed the contents to the ape before replacing the lid and waiting for them to choose. According to Call *each* subject showed an ‘above chance’ preference for the baited cup across sixteen trials in this condition—i.e. they chose the right cup in more than 50% of trials—and there was a high mean average for correct choices (2004 p. 235) (also see Fig.1). Burge seems heavily swayed by these results:

“Some types of animal do not immediately choose the non-empty container. They either continue to search the empty container; or they merely show an increase in the likelihood of searching the other container. But some non-human animals, including apes, show the sort of behaviour that suggests deductive inference. They immediately choose the non-empty place, without needing to look into it.” (2010b p. 59)

The key factor at work here seems to be that the apes are not given *direct* visual information of where the food is located. Rather, on seeing that one cup is empty they are taken to *infer* that the other must contain the food and choose accordingly.

The second case which Burge cites purportedly reveals an analogous result in the auditory modality (*Auditory Empty*) (Burge, 2010b p. 61). In this condition the experimenter fills the cup as before but this time *shakes* the empty cup and lifts the baited cup, without shaking it. Were the (shaken) cup baited it would make a noise thus those capable of inference would be able to work out that the food (if it were in any container) would be in the non-shaken one. Again Call claims that the subjects performed ‘above average’ in the *Auditory Empty* condition (2004 p. 235) (although the mean average is significantly lower than in *Visual Empty*, see Fig.1). Subjects were more successful than in the *Control* conditions, where they were given no information about the location of the food and seem to have chosen at random. The divergence here seems to show that, even in *Auditory Empty*, the information they receive enables them to make the correct choice in a greater number of cases.

[Chart omitted; copyright unavailable]

Figure 1. (From Call, 2004 p. 235) Mean percentages correct for *Visual-Empty* and *Auditory-Empty*.

Call employs a number of measures to ensure that the animals are not choosing the baited cup out of any bias other than the idea that it contains the food. Yet neither of these instances presents a highly compelling case for the claim that animals enjoy inferences. As Penn and Povinelli point out, one can raise significant doubts about such a conclusion based on Call's experiments:

“It seems quite plausible [...] that these captive apes had previously learned that a shaking noise (N) combined with a shaking motion (M) is jointly indicative of a reward (NM+), whereas [...] a shaking motion without a shaking noise (M-) is not.” (2007 p. 110)

What they suggest is that the apes discern the location of the food, not through a deductive inference, but through an *association* of representations. The idea here is presumably that, on not associating (M-) with reward, but even perhaps associating it with a lack of reward, the apes choose the other cup.

Penn and Povinelli offer a second, perhaps more serious, consideration against Call's (and Burge's) conclusion. This focuses on a further experiment Call performs which was designed to show that subjects were not choosing the unshaken cup because of an aversion to noiseless shaken cups. In this condition (*Shake-Rotate*) the experimenter presents both an empty cup which is shaken (and therefore noiseless) and a similarly empty cup which is *rotated* (and also noiseless). The idea is that if they had an aversion to the noiseless shaken cup they should prefer the noiseless rotated one. However, as Call claims, the subjects showed a ‘significant preference’ for the shaken cup—choosing it in about 70% of the eight trials (2004 p. 236). However, as Penn and Povinelli point out:

“If the apes had in fact understood the causal-logical relationship involved they would have inferred that neither cup contained food and would have chosen randomly between the two cups or, if anything, would have preferred the rotated cup.” (ibid.)

What this consideration might suggest is that the apes were not choosing on the basis of an understanding of the relations in play but were making their choice by other means—the association of a certain stimulus with the presence or absence of a reward.

Perhaps it might be claimed that the apes showed evidence of inferential thought

in selecting any cup at all. Thus even if they did not select the baited cup on the basis of a deep understanding of the causal relations involved they may have used the association of (M-) (motion without noise) and ‘*no-reward*’ to *infer* that there was a greater likelihood of the food being in the alternative cup. Such an inference may take the following form:

- 1) If (cup) *A* isn’t baited then *B* is.
- 2) *A* isn’t baited.
- 3) From (1), *B* is baited.

Here (2) could be based on a non-conceptual association (i.e. could arise because of the perception of (M-)) but (1)—a hypothetical—employs a conceptual attributive, based on the reasoning in §2.

But if Penn and Povinelli are right then this scenario seems very unlikely. What is important to note is that, at the beginning of both *Visual Empty* and *Auditory Empty* each of the subjects has gone through *at least* seventy-two trials (in previous conditions) where they are required to select one of the cups. Thus it could be that they are prompted to select a cup, not from an inference which suggests that the food is in one cup, but only from either habit or an association between selecting a cup and receiving a reward. Consequently neither of these cases categorically suggest that subjects employ an inference like (1)-(3).

To salvage Burge’s claim (at least, as a claim which can be based on the evidence he cites) we must turn to Burge’s third piece of evidence. This concerns an alternative series of experiments performed by Call on ape subjects (specifically six orang-utans, seven gorillas and four bonobos (Call, 2007 p. 4)). In this experiment the subjects were also required to choose between two different locations, one of which contained food. However the food was hidden, not in a cup, but beneath one of two rectangular wooden boards on the table before the experimenter. The experimenter placed the food under one of the boards behind an opaque screen, removing the screen before subjects made their choice. In the *Inclined* condition the boards had no other support but (potentially) the food hence the unbaited board laid flat on the table and the baited board lay at an angle of about 30°. In making their choice, as Call puts it, “five (out of seven) gorillas, three (out of four) bonobos and three (out of six) orang-utans

were above chance in the *Inclined* condition” (2007 p. 7). For each species there was, therefore, a significantly high mean average of correct choices (see Fig.2).

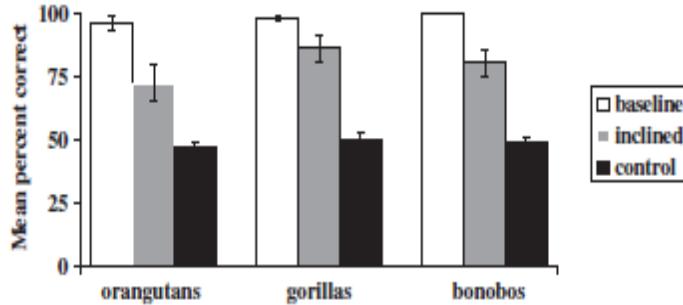


Figure 2. (From Call, 2007 p. 7) Mean percent correct in the *Inclined* Condition.

Again Burge makes a great deal of this conclusion:

“Presumably the relevant cognitive competence takes body size into account, and is sensitive to the effect of the body’s solidity on movement of the screen. Here cognitions of solidity, (something-like) causation, and object-permanence are engaged in exclusion transition.” (2010b p. 61)

Unlike the conclusion from the previous two cases this data seemingly shows, as Burge suggests, that the apes have grasped a variety of (possibly conceptual) attributives, including object-permanence. Each of these claims will need to be analysed in turn. To begin though I will address the main conclusion (from Call and Burge) that this data shows that apes have inferred the location of the food.

The first problematic feature of this series of experiments is that a worry similar to Penn and Povinelli’s second point can be raised: the subjects’ apparent understanding of the causal-relations involved doesn’t generalise. In another condition (called *Inclined Block*) the experimenter baited one of the boards (such that it inclined by 30°) and placed a wooden block (but no food) behind the other so it also inclined by 30°; as Call describes it: “both boards displayed a 30° inclination approximately and subjects were able to see that one of the boards rested on the wooden support, which protruded from behind the board from the subject’s perspective” (2007 pp. 8-9). If subjects did understand the underlying effects of body and solidity (such that they were able to infer the location of the food) we might expect them to choose the baited board since, as Call seemingly agrees, “subjects

could have solved the problem if they had considered the food as the only reason for the inclination of the board without a protruding block" (2007 p. 10). However no subject was above chance in the *Inclined Block* condition and the mean average indicates that the subjects were correct only about 50% of the time (indicating that they may have just chosen at random) (*ibid.* and see Fig.3).

There may be many ways of explaining the lack of positive results here but it does invite the hypothesis that, when the subjects choose between a flat (unbaited) and an inclined (baited) board they may not be doing so from a deep understanding of the relations involved or the effects of solidity. Rather they may have come to learn that a inclined board is more likely to produce food than a flat one.

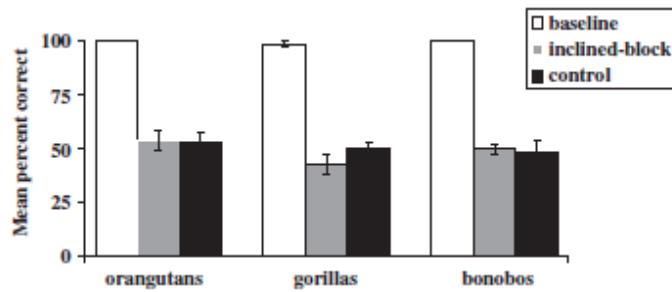


Figure 3. (From Call 2007, p.9) Mean percent correct in the *Inclined-Block* condition.

As in the above discussion of Penn and Povinelli's point it can still be alleged that the subjects employed an inference of the following form:

- 4) One should always pick boards at larger inclinations.
- 5)  $A$  is at a larger inclination than  $B$ .
- 6) Therefore pick  $A$ .

Since (4) is a universal claim 'larger inclinations' will function as a conceptual attributive. Nonetheless the claim that the apes don't necessarily *understand* the causal relations at play makes such an inference inessential: it may just be that apes have evolved to search for food under larger protruberances which can mean that the transition between the representations ' $A$  is at a larger inclination than  $B$ ' and ' $A$  contains the food' will be associative and therefore will not employ a conceptual representation like (4).

But even if it can be (reasonably) denied that the apes perform an inference in picking the baited board it still seems that they realise the food *exists* even though they

cannot see it. Indeed, as Call points out, both infants' and non-human animals' responses to object-protruberance are taken to be signs of an awareness of 'object-permanence' (see Call 2007, p. 2-4). Roughly it seems we can understand object-permanence as the idea that a (perceived) object  $o$  continues to exist (perhaps in a cup, or under a board) even though  $o$  cannot be seen. Such awareness enables the representations ' $o$  is over there' or, more generally, '*food* is over there'.

From the above quotation it is unclear whether Burge takes this awareness to be indicative of distinctly conceptual abilities—i.e. whether he takes the preponderance to search for food under the boards as the hallmark of inferential thought or as employing conceptual attributives. It could be taken as an *activity* which indicates the presence of conceptual abilities because it could be performed on the basis of an inference like:

- 7) If I have seen food go behind a screen and now see an inclined board, then the food is likely to be under the board.
- 8) I saw food taken behind a screen and now I see an inclined board.
- 9) The food is likely to be under the board.

Alternatively it might be thought that an attributive employed in a way which allows for (the awareness of) object-permanence displays the kind of complexity associated with conceptual attributives. If a representation like 'that is food' (arising on the perception of food as it is displayed by the experimenter before being placed behind one of the boards) contains an attributive—'food—which allows the creature to conceive of the object as existing unperceived then this seems to reveal a complexity of thought which is indicative of conceptual representations.

However this latter point seems to be of little use to Burge since the capacity to conceive of an object as existing unobserved is one of the capacities necessary for (NI). Thus, if he is proposing to attribute such capacities to (what were supposedly) 'less developed' creatures, then his *motivation* claim does not stand in opposition to neo-Kantian intellectualism.

Yet there is no reason to think that an awareness of 'object-permanence' shows the employment of an inference like (7)-(9). The reason for this is that it is not difficult to see the transition from 'there was food' to 'food is there [underneath that board]' as the result of association rather than inference. Having seen food in the

vicinity we can suppose that it will be of great evolutionary advantage for an animal to be inclined to search for food and to see large protruberances as possible locations. Such an explanation involves a behavioural output which, importantly, does not require the subject to employ a distinctly conceptual attributive, or inferential transition over an association of (non-conceptual) representations.

This section has been concerned with the specifically scientific evidence in favour of ( $M_1$ ) and has provided significant doubts for each bit of evidence Burge advances. But ( $M_1$ ) appeals not just to science but to ‘commonsense’—i.e. the folk psychological attributions which must form part of our psychological repertoire. Half of the claim of ( $M_1$ ) is that a non-intellectualist understanding of singular thought is required to make sense of our *folk psychological* usage of the concept.

But it is difficult to see what evidence could be offered in defence of such a claim. To assert that folk psychological attributions require a non-intellectualist understanding of singular thought one would have to claim that to conceive of infants and animals as incapable of thought would thoroughly distort our normal, folk psychological attributions and way of characterising and conceiving of their mental lives. Ostensibly such a view might seem compelling: we often describe such creatures as ‘thinking’ of various things (e.g. a toy, their dinner etc.) and use such comments to explain their actions and behaviour—e.g. ‘the dog went to the door because he *knew* his master was coming home’, ‘the baby is wailing because he thinks it’s dinnertime’ etc. Yet, however prevalent such descriptions, it seems hard to discern any embedded commitment to the view that infants and animals enjoy thought—and such characterisations are *literal*—rather than a merely metaphorical use which remains neutral on their actual mental states. It is difficult to work out whether, in using these descriptions, I am attributing to the infant *the same* thing I attribute to an adult human, namely a fully-fledged thought. It is difficult to imagine whether anyone, if pressed on such a question, would commit to such a statement about this creature’s psychology or would remain neutral. Certainly if this commitment were a deep-seated part of our conception of infant and animal-psychology it would be remarkable that so few psychological studies—so few interpretations of data like that given above—do not attribute these abilities more liberally.

It is at least possible that this sort of ‘commonsense’ description of an infant or an animal is but a way of explaining their behaviour ‘based on our own case’ and is

therefore metaphorical, and self-consciously anthropomorphic. A better defence of ( $M_1$ ) which can be provided by this ‘folk psychological’ view may bring us back to the scientific sphere. When apes (or other species) perform tasks to the same standard as, say, human children—old enough, let’s assume, that we are happy to attribute conceptual thought—then, intuitively, we are right to say that there is a parallel and thus are right to attribute similar conceptual abilities to the two groups (apes and children). Drawing this parallel between them, such a defence might claim, is inkeeping with our folk psychological concept, and therefore inkeeping with the best understanding of singular thought.

However it is unclear that the worries raised with the evidence cited by Burge are really at odds with a ‘commonsense’ understanding of the case. If the apparent abilities manifested in one condition seem contradicted by performance in another then the ‘commonsense’ answer seems to be that they never had those abilities in the first place. It would be difficult to rest an entire defence of non-intellectualist theories on such commonsense attributions as, being too heavily guided by intuition runs a serious risk of anthropomorphising the subjects under discussion.

Overall then it seems that none of the evidence Burge provides can function individually or cumulatively to give reason to think that apes engage in conceptual inference. Indeed, Burge is probably not wedded to these specific cases and there will be other studies which can be cited as evidence that less developed species employ conceptual attributives. However the broader point being made here is that such studies can also admit of alternative explanations and thus opposition to Burge’s desired conclusion—for example, Penn and Povinelli (2007) and Penn, Povinelli and Holyoak (2008) are both wide-ranging, psychological discussions against the thesis that animals possess similar cognitive capacities to humans. What this shows is perhaps that there is still significant enough debate that Burge is not yet quite entitled to say that an intellectualist understanding of singular thought is incompatible with our best comparative or developmental psychology. Certainly the evidence he has cited himself can be reasonably denied by an intellectualist opponent; further it seems unclear that such a denial would constitute a break with the only predominant or respectable theories in the relevant scientific fields. Nonetheless ( $M_1$ ) is a positive, empirical claim, which it seems Burge must substantiate if he is to use it to show that

intellectualism is patently false. What I have tried to show here is that such substantiation may still be required.

### §3.

With  $(M_1)$  abandoned we might question whether  $(M_2)$  can also be removed and thus whether it is possible to formulate a set of intellectualist claims, isomorphic to Burge's anti-intellectualist position in §1. Burge's first claim, VIABILITY, was trivially derived from the mere coherence of the theory. Likewise the intellectualist claim, VIABILITY\*, can be formulated with equivalent ease:

VIABILITY\*: It is easy to see that  $(NI^*)$  could be true.

What this claims is that, from our own case, it is easy to see how all instances of singular thought about an object, must locate that object in absolute space.

However  $(M_2)$  claimed that, given the coherency of an anti-intellectualist account—i.e. given the truth of VIABILITY and LEGITIMACY—an intellectualist must justify his claim that a cognitively more demanding condition should be placed on entertaining singular thought. What is required then is a reason to think that a given capacity  $C$  might be a necessary requirement for singular thought. To defend  $(NI)$  it must be shown that a capacity to conceive of  $o$  as within Absolute Space should be thought of as a necessary requirement for singular thought; in other words, that singular thought should not be attributed to creatures thought to lack this capacity.

Such an argument can be found in Evans' distinction between egocentric and absolute informational states. It will be recalled that Evans takes the mark of object-involving thought to be that it cannot be spelled out in *purely* egocentric terms. For Evans however, a subject's behaviour and reactions to a given stimulus can be explained by a state which locates that stimulus purely egocentrically. In the last chapter it was shown that such states can be specified with general, non-object-directed content like 'food *here*' or 'danger *there*'. I'll refer to this claim (that an adequate psychological explanation of (some forms of) behavioural output can make use only of non-object-directed states) as *Psychological Parsimony*.

When it comes to deciding the content which should be attributed to subjects

Evans seems to be in favour of such parsimony. If such parsimony is admitted—i.e. if it is admitted that non-object-directed representational states can form a part of psychological explanation—then an *Explanatory Challenge* can be mounted which shows the need for a principle like (NI\*): given that many external signals—e.g. behavioural output—can be explained using non-object-directed states, how do we distinguish between those cases and cases where an object-directed conceptual state *must* be employed?

It is tempting to read Evans as claiming that these purely egocentric, behavioural states are non-conceptual, while all non-egocentric states are conceptual. However, to widen the scope of this challenge, such a view could be resisted. Instead what could be distinctive of *purely* egocentric states is not that they don't employ concepts, but that they aren't *object-directed*; thus the attributive in 'food *here*' could very well be a 'conceptual attributive' (as defined in §1), which is not predicated of *an object* but is used in a conceptual representational state which governs behaviour.<sup>18</sup> Thus even if certain creatures are thought to employ conceptual attributives (e.g. because they engage in inferential thought), accepting *parsimony* means that they need not *automatically* employ object-directed representations.

The proponent of (NI) can easily answer such a challenge: object-directed thoughts should only be attributed to subjects who manifest an *understanding* of such thoughts (as per the theory endorsed in chapter three). As the last two chapters have made clear a *purely* egocentric location manifests an episodic ability to react to a given stimulus but does not manifest an understanding that the *source* of this stimulus will be an object. As such, purely egocentric location was not seen to be a reliable indicator of an object-directed thought. If a subject can be thought to understand his object-directed thought—i.e. understand what it is for the world to contain an object (which is food)—then he must be considered to distinguish between the object and his experience of it. It is only in this way that he will be able to conceive of the object as something which is not just tied to a behavioural response but which can occupy states (like being food) independently of his reaction to it. This was seen to require

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<sup>18</sup> Importantly I am not committing to the idea that *all* egocentric states are conceptual. Evans' insistence on the *immediacy* of such states—that we discern the direction of the sound 'without calculation' (1985 p. 384)—might preclude this. I am only suggesting that conceptual egocentric states should be possible.

the capacity to think about an object even when it is not directly related to a subject's location at  $t$  (the time of perception).

Thus, to answer the original *challenge*: cases which require an object-directed representation are those in which a subject is presumed to have a deeper level of thought about the object, one which enables them to think of it in ways which are not indexed to its current (spatial) relation to them. Cases which do not require (the attribution of) such object-directed representations are those in which such a deep level of thought cannot be presumed: cases which involve subjects not thought to possess the intellectual capacities which enable such thought. In this way an intellectualist theory like (NI) can begin to justify a top-down construction of the concept—i.e. one which begins with its manifestation in adult humans. In adopting those features which make us *conscious* that we enjoy object-directed (rather than non object-directed) thought as *necessary conditions* for singular thought we are, it might be claimed, in a better position to *track* cases of genuine object-directed thought rather than non object-directed representations. In such a way the original objection to an intellectualist account—that (NI) is an entirely arbitrary condition to place on singular thought—is harder to motivate: such intellectualist requirements are needed to answer the *explanatory challenge*.

It is therefore incumbent on an opponent of intellectualism (or (NI) specifically) to either provide an anti-intellectualist (or non-(NI)) response to the challenge, or to reject it entirely. Burge might press the latter option: he may reject the challenge because he would deny the *parsimony* claim. In chapter two it was seen that Burge propounds that singular representation of objects is *preserved* in the transition from perceptual representations to thought. He may admit that it is coherent (and sufficient) to explain behaviour in terms of (both conceptual and non-conceptual) non-object-directed states like 'food *here*'. However, since he believes that perception singularly represents *and* that such singular representation is *preserved* in other (non-perceptual) representations, there is no reason to suppose that non-object-directed representations *should* be used in psychological explanations. In other words if preservation is accepted then it seems *parsimony* and the entire explanatory challenge can be avoided.

Nonetheless it is hard to find reason to accept preservation over *parsimony*: Burge himself provides no objection to *parsimony* nor principled defence of preservation,

indeed it merely seems to be an assumption on his part. Importantly—as should be clear—preservation is not entailed by Burge’s theory of perception: one can easily maintain that perceptual representations *do* singularly represent and are determined anti-individualistically without having to accept that this transposes to *all* representational states. As such one can admit Burge’s theory of perception while remaining parsimonious about non-perceptual representational states.

To form an intellectualist MOTIVATION\* it would be necessary to show that *parsimony* should be assumed (and that neo-kantianism is best suited to answering it). In this way neo-Kantian intellectualism would be able to mount a significant challenge to Burge’s position. However that is not something I will pursue here; instead it is sufficient to show that an intellectualist requirement like (NI\*) should not be dismissed as ‘arbitrary’ simply because a less demanding alternative is available. Both the neo-kantian (NI\*) and the Burgian (AI) are based on assumptions which neither side has justified to the other; despite this neither of the main assumptions seems obviously false, or liable to be dropped in favour of the opposing alternative. As such the two views seem in genuine stalemate.

The discussion of this chapter has, I think, shown that Burge has much further to go in undermining an intellectualist rival to his principle (AI). First his main claim against such theories—(M<sub>1</sub>)—seems under-supported both by the explicit evidence he gives in favour of it and the relevant scientific fields to which he implicitly appeals. Second, even if these appeals can be granted—i.e. even if it is accepted that less developed creatures *do* employ inferential thought and therefore conceptual attributives—a proponent of (NI\*) can raise the explanatory challenge by questioning how we can be sure that these conceptual attributives are employed in object-directed, rather than non-object-directed, representations. The problem here is that, unless we accept Burge’s idea of preservation—which he has given us *no reason* to assume over *parsimony*—he is immensely vulnerable to this challenge.

As such it is reasonable to conclude that Burge’s theorising on mental representations has not implicitly shown the falsity of the neo-Kantian (NI\*). In chapter one it was shown that one of his main objections to both Strawson and Evans—that their theories conflicted with his account of perception—was not a firm basis on which to reject a theory inspired by the discussions of these theorists. In chapters two and three it was seen that the concerns which motivated Strawson and

Evans—i.e. a subject's consciousness and understanding of their own mental states, a distinction between one's experience and the objective world etc.—lead to a fundamentally different account of singular thought than Burge's anti-intellectualist alternative: this was taken to constitute a proper debate between the two forms of theory. The summation of these concerns are reflected in (NI\*), which chapter three showed can be divorced from the overblown demands of Russell's Principle, and which reflects a view I've been referring to as neo-Kantian intellectualism. What this chapter has shown is that that view is not conclusively undermined either by Burge's stated objections to intellectualism *or* by the mere viability of an anti-intellectualist alternative. Indeed the viability of the explanatory challenge means that (NI\*) might be an indispensable account of singular thought.

A far greater discussion of the competing intellectualist/anti-intellectualist assumptions would be required to come to a reasoned conclusion as to which is the preferable account of singular thought. Indeed it is perhaps likely that neither of these extreme views will actually present the best theory. However, it may only be through discussing and comparing such theories that we will find a decent account of the nature of singular thought. What I have shown here is that Burge's anti-intellectualism does not sweep aside his intellectualist rivals and neo-Kantian intellectualism remains a viable alternative.

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