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Vol. 80, No. 1; March 2002

(pp. 150–1): (1) giving reasons involves identifying the propositional contents of premises and conclusions of inferences, where the constituents of propositions are concepts; and (2) a subject's reasons must be her own, and this requires them to be mental states of hers whose contents are the contents of propositions that figure in inferences of the sort cited in (1). It is the first of these conditions that is the source of conflict with the non-conceptualist. But this just begs the question against views, like those of Peacocke, that maintain experiences with non-conceptual content can give an agent's reasons, from her own point of view, for endorsing such contents in belief.

So I do not think that Brewer's argument here establishes that perceptual experiences with only non-conceptual content are not capable of figuring in genuinely reason-giving explanations from the agent's point of view. Let us turn now to his argument in Part II that appeal to non-conceptual content is unmotivated. Brewer considers the strongest argument in favour of non-conceptual content, and against his own position, to be that a developmental story might be easier to tell about the transition from infancy to adulthood in conceptual abilities, as well as a story about the relationship between these and the cognitive abilities of non-human animals. And he acknowledges the force of this argument. Nonetheless, he concludes that both the conceptuallyist and the non-conceptualist are on an equal footing with regard to this problem:

The concept of conscious perceptual experience has close connections with both the perceptual sensitivity of animals and human infants, and with our own fully conceptualized thought about the world around us. No account of perceptual experience could be complete without respecting both of these connections. Yet they seem to pull in opposite directions. The challenge is to resolve this tension. The non-conceptualist aims to do this by starting with a level of perceptual representational content, which is common to adult humans, animals, and infants, and is therefore non-conceptual in nature. He then faces the challenge of connecting this level up with the level of fully conceptualized empirical thought. The conceptuallyist faces an equal and opposite challenge. For he begins with the level of the fully conceptual, although perhaps essentially demonstrative, thought about the world, and must connect this in some way with the non-conceptual perceptual sensitivity of animals and infants. Without a fully worked-out account... it is unreasonable to claim that one version of the challenge can be met, whereas the other cannot. So it is unacceptable to use this line of argument on its own as a motivation for the introduction of non-conceptual perceptual content (pp. 178–9).

But I think that Brewer's project is to steeped in the epistemological role that perception plays in helping to justify an agent's reasons for her beliefs, this role being primarily concerned with theoretical rather than practical reason, that he leaves no space for the role that it can and does play in intentional behaviour or action, where this is practical rather than theoretical. The result is that the evidence that is brought to bear on the thesis of non-conceptual content by those such as Peacocke and others (e.g., Bermudez 1998), namely non-linguistic behavioural evidence, is more or less discarded as evidence for the thesis. It is when one considers intentional action by pre- or non-linguistic creatures that the motivation for non-conceptual content is strongest. But because Brewer focuses almost exclusively on the theoretical role that reasons play in relation to belief, he is led to think that the conceptuallyist and the non-conceptualist are on an equal footing with regard to explaining the cognitive connections between non-linguistic and pre-linguistic animals and normal adult human beings.

So, even if we were to agree with Brewer that only conceptualized perceptual experiences can provide an agent's own reasons for her perceptual beliefs, this would not thereby give us reason to conclude that only conceptual content can provide an agent's own reasons for her actions. That said, Brewer's book constitutes one of the best defences of the conceptuallyist position that I have seen. Those interested in the debate between the conceptuallyists and non-conceptualists will benefit from the rigour with which he advances the debate.

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Fiona Cowie's What's Within is a ferocious attack on nativism. The book divides into three parts. Part I establishes what nativism is by identifying two independent lines of argument in Descartes and Leibniz, viz., the 'Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments' and 'Impossibility Arguments'. Parts II and
III criticize, respectively, contemporary instances of the Impossibility and Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments, viz., Fodor's conceptual and Chomsky's linguistic nativism.

Part I examines the seventeenth century debate over innate ideas. In chapter 1, Cowie argues against the standard interpretation of the historical debate over innate ideas in terms of 'externalist' vs. 'internalist' accounts of mental content (pp. 16–21). If nativism is understood as an internalist account of the origin of ideas, then it is indistinguishable from empiricism (p. 7) because 'both empiricists and nativists are both internalists and externalists about the origins of what is in our minds' (17). Cowie supports this claim by endorsing Locke's argument against innate ideas as it appears in Book I of his *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (pp. 17–18). What is not discussed, however, is that Locke's critique of innate ideas rests itself on a theory of content that the nativist would simply deny and, hence, succeeds only by begging the question against the nativist. And if Locke's argument is inconclusive, the disagreement between empiricists and rationalists may in the end have more to do with different views about content determination than Cowie is willing to concede.

In chapters 2 and 3, Cowie identifies what she takes to be the real issues that empiricists and rationalists disagreed about. She detects 'two independent strands in Nativist thought' (p. 67). As the outcome of the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments, nativism is a claim about cognitive architecture. The Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments grant empiricists that a general-purpose learning mechanism explains the acquisition of most of our ideas (for example, of RED and HOT, pp. 32, 40) but urge the necessity of postulating domain-specific mechanisms for the acquisition of ideas such as GOD and TRIANGLE. Though textual evidence from both Descartes and Leibniz is offered in support of this reading (pp. 33–7), it supports Cowie's interpretation much less than she thinks. For example, although Descartes's proof of the existence of material things in the *Sixth Meditation* is indirect evidence that he thought that ideas such as RED are occasioned in the mind by experience, there is reason to doubt that Descartes would agree with Cowie that these ideas are 'learned from experience' (p. 33) in virtue of some domain-neutral learning device.

Cowie concludes that empiricists' resistance to the nativism resulting from the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments is 'inappropriate' (p. 67) since it conciles that most concepts are learned from experience and postulates innate domain-specific mechanisms rather than innate contents. Chapter 3, however, makes clear why empiricists resisted nativism. They confused the nativism resulting from the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments with that resulting from Impartiality Arguments. According to Impartiality Arguments, empiricist accounts of concept acquisition are incoherent and, hence, all ideas must be innate. The nativism resulting from Impartiality Arguments is not a theory 'on the same level as the theories [it] is criticizing' (60); rather, it is a statement of non-naturalism, a pessimistic meta-theoretical claim about the prospects of a psychology of concept acquisition. In conclusion, neither 'strand in Nativist thought' is a real alternative to empiricism. Notice that Cowie's assessment of nativism depends on the distinction between the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus and Impartiality Arguments. But it is not so obvious that Descartes and Leibniz intended these arguments as distinct. That they didn't would explain why Descartes never conceded (contra Cowie) that RED is learned from experience and why empiricists resisted nativism (that is, because the 'weak' nativism resulting from POSA never existed).

Part II begins with a critique of Fodor's nativism (chapters 4 and 5). Fodor has defended nativism over the years along the following lines: according to Empiricists, concepts are acquired through a hypothesis testing process; however, on this model, primitive concepts cannot be learned; so, at best, only complex (i.e., internally structured) concepts can be learned. However, most concepts are internally unstructured; so most concepts are innate. Fodor's nativism is the claim that the process of concept acquisition is brute-causal: experience is both necessary and sufficient to trigger ideas in the mind. Then the question becomes: 'what is it about a person's initial state [...] that enables her to acquire concepts given only the "brute" interaction with the world that triggering supplies?' (p. 82). Sometimes Fodor writes as if concept acquisition were the activation by a triggering stimulus of some sort of preexisting, conceptlike object' (p. 83) (what Cowie calls 'protoconcepts'). However, Cowie argues, there is 'nothing for protoconcepts to be' (p. 83): at best the claim that protoconcepts are triggered by experience boils down to the claim that one gets certain concepts when one has certain kinds of experiences (pp. 83–6) and this is totally compatible with empiricism (p. 87). So what is Fodor's nativism? The answer to this question is given in chapter 5, where Cowie claims that Fodor's metaphysical solution to the so-called doorknob/door knob problem, in his *Concepts* (1998), reveals that Fodor's nativism is just an expression of non-naturalism (pp. 110–11)—and hence, no real alternative to an empiricist story of concept acquisition.

At first, it seems that Cowie's attempt to neutralise Fodor's nativism begs the question since it ignores Fodor's arguments supporting the claim that concept acquisition cannot be psychologically
mediated. The correct strategy would seem to be, instead, to attack Fodor’s arguments head on. And to her credit, in chapter 6, Cowie takes on the task of describing ‘the prospect for a psychology of concept acquisition’ (p. 112). The problem is that she ends up conceding too much to the nativist. Cowie holds that to have a concept of an F is to be locked to F-ness. ‘One way that a person could lock to a property is by knowing its definition’ (p. 132); another is by knowing the prototype for that property (p. 132); another by deferring to experts (p. 133); finally, ‘one can be locked to a certain property by virtue of how one is built . . . This is the truth of classical empiricism . . . there are some concepts we possess innately’ (p. 133). Incidentally, what happened to the claim in Part I that classical empiricists held that simple ideas are learned from experience? But even more puzzling is Cowie’s concession that not only many psychologically primitive concepts such as LIGHT but also many psychologically complex concepts such as FACE are innate (pp. 134–5). And these innate concepts seem suspiciously similar to Fodor’s ‘protoconcepts’.

However, she draws the line at concepts such as PLATYPUS and QUARK. In these cases, one acquires the concept by learning the prototype for that concept (p. 136). By her own admission, this last proposal has to meet two objections (p. 113). The first bullet—viz., the accusation of verificationism—she is simply prepared to bite (pp. 113, 140–1); the second bullet—viz., that acquiring concepts cannot be acquiring prototypes because concepts aren’t prototypes—she attempts to dodge by distinguishing between ‘meanings-in-the-technical-sense’ (their reference-fixing property) and ‘meanings-in-the-intuitive-sense’ (prototypes) and arguing that content must be compositional only as a reference-fixing property (pp. 142–6).

Since Cowie concedes that psychologically primitive (and complex) concepts are innate (‘we are born . . . with concepts of edges and color boundaries and faces . . . These unlearned concepts, whether structured or unstructured, comprise a ‘primitive conceptual base’ . . . with which we proceed to acquire further concepts’ (p. 139), she can defend empiricism about higher-order concepts at best. Although this is a prima facie plausible position, its defense depends on her debatable (to say the least) argument that concepts are prototypes.

In Part III, Cowie discusses Chomsky’s Linguistic Nativism. Her strategy consists in arguing that Chomskyan Nativism, rather than being ‘an organic whole, to be accepted in its entirety, or not at all’ (p. 156) is constituted of five partially independent core claims. Distinguishing the five core claims affords Cowie to illustrate the logical space of various alternatives to Chomskyan Nativism such as Enlightened Empiricism (that differs from Chomskyan Nativism in that it denies the innateness of the domain-specific constraints on language acquisition) and Weak Nativism (that differs from Chomskyan Nativism in that it denies that the innate, domain-specific constraints on language acquisition are to be identified with the principles of the universal grammar).

Chomskyan Nativism is supported by two versions of the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments: the ‘a posteriori Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments’; and the so-called ‘Logical Problem of Language Acquisition’ (p. 177). However, argues Cowie in chapter 9, a posteriori Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments are incapable to establish any form of nativism. Their force derives from: (a) emphasizing the poverty of the data available to the learner; and (b) from underestimating the explanatory powers of empiricism. However, the poverty of the data has been contested (pp. 184–8); and there is no reason to believe that Enlightened Empiricism, for example, wouldn’t be able to explain how the child learns a certain grammatical rule even in the absence of available data. The Enlightened Empiricist could argue that the child has ‘found out from her previous linguistic experience that . . . the structure dependent rules work best in the linguistic domain’ (pp. 196–7)—hence granting the domain specificity of the learning mechanisms while denying their innateness. No attempt is made by Cowie to explain how Enlightened Empiricism would account for how the task-specific constraints on language acquisition are acquired from previous experience. On the contrary, Cowie openly admits that she doesn’t have a proof on hand (p. 195). However, this proof would be needed in defense of empiricism.

In chapter 9, Cowie argues that the ‘Logical Problem of Language Acquisition’ supports Enlightened Empiricism at best (p. 207). The ‘Logical Problem’ claims that unless principles governing language acquisition are innate we wouldn’t be able to explain our collective success in language learning (p. 214), given the dearth of negative evidence. However, argues Cowie, there are many domains where people project beyond their experience. She illustrates the point by using the example of how we learn about curries (pp. 215–6) and then concludes: ‘That the “Logical Problem” in this instance is so clearly a sham [read: it is absurd to imagine that the domain-specific principles operating in our learning about curries are innate] suggests that the Logical Problem of Language Acquisition may be something of a pseudo-problem too’ (p. 216). In conclusion, the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Arguments (in either version) are ‘completely unable to establish any form of nativism. Nativists’ obsession with such arguments has therefore been a mistake’ (p. 177).
Overall, Cowie's defusing of Chomskyan Nativism in part III depends too much on arguments expressing the 'logical possibility that some or other brand of empiricism might be true' (p. 213). This problem emerges in various places throughout Part III (for example, 'Although I certainly would not want to claim that the considerations adduced in the previous chapters "prove" empiricism about language, I do think they indicate that an empiricist approach to language-learning has far more potential than has recently been allowed' (p. 239; see also p. 249). In conclusion, despite Cowie's claims to the contrary (p. 272), the lack of "any worked-out alternative to the Chomskyan picture" (pp. 271-2) seriously weakens her position. A defense of empiricism that doesn't offer a substantive empiricist alternative to nativism ends up either having a Pyrrhic victory (since it creates an argument for empiricism that is hard to refute simply because, as Cowie quotes Hume saying, 'it is impossible to refute a system which has never been explained', p. 213) or granting nativism. And in fact, the latter option seems the one chosen by Cowie. In the final chapter, Cowie concludes that even if the Poverty-of-the-Stimulus Argument don't prove nativism, other considerations (such as linguistic universals and the phenomenon of creolisation) incline her towards a Weak Nativism. By the end of the book, Cowie confesses that although she has tried in Part III to defend an empiricist approach to language acquisition, she 'cannot shake the intuition that some form of nativism about language learning is overall more plausible than its rival... ' (p. 305; see also p. 276). And this seems to be a pretty disconcerting conclusion for a book that presents itself as a defense of empiricism.

Despite its weaknesses, What's Within is one of the best recent books urging the resurgence of empiricism and should be given the kind of attention it deserves.

Raffaella De Rosa


This book is as provocative and persuasive as it is intellectually honest. It is timely, compelling, elegantly written and clearly argued. It earnestly attempts to systematically study the nature and moral importance of human sexuality and seeks to address some of the most perplexing issues within the area of sexual morality.

The book comprises two main parts. The first offers a critical account of the significant theories of human sexuality. It aims to answer two questions. What is sex? How can we distinguish natural from unnatural sex or, in other words, normal from abnormal sex? In addressing the first question, the author looks at four important theories of sex. These are the notion that the proper function of sex is procreation; the view that sex ought not be separable from love; the idea that sex is a form of body language, a way of expressing attitudes and feelings; and the leonidist view that sex is merely a source of pleasure. Especially thorough, is the author's attention to the distinction between natural and unnatural, normal and abnormal sex. He carefully addresses the negative consequence associated with the distinction, the concept of sexual perversion. He devotes an entire chapter to this notion. This much attention paid to this issue, is indeed warranted. After all, sexual perversion is still today very much part of our everyday language, and is still used by psychologists and sociologists who aim to explain sexual activities such as coprophilia, necrophilia, fetishes, just to name a few.

The second part of the book tackles some significant and difficult issues in sexual morality. It looks at marriage and monogamy, adultery, jealousy, prostitution, homosexuality, same-sex harassment and rape. When discussing marriage, adultery or jealousy, it investigates the issue of exclusivity within marital relationships. The section on prostitution mainly addresses the distinction between intrinsically important and instrumental relationships. The author's treatment of sexual harassment and rape includes a thorough consideration of the inequality and oppression of women.

After discussing all of these important issues and concerns, the author concludes with a chapter which asks the question: should we view sex as having some distinctive moral significance, or should we view sex as morally neutral, subject to the same rules and values that we apply to other aspects of our lives? In this last chapter, the author does not pull his punches.

We have no reason to believe that there is only one morally acceptable aim or purpose of human sexual experience or behaviour, whether prescribed by nature or enjoined by society. Nor do we have reason to believe that there is only one course of human sexual desire that is morally acceptable in virtue of being distinctively human. Sex has no special moral significance; it is morally neutral. No act is either morally good or bad, right or wrong, merely in virtue of being a sexual act.

This final thought challenges the reader to reassess their attitudes to common assumptions made in relation to many sexual behaviours, particularly those that involve sex without love and the buying and selling of sex. It stretches the reader to deal with the rigorous argumentation which is consistently