

Consciousness and Content in Perception

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Normal perception involves conscious experience of the world. What I call the Content View, (CV), attempts to account for this in terms of the representational content of perception. I offer a new argument here against this view.

Ascription of personal level content, either conceptual or nonconceptual, depends on the idea that determinate predicational information is conveyed to the subject. This determinate predication depends upon the exercise of certain personal level capacities for categorization and discrimination. Exercise of such personal level capacities depends in turn upon conscious selective attention. Yet conscious visual acquaintance with the world is the prior ground for the possibility of any such conscious selective attention. Acquaintance obtains throughout the visual field: where conscious attention is not actually directed as well as where it is. So acquaintance does not depend upon conscious selective attention. Thus, acquaintance is not sufficient for the exercise of the relevant personal level capacities. Exercise of these capacities is nevertheless necessary for personal level content. Therefore visual acquaintance cannot be understood in terms of perceptual content: basic conscious experience of the world is not a matter of anything like the predication involved in perceptual content. It is rather the relational ground for the possibility of such predication.

Every move in this argument needs clarification and defence. I offer this in §1. In §2 I consider the implications for the Content View. §3 concludes.

