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# Concepts and Properties

**Abstract.**

Concepts and properties are usually considered to be distinct universals, but the present paper argues that of the usual candidates for distinguishing concepts from properties, all are inadequate. The paper also suggests two new candidates: The first claims that concepts are ontologically dependent on their possibly being possessed or grasped by some mind, while properties are not. The second claims that concepts enter into the type-token relation, but properties do not. These latter two criteria are rejected as well, leaving a general, conditional conclusion that if the options discussed exhaust the alternatives, then the concept of being *F* and the property of being *F* are identical.

What is the difference, if any, between a concept and a property? Both are universals: The concept [green][1] has multiple exemplifications, and those instances are the very same as for the property of being green. Similarly, the concept [taller than] has multiple pairs of entities exemplifying that concept, and those pairs are the same exemplifications as those had by the relational property *taller than*. For every property, it seems that there is a corresponding concept sharing all of the same exemplifications. Yet concepts and properties normally are thought of as different sorts of universals. But what is the difference between the two? What is the necessity of multiplying entities so as to include both sorts of universal? At least six possibilities present themselves:

(1) Concepts are semantic universals, but properties are not.
(2) Some verbal expressions express concepts only, but others express both concepts and properties.
(3) Concepts are individuated by Frege's sense-individuation condition, but properties are not.

[1] In the paper to follow, concepts will be mentioned by enclosing the words used to express that concept in square brackets. One-place properties will be mentioned using italicized 'being'-clauses. For example, '[green]' refers to the concept of being green, while '*being green*' refers to the property of being green. Italicized 'that'-clauses will be used to mention propositions.

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(4) Concepts are individuated both extensionally and intensionally, but properties are individuated only extensionally.
(5) Concepts are weakly mind-dependent, but properties are not.
(6) Concepts may enter into the type-token relation, but properties do not.

The first four options are common enough in the literature, yet as I intend to show below, none are sufficient to distinguish concepts from properties. The fifth and sixth options are new offerings on my part, but despite their promise, they fail to distinguish concepts from properties as well. My general conclusion in this paper is a conditional one: If options (1)-(6) exhaust the options for distinguishing concepts from properties, then concepts and properties are a single sort of universal.

Two initial notes deserve mention. First, I aim to stay as neutral as possible with respect to the issue of what sorts of things universals are in general. That is, I aim to be neutral with respect to the familiar opposition between realists and nominalists in all of their varied forms. For instance, on most platonistic or *ante rem* accounts of universals, there can be necessarily uninstantiated universals, *contra* (4). On such accounts of universals it is also open for properties to be semantic universals (*contra* (1)), thus raising doubts about (2) as well. Yet on *in re* accounts of universals, the commitment to universals being "in" their instances commits such views to there being no necessarily uninstantiated universals. This latter commitment is shared by nominalistic views as well (except for those that admit *impossibilia*, that is). So *in re* and nominalistic views have no such conflict with (4), though they may conflict with (4) for other reasons. One of my aims in this paper is to avoid consideration of such theory-laden criticisms of (1)-(6) where at all possible. While my own inclinations lean toward platonistic accounts of universals, and while my verbiage is certainly that of a realist, I do not intend for those commitments to play an essential role in the conclusions to be drawn here.

The other note to make involves the quite common view of concepts that they are "in the head". If this were true, my task would seem rather easy. For if concepts are mental particulars of some sort, and the property of being green is not, then concepts are mental and properties are not, and that neatly distinguishes the two. Yet given the fact that concepts are *sharable* (i.e., potentially possessible or graspable by multiple agents), concepts cannot be identical to mental particulars. The concept of being green cannot be in both your head and mine, since what is in your head and

what is in my head are two distinct things, not one. It is what is shared by both of us that is the concept of being green, at least as I aim to investigate the matter here, and it is that sort of entity that is normally thought to be distinct from properties.

I.

So what might be the difference between concepts and properties? First (following (1) above), it might be thought that concepts are what one might call *semantic universals*, or universals that are akin to (or identical to) semantic values or linguistic meanings of various sorts. Since propositions are what is expressed by complete declarative sentences, and concepts are what is expressed by various sorts of sub-sentential linguistic constructions like predicates, adjectives, and the like, then concepts and propositions are similar in that both are expressible by various sorts of linguistic entities. Properties, on the other hand, might seem not to be the sorts of things that are expressible by anything, even though they are multiply exemplifiable, serve to explain similarities and differences among particulars, etc. So perhaps concepts are semantic universals while properties are not.

The problem with (1) is that while one might consider properties not to be the sorts of things that are expressible, or that they just *seem* to be different than linguistic meanings, that in itself gives little reason to distinguish concepts from properties in that way. For properties might also be semantic values more basic than propositions (and see Oliver 1996, 16), or at least that properties can play the same role as concepts with respect to being semantic values. Perhaps it just as correct to say that the predicate 'is green' expresses the *concept* of being green as it is to say that it expresses the *property* of being green. The principle of minimizing ontological commitments certainly leads in that direction: For concepts and properties both can share the same exemplifications, and one might appeal to both in explaining similarities and differences between particulars. If the only suggested difference is that concepts are meanings and properties are not, then it seems a better, more ontologically efficient suggestion is to posit one sort of universal to play all of those roles.

II.

Suppose one grants for sake of argument that concepts and properties are both semantic values, or at least that properties *might* also be semantic val-

ues or meanings (where this latter thesis would be enough to cast doubt on (1)). What of option (2)? It could be that for some verbal expressions a concept gets expressed but not a property, even if properties are nevertheless expressed by some other verbal expressions. For instance, if Armstrong (1978, 19-29; 1989, 82-84) is right, then there are no properties that correspond with negative and disjunctive predicates. Take the sentences '*x* does not have an electric charge of 4eV' and '*x* has either an electric charge of 4eV or a mass of 2kg'. It looks at first sight as if the concept of being not of charge 4eV gets expressed by 'does not have an electric charge of 4eV' in the former sentence and the concept of having either an electric charge 4eV or a mass of 2kg gets expressed by 'has either an electric charge of 4eV or a mass of 2kg' in the latter sentence.

Could these predicates express properties as well? Armstrong says not, for he argues that there are neither negative nor disjunctive properties. First of all, Armstrong appeals to one of the most basic reasons for positing the existence of universals, namely that universals serve as (at least part of) the explanation for the similarities and differences between particulars. Suppose there is a property of being not of charge 4eV. For all of the particulars that do not have an electric charge of 4eV, in order for them all to be instances of the property of being not of charge 4eV, there would have to be something shared by or "in"[2] all of the things that are not of charge 4eV. But there is nothing in a dead battery, a 10eV battery, and a Cheeto that is the same for all three in virtue of which none of them have an electric charge of 4eV. So there is no such thing as the property of being not of charge 4eV, Armstrong concludes.

Second, Armstrong takes properties to be crucial to a theory of causation. According to Armstrong, a particular thing has the causal powers it does in virtue of its properties. But negative properties would serve no purpose in causal explanation, Armstrong says. Suppose there is a property of not having an electric charge of 4eV: Then anything without an electric charge of 4eV would be an instance of that property. But the having of that property would not bestow any causal powers on things that do not have an electric charge of 4eV, it seems. The idea is that the reason something has the causal powers it does is because of the properties that it has, and only positive factors can serve as an explanation for something's

[2] One should note here that Armstrong is giving this criticism of the reality of negative and disjunctive properties from within a framework of *in re* realism about properties. Thus the use of the word "in" here.

causal powers. Negative factors would not have anything to do with the causal powers a thing has, and so there are no negative properties (Armstrong 1978, 23-29; 1989, 83). Similar considerations apply for disjunctive properties, in Armstrong's view. Nothing is shared by, or "in" all things that are either of charge 4eV or 2kg, and having such disjunctive properties would confer no unique causal powers on those particulars that have them. (Armstrong 1978, 19-23; 1989, 82-83).

Now, suppose Armstrong is correct in saying that there are neither negative nor disjunctive properties. Nevertheless, there are predicates that appear to express negative and disjunctive concepts. So perhaps negative and disjunctive concepts are real, but there are neither negative nor disjunctive properties, and perhaps this marks a difference between concepts and properties.

A rejoinder to Armstrong's position is suggested by the following passage in Jackson (1998, 16):

> Our notion of properties—properties-in-nature, we might call them—is to be distinguished from the notion of properties allied to concepts or predicate meanings...our properties-in-nature need not be particularly natural. Fish and fowl have something in common over and above the fact that the predicate 'is a fish or a fowl' applies to them but the something in common is not particularly natural.

It looks as if Jackson is just pointing out that there really is *something* in common among any two things or kinds of things, and thus there is a property or concept corresponding to whatever that is. Now, suppose Armstrong's arguments against negative and disjunctive properties are sound, but suppose further that one draws the following distinction: Among the properties, there are the *natural* and the *non-natural* properties. Natural properties are the ones such that there is something "in" their instances in virtue of which they fall into the extension of that property, and that being an instance of a natural property serves as part of the explanation for the causal powers had by that particular thing. But instances of non-natural properties need not have this characteristic. So one might take Armstrong's arguments against negative and disjunctive properties to have weight against the claim that there are *natural* negative and disjunctive properties, but not against the claim that there are non-natural negative and disjunctive properties.

Unfortunately, if the distinction holds up then this way of drawing a distinction between concepts and properties falls through. For there could

then be natural and non-natural concepts, just as there would be natural and non-natural properties. The consequence would be that predicates such as 'has either an electric charge of 4eV or a mass of 2kg' would express a property (or concept), but just not a natural property (or concept). But the original Armstrongian idea by which to draw the distinction between concepts and properties was to hold that negative and disjunctive predicates expressed concepts, but not properties. Yet by distinguishing between natural and non-natural properties (and concepts), negative and disjunctive predicates would express properties after all, just not natural ones. So (2) fails to distinguish concepts from properties, since admitting both natural and non-natural properties and concepts preserves the original worry about ontological redundancy.

III.

Peacocke (1992) offers another way of distinguishing concepts and properties, which for my purposes here is representative of option (3) (which aims to distinguish concepts by Frege's sense-individuation condition, but not properties). Peacocke says that

> [C]oncepts are...to be clearly distinguished from properties. There can be many different concepts *of* the same property (2, my italics).

The proposal is to individuate concepts by use of Frege's sense-individuation condition. Peacocke suggests that while the property *being red* may itself have the property of being the most perspicuous color of ripe tomatoes and the property of being the color of the former Soviet Union's flag, the concept [red] is neither identical to [the most perspicuous color of ripe tomatoes] or [the color of the former Soviet Union's flag]. I believe that red is the color of ripe tomatoes, but I might not believe that red is the color of the former Soviet Union's flag. But according to Peacocke, while it is true that the color of ripe tomatoes is the color of the former Soviet Union's flag, the concepts are distinct even though the corresponding properties are the same. So the proposal is this: If two expressions are not substitutable *salva veritate* in intensional contexts, then those expressions do not express the same concept, though they might express the same property.[3]

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[3] Chisholm (1992) takes the very same sort of consideration and infers instead that *properties* are individuated by means of the sense-individuation condition. If Chis-

But the proposal looks to identify concepts with modes of presentation. Peacocke is fairly explicit about this claim:

> [T]he theory of this book is...a theory of the level of concepts or modes of presentation... The concepts that concern us are at the level of Frege's senses, since they are individuated by considerations of cognitive significance (1992, 2-3).

So on Peacocke's view, concepts are identified with senses, and senses are in turn identified with modes of presentation.[4] Unfortunately, there is reason to think that concepts are not individuated by the sense-individuation condition, since identifying concepts with Fregean senses or modes of presentation individuates concepts too finely. For instance, a consequence of Peacocke's proposal would be that '*Waverly*'s author' and 'author of *Waverly*' actually express different concepts, since the two expressions are potentially different ways of referring to the author of *Waverly*. For instance, someone with only a rudimentary understanding of English grammar might wonder for a moment about whether 'The author of *Waverly* is *Waverly*'s author' is true but not for 'The author of *Waverly* is the author of *Waverly*'. In fact, it seems as if any difference in syntax might make for a difference in mode of presentation, and thus a difference in concept. But this entails that for two concepts to be the same, they would have to be presented or expressed in precisely the same way, and this runs counter to one feature of concepts that makes them universals. As a semantic universal, the same concept can be expressed in different ways (by distinct linguistic expressions and by tokens of different types of linguistic expressions). But it seems that two expressions could not express the same concept unless they were numerically the same expression, if concepts are identified with

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holm is right, and the sense-individuation condition is the proper way to distinguish intensional entities, then once again one has lost the distinction between concepts and properties. If they are both individuated by the sense-individuation condition, then one cannot use that condition to draw a distinction between them.

[4] Frege himself also identifies senses with modes of presentation. Yet one might identify concepts with senses but not identify senses with modes of presentation (as do Katz (1992, 2000) and perhaps Fodor (1998)). I am willing to take this line as well, except that the argument in the text above suggests that whatever concepts (or senses) are, they should *not* be distinguished in the same way as modes of presentation. If the point stands, the sense-individuation condition should more properly be called the *mode of presentation*-individuation condition instead.

modes of presentation.[5] It then seems that option (3) is misguided, since one cannot claim that concepts are indidviduated by the sense-individuation condition and properties are not, it in fact concepts are *not* individuated by the sense-individuation condition at all.

IV.

Option (4) also attempts to distinguish concepts from properties in virtue of their having different identity conditions, yet in a different way from Peacocke. Consider the following candidate account of the identity conditions for universals:[6]

> Universal *U* is identical to universal *V* iff
> (a) *U* and *V* are necessarily coextensive, and
> (b) *U* and *V* have the same analysis.

The account of course might not be correct for all kinds of universals. Perhaps only (a) is necessary and sufficient for property identity, while (a) and (b) together are necessary and sufficient for concept identity. If so, then there is a way of explaining why the properties *being triangular* and *being trilateral* might seem to be the same while the concepts [triangular] and [trilateral] are distinct. Suppose only condition (a) applies to property individuation. It is indeed necessary that everything trilateral is triangular, so according to the present supposition *being trilateral* is the same as *being triangular*. But the analyses of the concepts [triangular] and [trilateral] are distinct, for consider the following propositions:

> Necessarily, for all *x*, *x* is triangular iff (i) *x* is three-angled and (ii) *x* is a closed plane figure.
> Necessarily, for all *x*, *x* is trilateral iff (i) *x* is three-sided and (ii) *x* is a closed plane figure.

Condition (ii) is the same for both [triangular] and [trilateral], but condition (i) differs. The concept of being three-angled is not identical to the concept of being three-sided (for among other things, their extensions are dis-

[5] See also Fodor (1998, 15-21), especially p. 17.

[6] Bealer (1982) considers this sort of account of the identity conditions for universals, but he draws a different sort of conclusion than do I in what follows.

tinct). So [triangular] and [trilateral] are distinct concepts, even if *being triangular* and *being trilateral* are identical properties.[7]

There are several difficulties to consider here. First, one needs an argument to the effect that properties are in fact individuated merely in virtue of their extensions across possible worlds. By way of illustrating the difficulty, consider Chisholm's (1992, 15-16) argument to the contrary, namely an argument that condition (a) alone is not necessary and sufficient for property identity. Chisholm claims that for *being equiangular* and *being equilateral*, "there are truths about the one property that are not truths about the other (15)." Furthermore, Chisholm employs the following intentional account of what it is to be a property:

> *Being F* is a property iff *being F* is possibly such that there is someone who attributes it (1992, 14; also in 1996, 12).

where *attributing being F* is defined as *believing* that there is something that is *F* (14). The argument against using just condition (1) for property identity then runs like this:

[7] One might object that [triangular] and [trilateral] have the very same necessary and sufficient conditions, and hold that the proposition *that x is triangular iff x is a three-sided closed plane figure* is also an acceptable analysis of [triangular], for instance. But while the proposition *that x is triangular iff x is a three-sided closed plane figure* is indeed a necessary truth, it is not an *analysis* of [triangular] since there are other conditions that apply to what makes a proposition an analysis, in addition to specifying the possible worlds extension of the concept being analyzed.

(P1) Believing there to be something that is equiangular is distinct from believing there to be something that is equilateral.

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(C1) So, attributing the property of being equiangular is distinct from attributing the property of being equilateral (from (P1), the definition given above, and the relation between attributing and believing).

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(C2) So, *being equiangular* is distinct from *being equilateral*.
(P2) *Being equiangular* and *being equilateral* have the same extension across possible worlds.

_____

(C3) So, there are properties that are necessarily coextensive but not identical.

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(C4) So, necessary coextension is insufficient for property identity (15).

If the argument goes through, then since condition (a) is insufficient for property identity, then one cannot distinguish properties from concepts by holding that only (a) applies to property identity while both (a) and (b) apply to concept identity.

Chisholm says further by way of clarifying what he takes to be the difficulty with the modal criterion (my condition (a) from above) that "The modal criterion would have the consequence that properties that can be easily grasped are identical with properties that are difficult to grasp (16)."[8] If this claim is intended to stand on its own then it is clearly false. For the inference behind the move from (C1) to (C2) is much like that of the following argument:

[8] Ackerman (1986, 306; 1990, 537) makes a similar suggestion as evidence for the claim that in an analysis, the analysandum concept is distinct from the analysans concept. As an example, she suggests that the concept of knowledge might be easily grasped while the concept of being an instance of justified true belief not supported by false premises might not be so easily grasped.

(P1) Dennis believes that *a* is triangular (or attributes *being triangular* of *a*).
(P2) Dennis believes that *a* is not trilateral (or attributes *not being trilateral* of *a*).

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(C) So, the property of being triangular ≠ the property of being trilateral.

This is an invalid inference, since it commits the intensional fallacy.[9]

So, on its own the modal criterion does not entail the consequence that Chisholm claims. But if Chisholm's intentional definition of what it is for something to be a property is correct, then his earlier argument looks stronger. One needs something further in order to be convinced, though. Chisholm needs not only an argument to the effect that what it is to be a property is to be something that is attributable to something by someone, but he also needs a defense of the claim that attributing the property of *being F* ≠ attributing the property of *being G* entails that *being F* ≠ *being G*. In other words, Chisholm needs to defend his intentional definition of what a property is, along with an account of the identity conditions for properties in terms of that definition. As for the first task, Chisholm suggests in his (1992) that the medieval way of speaking about universals was to take them as "predicable of many (14)," and the intentional definition is suggested by that way of speaking. But clearly something more is needed than this, and Chisholm seems to provide no argument by way of accomplishing the second task.

In his (1994, 501), Chisholm tries a different line of argument against the modal criterion. First, he assumes a platonistic theory of properties, and suggests further that "According to this presupposition, there *are*...attributes [properties] that are *unexemplifiable* (501, italics in original)." If there are necessarily uninstantiated but distinct properties, then such properties would all have the same extension across possible worlds (namely the null set, or the null class, or just nothing). For instance if *being a round square* and *being a round triangle* are real properties, but unexemplifiable, then according to the modal criterion they would have the same extension and thus be identical. But intuitively, if *being a round square* and *being a round triangle* are real properties, then they are distinct

[9] The intensional fallacy is the fallacy of assuming that codesignating terms are substitutable *salva veritate* in all contexts (including intensional ones).

properties. This suggests that the modal criterion is insufficient for property identity.

There are several criticisms to consider. One is unique to Chisholm's argument, and the other is a general point one might make against the thesis that there are necessarily uninstantiated universals. First, Chisholm's claim that platonism entails that there are necessarily uninstantiated universals is contentious. I take platonism with respect to universals to be the thesis that universals are both mind-independent and ontologically prior to their instances—i.e., that they exist even if their instances do not. This implies that on a platonistic view, universals enjoy the status of being abstract objects, in some sense existing independently of space and time, are timeless and indestructible, and so on. If this is the view Chisholm is speaking of in the quoted passage, platonism doesn't entail that there are *unexemplifiable* properties, just that there can be *unexemplified* properties.

Second, '*a* is a round square' looks to be analyzable in terms of what is expressed by '*a* is round and *a* is a square'. This natural analysis suggests that perhaps our ontological commitments need only include the properties *being round* and *being square*, and not *being a round square*. That is, barring some other reason for admitting necessarily uninstantiated universals, one need not admit them.

This argument makes the presumption, it seems, that analysis is a reductive enterprise, and that if something is analyzable in terms of simpler constituents, then one need only commit to the existence of those simpler constituents. If *those* constituents are themselves analyzable in terms of still simpler constituents, then one need only commit to the existence of those simpler constituents, and so on. Yet this presumption seems false. Among other things, the presumption entails that there are no complex concepts. The concept [bachelor] is a complex concept, for instance, since it can be analyzed in terms of [male], [unmarried], and [human]. But if the presumption under consideration is true, then there is no concept of being a bachelor, just [male], [unmarried], and [human]. Yet *those* concepts look to have analyses in terms of simpler concepts, and so there are no concepts [male], [unmarried], and [human]. But surely the concepts [bachelor], [male], [unmarried], and [human] are real concepts, and so the presumption looks false. In short, the analysis of concepts need not be *reductive*, and so the criticism of Chisholm's argument fails. The more general criticism that there are no necessarily uninstantiated universals fails as well, since even if what is expressed by 'is a round square' has an analysis in terms of simpler

concepts, [round square] might still be a concept. The same would seem to hold for properties, so *being a round square* might still be a property.

Furthermore, what the more refined analysis of what is expressed by 'is a round square' suggests is that analysis matters after all to the individuation of properties. But if analysis matters to property individuation, then condition (b) matters to property individuation. So, the proposal to individuate properties only by condition (a) and concepts by conditions (a) and (b) is unsatisfactory, and so the proposal to distinguish properties from concepts by this sort of difference in identity conditions falls through.

V.

If options (1)-(4) fail to distinguish adequately between concepts and properties, and if there is a genuine distinction between the two, then what is it? A fifth option ((5) from earlier) distinguishes concepts from properties by means of a dependency relation entered into by concepts but not by properties. Concepts have *something* to do with the mind, one would think, and it seems at first sight that concepts are dependent on the mind in some way, whether in virtue of being mental particulars themselves or something else.

But there are two sorts of mind-dependence that need to be kept separate, for one might take concepts to be mind-dependent in either a strong sense or a weak sense. Consider the following two theses:

> *Strong mind-dependence thesis* (SMD): Necessarily, if *C* is a concept then *C* is actually possessed by some agent.
>
> *Weak mind-dependence thesis* (WMD): Necessarily, if *C* is a concept then it is possible for there to be an agent that possesses *C*.

So SMD entails that if there are no actual minds then there are no concepts, but WMD does not. For a view of concepts taking them to be types of mental representations of some kind, then SMD is the thesis that if *C* is a concept then *C* is actually tokened. WMD for such a view of concepts is the thesis that if *C* is a concept then *C* is possibly tokened.

Strongly mind-dependent views of concepts labor under at least two difficulties. The first concerns the categorial function of concepts: Concepts (like properties) are metaphysical categories of things in the world. If concepts are strongly mind-dependent, then those metaphysical categories are strongly mind-dependent as well. But this seems false, since such

categories would still exist even if there were no minds. Presumably there is a real difference between hydrogen and helium, for instance, and if the categories *hydrogen* and *helium* did not exist then there would be no difference between samples of hydrogen *as* hydrogen and samples of helium *as* helium. Yet certainly hydrogen and helium would exist even if there were no minds, and there would be a real difference between samples of each. The objection here is a common one against so-called conceptualist accounts of universals. One function of a theory of universals is to provide an explanatory basis for similarities and differences between particulars, and on an account of concepts taking them to be strongly mind-dependent there would be no such basis if there were no minds. Yet such similarities and differences between particulars would still remain even if there were no minds, and thus SMD is false.

A different family of problems for SMD involves propositions. Propositions are to be analyzed (at least partly) in terms of concepts, and if there were no concepts there would be little to distinguish one proposition from another. The sentences 'The sun contains hydrogen' and 'The sun contains helium' both express different propositions, and the natural explanation for the difference between them is that the predicates 'contains hydrogen' and 'contains helium' express different concepts. But if there were no concepts this explanation for the difference between the two propositions in question would be unavailable. On a strongly mind-dependent view of concepts, this would be the consequence if there were no minds at all, yet intuitively the two propositions would remain distinct. Hence it would seem once again that SMD is incorrect.

Still another difficulty for SMD concerns the truth and falsity of propositions. Presumably the right account of concepts and propositions (*qua* universals) will be the same overall theory with respect to both. So the view of propositions corresponding with strong mind-dependence for concepts would be strong mind-dependence for propositions. But there are a number of difficulties with the strong mind-dependence thesis for propositions. One involves the intuition that various propositions would still be true even if there were no minds. For instance, the proposition *that the sun is a star* was true prior to the existence of minds, and would still be true even if there ceased to be any minds. But if there were no minds then the proposition *that the sun is a star* would not even exist (much less be *true*), since on a strongly mind-dependent view propositions are strongly dependent on there being minds. This suggests once more that the corre-

sponding SMD thesis for propositions is false, and thus that concepts are not strongly mind-dependent.

So what then of the weak mind-dependence thesis? WMD only takes concepts to be dependent on the *possibility* of there being token mental representations corresponding to them. Here is one consideration in favor of WMD:[10] If it is the case that necessarily, for all *x*, if *x* is a concept then *x* is possessible by some agent, then it seems WMD follows. For if a condition on something's being a concept is that it could at least be possessed by someone, then it would have to be that concepts are weakly mind-dependent. Now if there happened to be even one unpossessible concept in the sense that it is impossible for any agent ever to possess it, then this argument for WMD would fail. But intuitively it seems wrong that there is a concept such that it would be impossible for there to be any agent that possesses it.[11] So it would appear that WMD is correct: Concepts are mind-dependent, but only in the sense that it must be at least possible for some agent to possess them.

It would seem that properties are not mind-dependent in either the strong or weak sense, and if this is right then it suggests the following distinction: Concepts are weakly mind-dependent, while properties are not mind-dependent in either sense. This would seem to illuminate at least some difference between concepts and properties.

There are two related difficulties to note with respect to option (5). First, it has been granted earlier (in discussion of option (1)) that properties might be semantic universals. If (at least some) properties serve as semantic values of various linguistic expressions, then it seems that properties

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[10] Thanks are due to Robert Hanna for discussion involving this suggestion.

[11] For an opposing view, see Bealer (2002). Bealer points out that there could be some propositions that would be impossible to grasp by any finite mind (or at least by a mind like ours). For instance, a proposition that would only be expressible by a sentence billions of light-years in length would seem to be ungraspable by any mind with cognitive abilities similar to our own. Now consider the predicate of such a sentence, which would seem to express a concept that would be ungraspable by any mind with cognitive abilities similar to our own. I grant that this would be a decisive counterexample against WMD if the weak mind-dependence thesis held that concepts were ontologically dependent on their being possessible *by minds like our own*. However, one should grant that *infinite* minds are at least possible, and WMD merely claims any given concept is ontologically dependent on its being possible for there to be some mind that can possess it. That there could be some concepts that are unpossessible by minds like ours thus seems not to be a counterexample to WMD.

would be weakly mind-dependent. For linguistic meanings are at least graspable or understandable, and as such the very same considerations in favor of the thesis that concepts are weakly mind-dependent would hold *mutatis mutandis* for properties. Second, one might set aside the notion that properties are semantic values and note instead that intuitively, properties are the sorts of things that are understandable or graspable too, just as concepts are understandable or graspable. If for any property it is the case that the property in question is at least understandable by some mind, then that property is weakly mind-dependent. But this seems to hold for any property one considers, and so properties are weakly mind-dependent, just as concepts are. So suggestion (5) fails.

VI.

Option (6) suggests a sixth possibility for distinguishing concepts from properties. Concepts may enter into two sorts of relation with particulars: (1) the relation exemplified by the relation between mental representation *types* and mental representation *tokens* (where types are construed as types of mental representations of some kind, and tokens are construed as particular representations), and (2) the relation between *universal* and *instance*. According to option (6), concepts may enter into the former sort of relation, but not properties.[12] For example, take the concept [green], and suppose for sake of illustration that concepts are types of mental representations, with the notion of a mental representation left unanalyzed here. As a universal, that concept has both token mental representations as its tokens and particular green things as its instances. But the property of being green would have particular green things as its instances, yet not be *tokened* by anything mental at all.

Nevertheless, *are* concepts types of mental representations? True, a view taking concepts to be mental representation types has the advantage of postulating an explicit tie between concepts and minds, and the type-token relation might then be of assistance in explaining the weak mind-dependence of concepts. Such a view also has the advantageous feature of offering a more refined way of distinguishing concepts from properties.

[12] The reason for this is that types would also seem to be a sort of property. So all concepts (construed as mental representation types) would be properties, but not all properties are concepts. So on this sort of view, concepts and properties are closely related in that concepts are one *kind* of property.

Yet while taking concepts to be mental representation types looks to be a promising suggestion, I set aside the task of considering detailed support for it here. For some difficulties for the view arise immediately:[13] If concepts are types of mental representations, *what then is a mental representation*? And whatever the right general account of mental representation happens to be, what *sort* of mental representation is it that concepts are types *of*? Answering these questions would be necessary in order to provide a full account of the commitments of a view of concepts as mental representation types. It also appears that both questions are at least as difficult as that of distinguishing concepts from properties, and perhaps as difficult as that of giving the identity conditions for concepts in general.

However, one might try for a more modest conclusion. For it still seems that concepts may enter into two sorts of relations with particulars, no matter whether concepts are representation types or not, and they are the universal-instance relation and the type-token relation. Even if concepts are not themselves types of mental representations, the weak mind-dependence of concepts still entails that in order for something to be a concept, it must be possible for there to be an agent that can grasp it. So in order for something to be a concept, it then must be possible for there to be an agent such that there is a relation between that concept and *whatever it is* in that agent's mind such that she possesses that concept. This might be a mental representation of some sort, a capacity for various sorts of behavior, a capacity for having various intuitions, or something else entirely. For lack of a better term, one might go ahead and call whatever it is in the mind in virtue of which one possesses a concept a *token* of that concept. But I leave the task of filling in the details of that account to those who seek an account of concept *possession*. What seems to remain is that concepts are dependent on their possibly being tokened, while properties are not.

This is a promising-sounding suggestion, yet the same style of response as that given to option (5) seems forceful here as well. Once again, if properties can be semantic universals (as concepts are), then it seems there would be mental tokens of them. And even setting aside the possibility that properties are semantic universals, they are entities that are at least understandable or intelligible. But if properties are understandable, then it is plausible that they would be tokened in the mind (in the sense of 'tokened' of the previous section). So just as concepts can have exemplifications and can be tokened in the mind, properties also can have exemplifica-

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[13] George Bealer is due thanks for suggesting the following criticisms.

tions and can be tokened in the mind. The ontological redundancy presents itself once again, and so option (6) fails to be attractive as a means of distinguishing concepts from properties.

To sum up, none of the options I listed at the outset hold up as a means to mark a definitive distinction between concepts and properties. If those six options exhaust the possibilities, then concepts and properties should be construed as the very same sort of universal. That is, the concept of being green is identical to the property of being green, the concept of being a star is identical to the property of being a star, and in general, the concept of being *F* is identical to the property of being *F*, for all *F*.

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