

The Ecology of the Concept: Montero, Dreyfus, and McDowell

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In this paper, I examine the so-called Dreyfus–McDowell debate to shed light on the role of concepts in embodied action.¹ For Dreyfus, to allege that embodied action is conceptual in nature is to over intellectualize the body, to illegitimately read into more primary processes a set of rational faculties that participate in action only in rare moments of detached reflection. In contrast, McDowell, following Wilfrid Sellars, alleges that even basic embodied comportment requires for its success a conceptual construction. That is, for McDowell, action is always conceptually guided, albeit automatically, unconsciously, and somatically.

I will argue with McDowell and Barbara Gail Montero, and against Dreyfus, that the way to think about embodied action is not to see it as nonconceptual but to re-read the conceptual as an act or skill of the body. The concept on this view is a skill of the understanding, to use Alva Noë's language.² Insofar as such skills afford meaningful discernment and possibilities for action, the concept becomes an act of transformation in the experience of the individual, allowing him or her new capacities unavailable to the uninitiated. In other words, I will show that the concept is an activity, a way of acting upon one's actions; it reorganizes the content and

¹ Schear eds., *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The Dreyfus–McDowell Debate*.

² Noë, *Varieties of Presence*.

meaning of perception, affording new sites of engagement, allowing the conceptual to guide action even in so-called flow states.

To articulate this ecology of the concept, I will re-situate the body as the site of the conceptual and suggest that the body's engagement with the environment is already conceptually structured, though not necessarily in an intellectually distanced way. This path forward breaks down the mind–body dualism without collapsing the distinction into either term. The paper proceeds in several sections. First, I describe Dreyfus's descriptions of flow and skillful coping, the intentional arc, and the role of deliberation in expert action, positions that together generate a nonconceptual and nonminded view of expert action. Second, I lay out McDowell's and Montero's counterclaims to the nonconceptual view.

To this end, I describe McDowell's view that mindedness is pervasive in both perception and action. I then evaluate Montero's claims that not only should perception and action be seen as conceptual throughout, but also that modes of second-order judgment and deliberation are often essential to expert action. Montero's so-called cognition-in-action principle, I conclude, forms not only a coherent philosophy for understanding action and perception, but also offers resources for understanding the role of mind in life more generally.

The Nonminded View: Flow States, the Intentional Arc, and Detached Deliberation

Dreyfus is most well-known for offering an account of intelligent human coping without appealing to explicitly cognitive or rational sources of action. Following philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, Dreyfus instead roots human intelligence—theoretical or otherwise—in our embodied everyday comportment with the world, in our practical actions and responses to the immediate environment. In Mark Wrathall's words, “Rather than starting from cognition as the primary locus of intelligence, and *building out* to an

account of action, Dreyfus starts with the premise that skillful activity itself is the consummate form and foundation of human intelligence, and derives an account of cognition from coping.”³ In placing practical engagement before theoretical cognition, Dreyfus builds a new picture of what it means to skillfully cope in the perceptual world that unfolds before us.

In offering a practical view of skillful action, Dreyfus explicitly calls into question what he calls “the Myth of the Mental.” Stated plainly, the Myth of the Mental, here attributed to John McDowell, suggests that perception is conceptual through and through.⁴ On Dreyfus’s account, the Myth of the Mental misreads a set of exclusively verbal, propositional, and rational abilities as ingredient in more basic and immediate engagements with the world. The world, alleges Dreyfus, does not require the mediation of mental or psychological states in order for it to guide the actions of the person who engages it. Indeed, Dreyfus is correct to point out that a good deal of human activity takes place without conscious effort or deliberation. For example, people typically do not rationally plot out in advance the steps they need to take to their cars every morning. Nor is it necessary to evaluate in a discursive way how to drink a cup of coffee. In fact, as Dreyfus is fond of noting, it is often a disadvantage to take such a distanced and theoretical approach to everyday actions.

But this account raises several questions. If cognition and concepts have historically been construed as supplying mental content to our perceptions and actions—Kant’s famous statement comes to mind, “Thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind”⁵—then what, in Dreyfus’s account, gives sense to our actions so that our comportments with the world are successful? In other words, how do we know that we are responding

³ Wrathall, “Hubert Dreyfus and the Phenomenology of Intelligence,” 3.

⁴ Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping*, 105.

⁵ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, B75.

adequately to a situation if our engagement with the world is primarily nonminded and nonconceptual? How do we know in the moment how to give the right responses?

Instead of concepts and cognition, Dreyfus sees our action in the world as guided by the grain and contour of the world itself. Along these lines, he appeals to a mode of nonconceptual knowledge rooted in our motor intentionality, where the body is led directly to move by the external forces in play in an environment. In Dreyfus's words, this is "a world organized in terms of [peoples] needs, interests, and bodily capacities without *their minds* needing to impose a meaning on a meaningless Given."⁶

The intentional arc situates these skills in recursive loops of action, built up over time. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Dreyfus defines the intentional arc simply as "the way our successful coping continually enriches the way things in the world show up."⁷ Stated again, the intentional arc is a "feedback loop in which our actions and projections are drawn out of us by the meaningful features of the world and, in turn, alter the way the world shows up as soliciting us."⁸ In short, the intentional arc marks a relationship between meaningful appearances and their disclosure as achieved through practice and repetition. This nonrepresentational view of solicitation does not require for its success the exercise of concepts or the following of explicit rules for action. Instead, we achieve expert-level responses to a scenario, or what Dreyfus calls "maximal grip," through a mode of nonpropositional motor intentionality, whereby the person becomes increasingly skilled at completing a task by, in Wrathall's words, "intuitively picking up and responding to the meanings the situation offers."⁹

⁶ Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping*, 107.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wrathall, "Hubert Dreyfus and the Phenomenology of Intelligence," 22.

⁹ Ibid., 10.

On this view of action, rational cognition is for Dreyfus an exclusively reflective, linguistic, and propositional activity—the traditional markers of conceptual ability—and therefore it should not be read as participant in the flow states of absorbed action. The fact that these abilities are not present in young children nor many nonhuman animals further suggests to Dreyfus that whatever else skilled comportment ends up being, it cannot be construed as conceptual, since otherwise neither animals nor young people would be able to relate to their environments in a meaningful way when plainly they do.¹⁰ A fair insight, but this is not the image of the conceptual McDowell and Montero have in mind. As I show below, the relationship between intuitive response, meaningful disclosure, and intentional arc is where I think Dreyfus gets it wrong, even if his account of what it feels like to perform may be correct.

The Minded View: Concepts and the Ground Floor of Perception

It is precisely on the status of intuition, belief, significance, and concern in perception where I find Dreyfus's account wanting, and where I think McDowell and Montero get it right. It seems that Dreyfus takes everything traditionally attributed to concepts and conceptual ability and repositions these skills as available to an agent at the ground floor of perceptual experience through nonconceptual motor understanding. But what sense does it make, for instance, to speak, as Dreyfus does,¹¹ not only of *perceptual knowledge* but also of *nonconceptual beliefs* about perceptual objects and the solicitations, affordances, and constraints that issue from my engagement with them? The appeal to solicitations (or to what an object obliges of me), to affordances (or to what an object may aid me in doing), and to constrains (or to what an object may prevent me from doing), seems squarely in the domain of a cognitive and inferential space,

¹⁰ See Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping* 105, 117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97

in other words, a space shot through with a conceptual understanding that interleaves my every practical action. Indeed, this is precisely the stance that McDowell takes against Dreyfus.

However, in arguing for a conceptual dimension to perception and action, McDowell is not promoting the kind of detached and deliberate monitoring that Dreyfus rightly notes often interferes with everyday practical performance. In McDowell's own words, "We should not pretend to find a detached self in all our experiencing and acting."¹² This view, alleges McDowell, falls prey to its own myth, the Myth of the Mind as Detached. In this sense, to take a minded view of action and perception does not suggest that conceptuality is equivalent to detached monitoring or to an explicitly contemplative orientation to everyday behaviors.¹³ Instead, what McDowell suggests in saying that perception is conceptual through and through is that mindedness is itself an absorbed and pervasive feature of the body's intelligent engagement with the world. It is not, as Dreyfus construes it, a verbalized and propositional reconstruction of a prior experience of engagement that was itself nonconceptual, where its perceived propositional features arose only post hoc in descriptive reconstruction. As McDowell notes, "We should not suppose conceptual capacities come into play, in connection with empirical knowledge, only downstream from experience."¹⁴

In other words, on McDowell's view, conceptual capacities are not actualized by taking a step back from and evaluating things from a distance; concepts are in fact ingredient in the bringing to presence of the objects in our perceptual cognition in the first place. However, it is important to note here that saying perception is shot through with conceptuality is not the same as saying that things have been perceived or understood correctly, or even optimally. The point is more humbly that action is guided—consciously or not, correctly or not—by reasons for doing

¹² McDowell, "The Myth of the Mind as Detached," 41.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 42.

things, reasons that are grounded in our nonreflexive understanding that a situation is a certain way, and that we should respond—again, consciously or not, correctly or not—in a manner appropriate to our abilities, coupled with our understanding of a situation.

Nevertheless, Dreyfus is surely right that the Myth of the Mental, which incorrectly sees action as the execution from a distance of rational and deliberate reasons for behavior, needs to be replaced with an alternative account of perception, action, and cognition. At the same time, this account must be explicit about how it is that the intuitive responses to environmental solicitations that Dreyfus sees as key to practical action come to be what they are. In other words, how is that “external forces” show up for something that is not self-conscious awareness but is still capable of semantic recognition and skilled response to meaningful solicitation?¹⁵ One answer is to follow McDowell in seeing the conceptual as co-arising with perception. However, in seeing the conceptual as basic to perception, one need not assume a definition of concepts that requires explicit propositions, declarative speech, or conscious rule following.

Montero is persuasive on this issue in her view that language can and does mediate sensory attention, but that we as actors are also quite capable of attending to details without articulating in words what, exactly, we are attending to. “For example,” writes Montero, “you are not or at least need not be thinking *this sunset exhibits the most spectacular array of colors I have ever seen*. Nonetheless, you may be attending to the scene before you.”¹⁶ Montero continues, “According to Dreyfus as well as a number of psychologists the expert performs best when she does not conceptualize her actions. I take conceptualization roughly to be a process of

¹⁵ Do nonreflexive phenomena show up for a “someone,” at this basic level? This is not clear.

¹⁶ Montero, *Thought in Action*, 44.

understanding one thing as falling in a certain category, a process which can be, though is not necessarily, verbalizable.”¹⁷ Conceptualization and verbalization are on this view discrete tasks.

In other words, Montero is suggesting that meaningful conceptual attention, interleaved with empirical particularity, makes attending without articulating possible, if not a common mode of engagement with environments. McDowell agrees when he writes, “Our rational mindedness is *in* our sensory awareness and intentional bodily movements, whether or not they are explicitly self-conscious.”¹⁸ The order of conceptual syntheses that make available the meaning and appearance of phenomena are in this way tied to and ingredient in the causal order of the larger ecological system, even at the level of motor intentionality. The philosopher Jason Stanley sums up this distinction well when he suggests that the knowledge how to perform correctly does not need to be explicitly consulted in conscious thought or verbalized in language in order to be put into use; it just needs to be held and available to the performer in order for it to guide action without explicit reflection.¹⁹

For her part, Montero goes farther than McDowell in suggesting that, not only is the conceptual a key component of skillful action and absorbed coping, but argues that the zone of skillful action is itself punctuated by moments of deliberation and second-order perception. “Contrary to the idea that expert action proceeds automatically,” writes Montero, “I argue that experts in fact present a model of Socratic rationality, exemplifying both grounded knowledge of their actions and self-awareness.”²⁰ In other words, argues Montero, “effort, thought, bodily,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁸ McDowell, “The Myth of the Mind as Detached,” 56.

¹⁹ Stanley, *Know How*, 24.

²⁰ Montero, *Thought in Action*, 31.

awareness, and other such psychological factors are generally integral to the smooth, apparently effortless execution of expert-level skills.”²¹

In supporting the view that expert action often involves conscious monitoring, Montero paints quite a different picture from those of Dreyfus and McDowell. However, Montero’s point is not that unconscious execution of movement plays no role in expert action—it clearly does—her point is more that modes of self-reflective attending to action are just as trainable, and are just as advantageous to accomplishing a goal, as are the movements themselves. Moreover, Montero suggests that the real conflict may be between declarative and nondeclarative modes of attending and monitoring, rather than between thinking and absorbed action per se.²² In other words, Montero argues for nondeclarative modes of sensory and cognitive attention, leaving “open the possibility that we may have concepts that are not verbalizable.”²³

But in what ways can we justify the claim that skilled attending without discursive articulation is possible? One path forward is to suggest that, if language is a medium of thought, it is not the only medium of thought, and, closer to the argument of this paper, it is not the only medium through which the conceptual emerges. One can imagine, for example, a nonverbal thinking in the mode of geometric images or graphic movie-like scenes rather than words. There is no reason to assume that thinking cannot take place through a multi-modal display. More to the point, what is required here is not the ability to express things in words, but to make conceptual judgments through a variety of a practices and communicative processes. For such images to convey meaningful content, they would still need some conceptual comportment that could deliver an understanding of meaning, with or without exclusively verbal expression.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ Ibid., 45.

In other words, embodied action on this account still deals in a kind of judgment, though not necessarily linguistic, expressively conscious, or reflectively distanced kinds of it. In this context, Montero appeals to a class of nondeclarative concepts that give meaning to intuitive response and expert action. In other words, for Montero, the intuitive is the site of sedimented conceptual understanding, geared towards the solicitations of a specific environment.²⁴ (This is also what McDowell, appealing to Aristotle, calls second nature, or “cultivated rationality.”²⁵)

On this view, the embodied conceptual structure of intuition, as found in, for example, learned movement, may be separable from the abilities tied to language use. A judgment is more like a habit in this sense, an automatic and preconscious execution of context-bound semantic associations, acquired in experience. In fact, it appears from this view that the nonlinguistic capacity for conceptual discrimination is the very condition of possibility for language, rather than the other way around. The linguistic on this view is a translation of a prior conceptual mediation, rather than a prerequisite for conceptual competence, as is sometimes argued.

At this point, the reader can perhaps anticipate that Dreyfus, still following Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, is skeptical of the idea that all intelligible perception and skillful coping is implicitly conceptual.²⁶ Again, though, Dreyfus is concerned with a specific kind of context-invariant, propositional, and linguistic concept—the kind of concept that could never adequately capture the particular singularity of actual contextual events—as seen, for instance, when he invokes Robert Brandom’s idea that to grasp a concept is to master the use of a word.²⁷

Separating expert action from word use is the right move, but when Dreyfus then appeals to a

²⁴ See Montero, *Thought in Action*, 233–236.

²⁵ McDowell in “The Myth of the Mind as Detached” writes, “The concept of second nature applies to any responsive propensities that are not inborn or provided for by ordinary biological maturation but acquired through, for example, training,” 51.

²⁶ Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping*, 110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

“space of motivations” in the place of a “space of reasons,” Dreyfus drops us back into a zone where we are left to explain how solicitations and motivations from the environment draw us to act in intuitively immediate ways. In other words, we are back to the question of intuition.

Rethinking the Conceptual: Ecology and Skills of the Understanding

In order to understand how a space of motivations might work, it seems that the conceptual must to some degree be ingredient in the structure of intuition, in the cultivated rationality or second nature of McDowell’s account. But what is a concept on this view? It certainly cannot be the kind of declarative and detached representational item that Montero and Dreyfus both agree impede expert action, and even everyday practical comportment, for that matter. Concepts in this sense must be something else, they cannot be, as Dreyfus notes elsewhere, “context-free principles or rules that could be used to guide actions or at least make them intelligible,”²⁸ simply because the objects and affordances we encounter are not context free either, they are rather singular, relational, and tied to uniquely complex ecologies of materials and processes. How, then, do we talk about concepts without falling back into the Myth of the Mental?

An appealing option here is to re-read the conceptual as a skill of the understanding, and to in turn read the understanding as implicated in perception. This is the path Alva Noë takes, and in so doing he offers a few key resources for resolving the tension between nonconceptual solicitation and immediate intuitive response, on the one hand, and the inferential and semantic qualities of the concept, on the other. In appealing to “the continuity of thought and experience,”²⁹ Noë reads the conceptual and the sensory as one entangled continuum of perception, as McDowell and Montero also do, but he reads the conceptual along the lines of a

²⁸ Ibid., 117.

²⁹ Noë, *Varieties of Presence*, 25.

nonrepresentational set of skills for achieving access to things, much as Dreyfus says is the case with intuitive responses to solicitations.

Noë writes, “A concept is a technique for grasping something. It is a tool or a technique of access,” and further, “[Concepts] are rather skills for taking holding of what there is. To say that perceptual experience is *conceptual*, from this standpoint, is to say that perceptual experience is a *skillful* grappling with what there is.”³⁰ Finally, accommodating Dreyfus’s criticism of the traditional view of concepts, Noë adds, “Don’t think of a concept as a label you can slap on a thing; think of it as a pair of calipers with which you can pick the thing up.”³¹

In viewing the conceptual as a component of skilled understanding, Noë is able to support his primary claim that perceptual presence is always an achievement of the effort, skill, and knowledge of the person. In other words, for Noë, thinking and perceiving occur simultaneously, and these abilities together lead to the world “showing up” for the observer in a way that matches his or her skills of access, to the modes of available skillful grappling with what is.³² This approach leaves in play the reality of the conceptual’s influence on embodied action, but it also reads the conceptual as thoroughly constellated within a background of practice and effort, as a set of abilities that tightly couple the person with the environment, not unlike the perceptual enrichment afforded in Dreyfus’s and Merleau-Ponty’s intentional arc.

Thus when thinking about the concept with McDowell and Montero, it becomes clear, contra Dreyfus’s picture of the intentional arc,³³ that thinking of knowledge and concepts on a basic model of repetition or trial and error is insufficient. Again, the issue hinges precisely on the internal structure of intuition, on how it is we come to learn what to do and how to repeat. If the

³⁰ Ibid., 35.

³¹ Ibid., 36.

³² Ibid., 35.

³³ Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping*, 111.

structure of intuitive response demands an inferential or meaning-communicating component, then it is also true that intuitive development requires a further series of judgments, sedimented over time through instances of correct repetition. This fact in mind, it becomes clear that the intentional arc requires for its success some amount of semantic content in order for it to yield the increasingly rich surplus of detail that it generates in the agent. In other words, repetition in the intentional arc must be knowledge directed.

This picture, if it is on the right track, suggests that we learn to associate certain environmental cues, constructed from our knowledge and past experience, with certain actions that we modulate in the moment based on the cues that we receive. The cues themselves are not brute facts or raw sense impressions, they are rather semantic features we construct and learn to feature in perception and decision making as our goals shift dynamically across contexts. In this process, accurate judgment, and thus inference-delivering knowledge, is central. Intelligent action, even in its most responsive and immediate form, is for this reason partly conceptual.

The conceptual furnishes for us, to borrow a few words from Andy Clark, with “successful, world-engaging prediction.”³⁴ Clark in this context speaks of the “cognitive co-emergence” of knowing, perceiving, and understanding, where our predicting is based in part on tandem appraisals about the body (and what it is capable of) and about the world (and what it is like). In this so-called predictive processing model of cognition our top-down guessing, based on stored knowledge and past experience, engages the shifting bottom-up sensory manifold that meets our bodies as we move through the world.³⁵ On this view, the knowledge we have obtained alters what we are able to see and how we are able to engage with the world. In agreement with the position of this paper, Clark adds that such “knowledge-based effects” in

³⁴ Clark, *Surfing Uncertainty*, xiv.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

perception do not require that such knowledge be consciously accessible to a reflective knowledge; it is rather a subpersonal process that conjoins brain, body, and world simultaneously in perception.³⁶

The concept re-emerges then as an activity, as a way of acting upon one's actions; it reorganizes the content and meaning of perception, affording new sites of engagement. As Noë and Dreyfus would no doubt agree, a concept on this view cannot be thought of as a singular item or as an invariable and context-free set of rules to follow. Rather, the concept ought to be viewed in the light of the ecology of practices and concepts within which it is a member. I use the term *ecology* in this way both as a metaphor, in the sense that knowledge and concepts often form complex webs of reference and meaning, but also in the more literal sense that knowledge and concepts enact a transformation in the person's perceptual field, through a micro-evolution in the increasingly elaborate intentional arc of engagement with the environment.

The question then is not, how do environmental affordances elicit nonconceptual responses—this is impossible in the context of skilled action—but rather, how does our faculty of judgment and imagination select among the possible inferences rendered available in a given moment so as to successfully guide action towards its goal or telos. What separates experts from nonexperts in this sense, then, is not that experts merely have more available data points (drawn from a greater number of previous and similar scenarios) that allow for better predictions and responses than nonexperts, it is also that they are able to arrange meaningfully the array of incoming events in a fashion that permits in-the-moment judgments about what to select from the field of sensation, and that they can in turn generate fast responses in tune with the goal. In fact, even making a judgment about what constitutes the maximally beneficial goal is itself a judgment that organizes priorities among incoming solicitations for action.

³⁶ Ibid., 55.

Stated differently, the role of judgment in intuition implicates knowledge in the structure of our responses to solicitations. Knowledge must be more than mere trial-and-error repetition because it must also include a decision about *what* and *how* to practice and repeat. Knowing what to practice and how to practice correctly goes beyond mere repetition and invokes the knowledge needed to judge the what, when, and why of a situation. This accumulation of intuitive ability gained through practice and correct judgment means that the iterative pattern of acquiring new intuitions should not be thought of as merely an aggregate of past scenarios (i.e., as contextual memories), but as repetitions that, when practiced correctly, involve judgment and meaningful discrimination exercised throughout the process of training and skill building. This is what Montero's cognition-in-action principle looks like when applied to repetition and learning.

In this sense we can say, to coin another term, that knowledge ecologies participate in each individual's embodied cognition, aiding in bringing to presence the phenomena that become available to the individual. The adept person on this account brings to his or her environments an ecology of practices and knowledge. With Dreyfus, then, it is correct to say that the environment plays a substantial role in cuing up for the person the solicitations available for engagement, but it is also correct that the person's learned repertoire of knowledge and skills play a role in accessing the structure of solicitation and the intuitive responses that are available within a given scenario. Along these lines, the concept is a kind of craft of perception, a pulling together of sensations and affordances in the perceptual field. Insofar as such objects yield meaningful discernment, the concept becomes an act of transformation in the conscious experience of the individual, allowing him or her new capacities for action not available to the unskilled. The concept reorganizes perception and affords new landscapes for perceptual engagement.

There is a recursive relation, then, between concepts and instances of apprehension, or, stated another way, there is an ecology of concepts that participates in ecologies of action and perception. The concept is a process, a technique, for achieving a certain kind of access to things. One could think of the concept as a specific habit of recognition or apprehension; it is a way of doing things to and in perception. The synthesis of perception accomplished by the concept is thus never achieved once and for all, as though the concept once learned becomes a fixed feature in the cognitive landscape, it is rather an act that must be accomplished over and over, and always within a more complex and shifting ecological context of practice. This ecological account, then, represents one way of resolving the tensions between Dreyfus, McDowell, and Montero, whilst maintaining the key insights and criticisms of all three positions.

Conclusion

I considered in this paper three competing views of the role of concepts in action and perception. First, I recounted Dreyfus's view that expert action is direct, nonreflective, nonconceptual, and nonminded. This account of absorbed coping positioned the solicitations and external forces of the environment as central to the intuitive responses of the individual, whose deliberative thought only aids in action when flow states breakdown—in other words, when something goes wrong in practical comportment.

Second, I offered McDowell's rejoinder to the nonconceptual account of action. For McDowell, expert action is conceptually mediated because all action must be conceptually mediated in order to be successful. In other words, in order for solicitations to function as Dreyfus says they do, McDowell underscored that inferences must be in play at this level of experience, inferences provided by the conceptual dimension of perception. However, we saw

that McDowell also agrees with Dreyfus that the rational dimension of action is best backgrounded in flow states and cases of optimal performance.

Finally, I described Montero's view that intuitive responses to environmental solicitations, even at the expert level, are conceptually mediated (though are not necessarily declarative in an explicitly linguistic sense). Moreover, I reviewed Montero's I think successful argument that experts not only access modes of conscious deliberation, in and out of flow, but that they do so regularly, even when performing certain actions and while the situation is perceived as proceeding successfully.

In summary, the concept was repositioned as a skill of the understanding that affords meaningful discernment and possibilities for action. The concept on this view is an act of transformation in the experience of the individual, allowing him or her new capacities for acting upon the organization of perception and action. In thinking of concepts as skills of the understanding, to use Noë's term once more, we find a new philosophy of action, grounded in the person's ecology of skills, practices, and knowledge, that can synthesize the insights found in the important works of Dreyfus, McDowell, and Montero.

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