
Concepts: What is the best way to characterize them?

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Often investigations on concepts start with the premise that concepts are a unitary phenomenon. We only have to search for the core features which constitute a concept and the possession of a concept. At least when we look into the philosophical debate, we have to account for concepts of individual objects, of properties, events, processes. We should account for the difference between folk-psychological and scientific concepts as well as for the difference between single feature concepts and cluster concepts; and we should also be able to account for phenomenal concepts as well as for natural kind concepts. Is it possible to have a unitary framework which adequately account for all of these types of concepts? I will argue that we can characterize a unitary framework for the relevant information which is involved in the different types of concepts but we need to distinguish different mental strategies to handle this information to account for the variety of concepts. Since the mental strategies are rather different (e.g. relying on definitional features in contrast to relying on a pattern of visual features), the unitary informational organization is only a minor aspect of concepts. The mental strategies seem to be much more important to characterize our use of concepts.