**Content with Publicity**

**Section 0: Introduction**

Suppose Jimmy is thirsty and currently holding a bottle of water. Suppose another individual, Lois, is thirsty as well and also holding a bottle of water. Suppose each drinks from their respective bottle, afterwards serendipitously uttering “I was thirsty!” A plausible partial explanation for why Jimmy and Lois behave similarly is that they have the same attitudes. Among other things, each appears to desire to drink water and believes the bottle of water they hold is a means to satisfy the desire. Granting the plausibility of this partial explanation in terms of sharing attitudes, one may wonder if a full explanation requires John and Mary also share the same *concepts*, i.e. mental representations such as WATER or THIRST.[[1]](#footnote-1) Several researchers working at the intersection of philosophy and psychology answer affirmatively.[[2]](#footnote-2) Indeed, many claim any adequate theory of concepts must permit sharing of concepts, a requirement Jerry Fodor calls the *publicity constraint*.[[3]](#footnote-3) Fodor, in fact, goes as far as claiming publicity is non-negotiable, i.e. theories in violation ought to be rejected outright.[[4]](#footnote-4) That such a claim is substantial is evidenced by Fodor’s deployment of the publicity constraint in arguments against, among others, inferential role semantic theories of concepts.[[5]](#footnote-5) Given the importance he places on publicity, it is perhaps ironic that a seemingly powerful argument[[6]](#footnote-6) of Fodor’s to the publicity constraint is unsound. Spelling this out will occupy us in what follows.

In **Section 1**, I examine motivation for requiring theories of concepts meet the publicity constraint. I also extract, explain, and motivate four premises Fodor employs in arguing for the publicity constraint. In passing, I outline aspects of Fodor’s Language of Thought Hypothesis, paying particular attention to the representational and computational theories of mind. In **Section 2**, I formalize and defend Fodor’s argument that generalizable laws of psychology entail concepts must be public. I then evaluate Fodor’s argument, ultimately declaring it unsound given his commitment to an informational semantic account of mental state content coupled with his response to Frege Puzzles which plague such accounts. On Fodor’s behalf, I propose motivating the publicity constraint via argument to the best explanation, while noting such a tactic is an uphill battle.

**Section 1: Fodor and Publicity**

In this section, I motivate the publicity constraint, and establish four premises for Fodor’s argument to that conclusion.[[7]](#footnote-7) In discussing each premise, I introduce several salient commitments of Fodor’s, in anticipation of the explanation and evaluation of Fodor’s argument in the next section.

*The Publicity Constraint*

Fodor included publicity on an influential list of constraints on any adequate theory of concepts.[[8]](#footnote-8) The publicity constraint requires any adequate theory of concepts must permit concepts to be shared between distinct agents.[[9]](#footnote-9) That is not to say distinct agents must be able to share *token*, or numerically identical, concepts; sharing of concept *types* is sufficient. Jimmy and Lois, for example, need only be permitted to share respective tokens of the same concept type WATER.

The publicity constraint is not difficult to motivate. One source of motivation is that shared concepts appear required for communication.[[10]](#footnote-10) For example, if Jimmy is looking for a snack and asks Lois if there are any apples nearby, plausibly, for Lois to understand and respond to Jimmy she must at least have the same concept APPLE as Jimmy. Otherwise, Jimmy and Lois would have distinct concepts in mind, which would make Lois’s subsequent behavior, say, pointing to a basket nearby which containing apples, appear accidental. Another source of motivation is that shared concepts appear required for disagreement.[[11]](#footnote-11) For example, were Lois and Jimmy to dispute over whether there are apples nearby, it seems they must again have the same concept APPLE in mind. Otherwise, they would apparently be talking passed one another. It is, of course, plausible verbal, merely verbal, or otherwise insubstantial disagreements arise.[[12]](#footnote-12) Still, absent publicity, it seems nearly all putatively substantial disagreements are anything but, or so this motivation for publicity goes.

Each motivation just considered is reasonably understood as an argument for the publicity constraint as the best explanation for observed data. Of course, while concept sharing may seem a natural explanation, it need not be the *best* explanation.[[13]](#footnote-13) There may be less obvious, but better, candidates. Putting that aside, classifying the preceding as arguments to the best explanation contrasts them with a stronger, deductive, motivation for the publicity constraint offered by Fodor. Fodor claimed the publicity constraint follows from certain defensible commitments concerning the nature of thought and thinking.[[14]](#footnote-14) More specifically, Fodor claimed certain law-like generalizations of scientific psychology *entail* the sharing of concepts. The idea is, broadly speaking, if scientific psychology is to be a viable enterprise, it must be able to formulate generalized claims about agents it studies, and these generalized claims require agents have the same concepts.[[15]](#footnote-15) If correct, and if Fodor’s assumptions concerning the nature of mental activity are granted, one need not rule out candidate explanations for certain behavioral evidence to motivate the publicity constraint. It is sufficient that viable scientific psychology requires it.[[16]](#footnote-16)

It is thus worth investigating this stronger motivation for the publicity constraint, if anything to save ourselves labor. We will then extract plausible premises for Fodor’s conclusion, explaining Fodor’s commitments as we proceed, with the aim of constructing a (classically) valid argument resulting in the publicity constraint as its conclusion.

*Premises (1) and (2): Scientific Psychology and Intentional Generalizations*

Fodor defended the philosophical tractability[[17]](#footnote-17) of scientific psychology. Important for our purposes, Fodor claimed mature scientific psychology would likely maintain certain features of folk psychology,[[18]](#footnote-18) namely, that mental states be understood as *intentional* and involved in *genuine causal explanations*.[[19]](#footnote-19) For a mental state to be intentional is for that state to be “about” something. For a mental state to be involved in genuine causal explanations is for that state to be indispensable[[20]](#footnote-20) in explaining the behavior of the agent of the state. Combining these folk notions with scientific psychology which is, in part, concerned with uncovering generalizations about its domain, results in scientific psychology seeking to uncover *intentional generalizations*, i.e. generalizations the form: If agent A desires to drink water, then *ceteris paribus*[[21]](#footnote-21), A will attempt to drink water.[[22]](#footnote-22) Insofar as formulations range over agents, they are general, and insofar such explanations involve mental states linked to behavior or other mental states, they are genuinely causal.

These brief observations, perhaps surprisingly, supply Fodor’s argument for the publicity of concepts with its first and second premises. First, scientific psychology is a viable science. That is, Fodor assumes the tasks undertaken by scientific psychology in characterizing its domain may accurately reflect that domain. Second, if so then scientific psychology will employ intentional generalizations about agents in its domain. We turn next to extracting Fodor’s third premise.

*Premise (3): Representational Theory of Mind*

In pursuance of defending the philosophical tractability of scientific psychology, Fodor famously defended the Language of Thought Hypothesis (LOT),[[23]](#footnote-23) an empirical thesis concerning the nature of mental activity characterized in terms of a sort of mental language.[[24]](#footnote-24) The scope of LOT is restricted to a certain class of mental states: *propositional attitudes*. Generally, propositional attitudes are understood as thoughts characterized by sentences of the form: “A φ p” where “A” denotes the agent of the attitude, “φ” an attitude such as believes or desires, and “p” a proposition.[[25]](#footnote-25) More specific to LOT, propositional attitudes are relations between agents and *mental representations*,[[26]](#footnote-26) an aspect of LOT known as the Representational Theory of Mind (RTM). For Jimmy to believe proposition p according to RTM is for Jimmy to stand in the belief relation to a mental representation which has as its content p. Similar remarks apply to other attitudes Jimmy has.

According to RTM, propositional attitudes inherit content from the content of the mental representation to which an agent is related. For example, Jimmy believes there is a glass of water on the table just in case there is a belief relation between Jimmy and a mental representation, the content of which is *there is a glass on the table*. Hence, RTM treats mental states as semantically evaluable, i.e. they may be true/false, accurate/inaccurate, satisfied/unsatisfied, etc.[[27]](#footnote-27) Jimmy’s belief about the glass is true just in case the representation of the glass to which Jimmy bears a belief relation is true. The truth of Jimmy’s belief then is inherited from the truth of the representation.

RTM provides the resources to introduce Fodor’s third premise. As a first pass: If there are intentional generalizations, it seems there are distinct agents with the same mental state, i.e. with the same propositional attitude.[[28]](#footnote-28) While not problematic, there is an implicit feature of this premise worth elaborating. Recall, our example intentional generalizations above took the form: If agent A desires to drink water, then *ceteris paribus*, A will attempt to drink water. Observe, this is general only over agents, with both the propositional attitude and its content fixed. Alignment with intentional generalizations thus construed then requires there be distinct agents sharing both a propositional attitude and content. We make this more perspicuous with our second pass: If there are intentional generalizations, there are distinct agents bearing propositional attitudes of the same type to the same content. We turn next to Fodor’s fourth, and final, premise.

*Premise (4): The Computational Theory of the Mind*

RTM provides a satisfying way to characterize mental states, but provides no insight into how mental states may be coherently causally connected to other mental states. That task is handled by another aspect of LOT, the Computational Theory of Mind (CTM). According to CTM, mental representations form a symbolic system which has both combinatorial syntax and semantics. To say a system of mental representations has a *combinatorial* *syntax* is to say the system employs atomic and complex representations, where complexes are composed of atomic or other complex representations. To say a system of mental representations has a *combinatorial semantics* is to say the semantic content of representations is a function of the semantic content of the syntactic constituents.[[29]](#footnote-29) That is to say, in the symbolic system of mental representations, atomic representations provide a base for complex mental representations, where the content of each is determined by the contents of its constituent parts. More specifically, there are rules of formation defined over mental representations which determine what complex representations are permitted, and operations defined over mental representations which are sensitive to the syntactic features, e.g. shape, size, location, etc., of said representations.[[30]](#footnote-30)

It is worth emphasizing that while according to CTM representations have both semantic and syntactic features, only the latter are involved in symbol manipulation. Indeed, syntactic features of mental representations are claimed sufficient to explain causal connections preserving semantic features one expects among propositional attitudes understood along the lines of RTM.[[31]](#footnote-31) To illustrate the point, consider if Jimmy believes there is water in his hand which will satisfy his thirst, then plausibly Jimmy bears attitudes to mental representations, i.e. concepts such as WATER and THIRST, among others. Presumably, these mental representations will have semantic content, e.g. *water*, *thirst*, respectively. But a physical system need not be directly sensitive to semantic content to explain causal connections among propositional attitudes. That is, Jimmy’s representational system need only be sensitive to rules such as: If the system has ‘water’ input, then output ‘water satisfies thirst’, i.e. rules sensitive only to syntactic properties of mental representations such as WATER and WATER SATISFIES THIRST. Like the rules of classical logic, representational system rules and operations are content-neutral, but defined in such a way to preserve desirable semantic properties.

RTM coupled with CTM provides impressive benefits. Of particular importance is the result appears to explain the empirical fact that thought is *compositionality*.[[32]](#footnote-32) According to Fodor, compositionality is that feature of our thought that explains how it is both *productive* and *systematic*. Productivity reflects the absence of an upper bound on what thoughts we may entertain. For example, Jimmy might believe there are apples in a basket, or might believe there apples and bananas in the basket, or might believe there are apples, which are on top of oranges, in the basket, and so on. Systematicity reflects our ability to, when entertaining a thought, to entertain permutations of that thought. For example, assuming Jimmy entertains apples are to the right of the basket, he might also entertain apples are to the left of the basket, etc. According to RTM and CTM, compositionality is explained in virtue of the fact that thought involves mental representations and recursive rules defined over them. Consequently, an infinite number of complex representations may be constructed (productivity) and logically permuted (systematicity).

Moreover, CTM and RTM provide the resources to introduce Fodor’s final premise. Observe from RTM and the combinatorial syntax and semantics of CTM, it follows the content of a propositional attitude is determined by the content of its constituent parts. Then the respective contents of distinct agents bearing attitudes of the same type is determined by the content of respective constituent parts. Now, consider Jimmy and Lois again, both desiring water. This time, however, assume they are sharing a water bottle. Plausibly, they both bear the same attitude type, desire, to the same *bottle of water*. That is, Jimmy and Lois share content with respect to their token desires. Since, say, the content of Jimmy’s desire is determined by its constituent parts, and since among these constituent parts is the concept WATER, and since the same may be said of Lois, then Jimmy and Lois also share the concept WATER, among others. This is, in effect, an instance of Fodor’s fourth premise. More generally: If distinct individuals have token attitudes of the same type to the same content, then they have attitudes with token concepts of the same types.

But distinct individuals sharing concepts of the same type is just the publicity constraint. We have thus collected four premises which appear to entail this constraint. We check our work in the next section, and check Fodor’s as well.

**Section 2: Publicity Argument Unsound**

In this section, we characterize Fodor’s argument more precisely, motivate each premise further, and evaluate the argument as a whole. Our evaluation reveals Fodor’s argument unsound, and we specify where exactly it fails. We close this section by considering a response on Fodor’s behalf.

*Fodor’s Publicity Argument Extracted*

In rough outline Fodor’s argument for publicity is that intentional generalizations of scientific psychology require the sharing of concepts. More explicitly, Fodor claims that if scientific psychology is to be a viable scientific enterprise, then it will seek to uncover intentional generalizations about entities in its domain. For intentional generalizations to be general, they must apply to distinct agents, and *a fortiori*, distinct token attitudes of agents, which are nevertheless of the same attitude type. This holds, in particular, when distinct agents bear attitudes of the same type to the same content. But since content is determined by concepts, distinct agents bearing the same attitude to the same content thereby have the same concepts. Hence, concepts must be public. Altogether then:

1. Scientific psychology is a viable science
2. If scientific psychology is a viable science, there are intentional generalizations
3. If there are intentional generalizations, then there are distinct individuals bearing token attitudes of the same type to the same content
4. If distinct individuals bear token attitudes of the same type to the same content, then they have token attitudes with token concepts of the same type
5. Hence, distinct individuals have token attitudes with token concepts of the same type

*Fodor’s Publicity Argument Explained*

The argument is valid. Let us examine whether it is sound. We assume **(1)**, since it is plausible enough, and defense would take us far afield. Recall though, scientific psychology is said to be viable if, roughly, the tasks undertaken in inquiry concerning its domain may accurately reflect that domain. Concerning premise **(2)**, assume psychology is a viable science. We must show there must therefore be intentional generalizations. Now, as a science, psychology attempts to uncover generalizations about its target domain. Mental states fall within this domain, and they are intentional and exhibit causal connections to other mental states and associated behaviors. Hence, scientific psychology is tasked, at least in part, with uncovering generalizations about intentional mental states exhibiting causal connections to other mental states and associated behaviors, i.e. intentional generalizations. Since scientific psychology is assumed viable, these generalizations may be accurate, which suffices for our purposes to say there are such generalizations. Hence, **(2)** is true.

Concerning premise **(3)**, assume there are intentional generalizations. We must show there are distinct individuals bearing token attitudes of the same type to the same content. Since there are intentional generalizations, there are at least two distinct individuals with token attitudes of the same type. Then we must show some such pair has the same content. Note, an example of an intentional generalization might be of the form: If agent X desires the glass of water on the table, then *ceteris paribus*, X will attempt to acquire the glass of water on the table. For example, if Jimmy wants the glass of water on the table, then *ceteris paribus*, Jimmy will attempt to acquire the glass of water on the table. Similarly, if Lois wants the glass of water on the table, then *ceteris paribus*, Lois will attempt to acquire the glass of water on the table. However, if Jimmy and Lois fall under this intentional generalization, then at least two distinct individuals bear token attitudes of the same type to the same content, i.e. *the glass of water on the table*.[[33]](#footnote-33) Hence, **(3)** is true.

Concerning premise **(4)**, assume distinct individuals have token attitudes of the same type with the same content. We must show they have attitudes with token concepts of the same type. Here we rely on combining RTM and CTM. The content of a given propositional attitude is determined by the content of its parts. Relying on our running example, observe since Jimmy and Lois both desire, say, the same glass of water, they both have token attitudes of the same type and share the same content *glass of water*. But then Jimmy and Lois must share the same concepts, since concepts are the constituents which determine content. Hence, **(4)** is true. Moreover, since **(1)**-**(4)** are true, **(5)** follows as a matter of logic. Hence, **(5)** is true.

*Fodor’s Publicity Argument Evaluated*

At least, this is how Fodor’s argument from commitments of LOT to the publicity constraint seems to work.[[34]](#footnote-34) The preceding discussion suggested the argument is sound, but there was illicit justification. Grant **(1)**-**(3)** for the sake of argument, but return to **(4)**. In justifying this premise, we relied on RTM and CTM, in particular, the claim that the content of a given propositional attitude is determined by the content of its parts. But we have misapplied Fodor’s commitments. We may grant for the sake of argument that RTM and CTM, with respect to concepts, entail distinct individuals with token attitudes of the same type sharing type identical concepts thereby have the same content, but we cannot grant the converse. For RTM and CTM applied to concepts does not entail that distinct individuals with token attitudes of the same type sharing the same content thereby share type identical concepts. Given another of Fodor’s commitments, the same content *cannot* in general entail concepts of the same type.[[35]](#footnote-35)

To see why, observe first that despite the impressive framework provided by accepting RTM and CTM, neither exactly provides an explanation for the intentionality – the “aboutness” – of concepts, or mental representations more generally. For that, LOT accepts Informational Atomism (IA).[[36]](#footnote-36) IA is the view that concepts are unstructured atoms whose content is determined by informational relations they bear to the environment. For our purposes, the important feature of IA is that the meaning of a concept is exhausted by its reference; hence, concepts are about things because they bear certain sorts of relations to things. For example, Jimmy’s concept WATER is about *water* because, roughly, instances of the latter co-vary with tokens of the former. IA provides a natural story for how concepts, and thereby complex mental representations, acquire intentionality, and fits nicely with RTM and CTM, i.e. the contents of a complex mental representations being determined by the contents of constituent parts.

However, IA is not without problems. One pressing issue is that since it entails meanings are exhausted by reference, IA is susceptible to *Frege Puzzles*.[[37]](#footnote-37) Consider Lois once again. Suppose rational Lois believes the Daily Planet reporter Clark Kent is weak and, concurrently, believes the Metropolis superhero Superman is strong, and the constituents of Lois’s beliefs include concepts such as CLARK, WEAK, SUPERMAN, STRONG. Moreover, suppose Lois is ignorant of the fact that Clark and Superman are the same individual, and believes the property of being strong precludes the property of being weak, and vice versa. If the meanings of mental representations are exhausted by their reference, then it seems Lois believes contradictory things. For the referent of CLARK and SUPERMAN is the same individual, and yet Lois is attributing incompatible properties to this individual. Yet, we claimed Lois is rational - not a happy result. Now, Fodor was aware IA is susceptible to such puzzles.[[38]](#footnote-38) In response, Fodor claimed syntactic properties of Lois’s mental representations were sufficient to maintain Lois as rational. In particular, while the content of Lois’s concepts CLARK and SUPERMAN is the same individual, the concepts themselves are of distinct *syntactic* types. Because these symbols differ with respect to syntactic type, they will differ with respect to the informational relations they enter into. Put another way - Lois believes Clark/Superman has properties under distinct modes of presentation, where the distinctness is characterized in terms of syntactic properties of mental representations.

Whatever one thinks of this response to Frege Puzzles, Fodor’s commitments here make trouble for his argument to the publicity constraint as construed above. Given this answer, the same content cannot in general entail type identical concepts. Lois has the same content corresponding to her concepts CLARK and SUPERMAN, namely, the denoted individual. However, these are distinct concepts involved in distinct informational relations. Similarly, distinct individuals may have the same content but distinct concept types. Suppose, for example, Jimmy knows Clark and Superman are the same individual. Then Lois and Jimmy bear token attitudes of the same type to the same content, but nevertheless for Lois CLARK and SUPERMAN are distinct, while for Jimmy CLARK and SUPERMAN are the same. Then Fodor cannot rely on such justification for premise **(4)**. That is, even if distinct agents have token attitudes of the same type to the same content, it does not follow they have attitudes with token concepts of the same type. Hence, **(4)** is false, and Fodor’s argument for the publicity constraint unsound.

*Response: Argument to the Best Explanation*

Fodor might respond in a number of ways.[[39]](#footnote-39) In the interests of space, we examine one: Fodor might drop the deductive argument entirely and rely on arguments to the best explanation. As indicated at the outset of this article, communication and disagreement appear to presuppose public concepts. Hence, communication and disagreement seem best explained by appealing to public concepts. If so, then any theory of concepts should permit sharing of concepts, i.e. the publicity constraint. Fodor himself appears to argue in just this manner in places.[[40]](#footnote-40) Moreover, rather than relying on intentional generalizations and other plausible assumptions to entail the publicity constraint, Fodor might attempt to argue in favor of publicity as the best explanation for intentional generalizations we well.

Of course, as noted earlier, to be an effective argument to the best explanation for the publicity constraint it is insufficient that an explanation be simply plausible, or natural, or good. It must be the best. Or at least, rival candidate explanations must be ruled out. An example rival candidate might take a lesson from the preceding results, and claim that the publicity constraint is too restrictive. Rather than requiring agents share concepts, it might be claimed, all that is needed is agents share the same attitude types to the same content, leaving concepts aside. If so, Jimmy and Lois, say, may communicate about and disagree over Clark/Superman despite having distinct concept types. That is, they may bear the same attitude types to the same content.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The force of reliance on an argument to the best explanation will then depend on whether such alternatives can be ruled out in a manner that leaves the publicity constraint a clear victor. Alas, that was just the labor we were trying to avoid in investigating Fodor’s publicity argument.

**Section 3: Conclusion**

Many researchers champion the publicity constraint for any adequate theory of concepts. Here, we examined a strong argument offered by Fodor to the effect that if one accepts plausible assumptions concerning scientific psychology and the nature of the mind, then one is committed to the publicity constraint as a consequence. Scrutiny revealed, however, that Fodor’s argument is unsound, as it trades on an illicit move from the type sameness of content to the type sameness of concepts. Moreover, given certain other of Fodor’s commitments, i.e. the view that meaning is exhausted by reference and the corresponding solution to Frege Puzzles which plague such views, it is clear that Fodor cannot maintain in general that sameness of content entails sameness of concepts. Of course, there are options Fodor might pursue given these results. In particular, Fodor might argue for the publicity constraint as the best explanation for communication and disagreement. However, such an undertaking involves the not so easy task of ruling out rival explanations for the data.

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1. Concepts, and mental representations more broadly, are represented in what follows in uppercase. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (Prinz, 2002, pgs. 14-15), (Fodor & Lepore, 1992), (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 28-29) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 28-29); (Prinz, 2002, pgs. 4-22) constructs an extended list, but otherwise accepts Fodor’s constraints. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (Fodor, 1998, pg. 24; 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 13-15); more generally, Fodor wielded publicity against semantic holism – all of a concept’s inferential connections are constitutive – claiming since agents likely have at least some unique beliefs, holism entails no agent shares concepts with any other. See (Fodor, 1994, pgs. 8-10) and (Fodor, 2004, p. 35). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 37-39). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. These premises are extracted from the discussion in (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 28-29), with supplements cited below. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In total, Fodor proposes five constraints (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 23-31). Concepts are: mental particulars (pg. 23); categories (pg. 24); the constituents of thoughts from which mental representations inherit content (pg. 25); learned in many cases (pg. 27); public (pg. 28). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Strictly, concepts must also be public among agent time-slices (Fodor, 1998, pg. 29; 115). I ignore this in what follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. (Fodor & Lepore, 1992, pgs. 8-9), (Prinz, 2002, pgs. 14-15), (Clark & Prinz, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. (Fodor & Lepore, 1992, pgs. 11-14) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. (Jenkins, 2014), (Chalmers, 2011) on the distinction between substantial, verbal, and merely verbal disputes. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In fact, it need not be *the* best explanation, e.g. if candidate explanations tie. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “…these constraints…follow from…RTMs with…assumptions about cognitive processes…” (Fodor, 1998, 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 28-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 35-36). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tractable in the sense of being *naturalistic*, i.e. not relying on irreducible non-physical entities, properties, or events. Mental activity within purview is explained in terms of the realizations of brain states (Aydede, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. By this Fodor does not mean just any folk psychology notion will be preserved (Fodor, 1987, pgs. 3-4; 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. (Fodor, 1994, pgs. 3-4; 1998, pg. 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Indispensability is perhaps too strong, but the strength of this characterization will be harmless for what follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Examples of situations this clause is meant to rule out include conflicting desires or beliefs, there being no water, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Fodor provides an example intentional generalization: “If you want to \_\_\_, and you believe you can’t \_\_\_ unless you \_\_\_, then *ceteris paribus*, you will perform an act that is intended to be \_\_\_.” (Fodor, 1994, pg. 4). My version includes conceptual content in the intentional generalization. This makes it easier for Fodor to argue to publicity (see fn. 33 below). While I think Fodor’s argument fails, it is not due to my formulation of intentional generalizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Worth noting is Fodor’s commitments extend beyond what is covered in the sequel, e.g. concept nativism. See (Aydede, 2010) for overview. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Though groundbreaking and still influential, LOT has its rivals, e.g. Connectionism emerged as rival general framework. See (Smolensky, 1990) as a representative defender; (Aydede, 2010) for others. In psychology and cognitive science circles alternative theories of concepts are more common, such as prototype, exemplar, theory, and neo-empiricism theories; See (Fodor, 1998), (Prinz, 2002) for discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Incidentally, we also assume standard characteristics of propositional attitudes, e.g. they may be incomplete (lack of detail; representing something but not a particular thing); they may concern non-existing entities and falsehoods, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 7-8) claims mental representations may be understood as early modern empiricist “ideas”, sans connotation of images. We follow that line here. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. (Fodor, 1994, p.9) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. As with the publicity constraint, this need not mean the same token propositional attitude. Two agents need only token the same type of propositional attitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Propositional Logic provides a useful analogy, as it is a symbolic system with both combinatorial syntax and semantics. Moreover, in standard presentations of propositional logic, syntactic consequence aligns with semantic consequence. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. (Fodor & Lepore, 1992), (Aydede, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. As Fodor puts it, “…the syntax of a symbol might determine the causes and effects of its tokenings in much the same way the geometry of a key determines which lock it will open.” (Fodor, 1987, pgs. 18-19). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. (Fodor, 1987), (Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Note the strength of my formulation of intentional generalizations permits one to infer there *are* two distinct individuals bearing the same attitude type to the same content, rather than, say, there *may be* two such individuals. This is because my formulation includes content directly in the generalization. Compare, Fodor’s formulation (fn. 22) ranges over both agents and contents. A version of **(3)** respecting that formulation would be: If there are intentional generalizations, then there are distinct agents bearing token attitudes of the same type. It is, however, difficult for me to see how this premise may be used to entail publicity. Hence, I use the stronger intentional generalizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 28-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. (Prinz, 2002, pg. 97) makes similar observations while investigating whether Fodor’s theory of concepts satisfies the publicity constraint, a different question from the one occupying us here. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. I stress *Fodor’s* version of LOT, since IA is contentious, as Fodor himself admits in several places. Fodor was motivated to accept IA by process of elimination, claiming it was the only viable option to explain the intentionality of concepts. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Putnam’s well-known Twin Earth Puzzles also generate *prima facie* problems for IA. We stick with Frege here. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. (Fodor, 1998, pgs. 12-22) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. E.g. Fodor might weaken publicity, but leaving it strong enough to rule out, say, inferential semantic accounts of concepts. Alternatively, Fodor might bite the bullet on Frege Puzzles, rejecting them as providing genuine problem cases for scientific psychology. I am skeptical either option is satisfying, and intend examine each in future work. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. (Fodor & Lepore, 1992, pgs. 8-14). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Such a proposal strikes me as similar to Dilip Ninan’s answer to those claiming possible world semantic treatments of de se attitudes undermine communication. On centered world accounts, two agents may bear attitudes to the same content as long as their respective attitudes do not rule out any worlds constituting the content. Or as Ninan playfully puts it, “All the dogs are in the house; all the cats are in the house; yet no dog is a cat.” (Ninan, 2013, pg. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)