**Questions to Consider**

Chapter 10: Concepts and Knowledge

* **What is a concept?**

A concept is a mental representation of a category of things in the world. The conceptual representation is a mental organization of the knowledge we have about categories of things stored in our long-term memories.

* **How are concepts mentally represented?**

The chapter reviewed three main approaches. The classical approach of categories as definitions has generally been refuted on both theoretical and empirical grounds. The prototype approach is that concepts are represented as an abstract average of representative features of the items in a category. The exemplar approach is that concepts are based on sim­ilarities to retrieved memories of previously encoun­tered category members. The knowledge-based approach suggests that conceptual representations must also include theories about how different fea­tures are related.

* **How are concepts and knowledge organized?**

Concepts appear to be organized hierarchically, with general superordinate groupings and more specific subordinate groupings. There is theoretical debate as to whether these hierarchical relationships are directly represented in long-term memory or com­puted through feature comparisons. Additionally, certain levels of the hierarchy are treated as basic-level concepts, showing preferred processing.

* **What do we use concepts for?**

Concepts may underlie most of our cognitive pro­cesses. We use them to categorize things, allowing what we already know about a concept to apply to new instances. Similarly, we can use concepts to make inferences about other similar concepts. We can also combine categories to productively create new and potentially more complex concepts.