Maclachlan's chapters 9, 10,11.

I. The Breakdown.

M's view is that when I hear a fan, I directly perceive a noise (only a sensation) and infer that it is caused by a fan (a physical object). The key point is that inference begins with a "mere" sensation and ends with a claim about the existence of a physical object. Let's spell out this inference in the following conditional:

A. If (a) I directly perceive a noise, then (b) a fan causes this noise.

The traditional objection to this view is that this inference is unjustified. The heart of this objection is that any such inference relies upon past experience which supports only the following conditional (see p. 65):

B. If (a) I have an auditory sensation of this type, then (c) it is probable that I have had a visual sensation of a fan which I take to cause this noise.

M. claims that this results in a "complete breakdown" of the support for the causal representative theory (CR). We can summarize this breakdown as follows: CR requires A. which allows us to infer a claim (b) about the physical world from a claim (a) about our sense experience. However, our past experience only supports B. which allows us to make an inference between two claims about our sense experience: (a) and (c). As a result, our past experience gives us no reason to infer to any claim (b) about the physical world. (We will return to this last claim - which is controversial - under solipsism.) You should be able to explain this "breakdown."

II. Berkeley

For Berkeley, what is a physical object? What is the resulting problem with this view with respect to physical objects existing when we do not perceive them? How does Berkeley solve this problem and what is the economy of such a view?

III. Better than Maclachlan on solipsism.

Define strict solipsism. Let's take strict solipsism as claiming that only mental states, e.g. sensations, exist. Solipsism can be supported in the following manner:

1. The only reason for believing that something exists is empirical evidence in the form of a claim of sense experience, e.g., "I have a visual sensation that …"

2. All reasonable inferences from claims of sense experience have the form of B (see above), which is simply an inference between two claims of sense experience.

3. Hence, we have no reason for believing that anything exists outside of our sense experience.

This form is not valid unless we add an implicit conditional: "if 1, and 2,, then 3." This may seem to be a cheap way of constructing a valid argument out of any set of premises, but it is legitimate. Its utility will depend on the plausibility of the constructed conditional. Premise one is an empiricist type assumption that any evidence for existence must be in the form of sense experience. The second premise is key. It limits "reasonable" inference to deduction. Deductive inferences can be described as follows : "… the conclusion of the argument cannot assert the existence of anything whose existence is not already asserted, at least implicitly, in the premises." (70). If we understanding deduction in this manner and limit reasonable inferences to deduction, then premise 2 is true. The above added implicit conditional seems reasonable as well; consequently, this is a compelling argument for the truth of solipsism, not just its logical possibility. You should be able to explain why, when you begin with indirect realism (or even BonJour's perceptual subjectivism) solipsism is difficult to avoid.

Chapter 10.

It now appears that not only the fate of M's CR theory, but combating solipsism as well, depends on the legitimacy of nondeductive inferences. M's first crack at such an inference is the following:

> C. If (a) in past experience it has been observed that items of type A are regularly followed by items of type B, then (b) a causal connection between these two items may be assumed and (c) given an item of type A, the corresponding items of type B may be legitimately inferred.

The antecedent in (a) expresses our past experiences. What is at issue is the reasonableness of the "inductive" inference to the two claims in the consequent. (Before, M. gets to this issue he has two problems. The regularity in (a) need not be absolute and the inference in (c) can concern items occurring in the past, present, or future.) A further critique, which M does not mention, is the so-called *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy. In other words, temporal succession in (a) does not lead to causal succession in (b).

M. believes that the key to reformulating C. is to acknowledge that we experience only partial regularities and that what we are looking for an explanation of partial regularity.

> D. If (a) in past experience it has been observed that items of type A are partially followed by items of type B, then (b) there is an explanation of this such there is a causal connection between items of type X and items of type Y and (c) given an item of type A, the corresponding items of type B may be legitimately inferred.

Clause (b) allows us to appeal to unperceived and even unperceivable items which we "hypothesize" as responsible for the "connection" between the observed items in (a). The link between the antecedent and consequent is how well the items appealed to in (b) “explain” the observed, and possibly only partial, connection (a).

M. concludes his chapter with two examples which illustrate how D. supports his causal representative theory. Be sure you can appeal to these examples to explain D.

Chapter 11.

M. realizes that the explanation appealed to in clause (b) allows a wide range of possible types of causes of our sensations. Although, he doesn't mention it at this point, various skeptical hypotheses serve as rival explanations of our sensations. To use D. to defend a realist view of the external world, requires that M. claims that the realist account is also a better explanation than all other rival accounts.

M here believes that there are some restrictions upon possible explanations of sensations. In order words, the character of our sensations poses some constraints on what kinds of items are hypothesized to be their causes. One way of expressing this constraint is the following:

> C. If our sensations have property p, then the causes of our sensations also must have property p.

M. believes that the spatial and temporal properties of our sensations must also be shared by their causes. However, he does not claim that the colored properties of our sensations are also shared by their causes. So, the natural question is what is the range of property p in the above principle C? M. uses a naturalistic criterion of appealing to scientific inquiry as outlining the most plausible properties of the causal realm. (We will return to this issue after BonJour's chapter 7.)