János Boros (ed.)

Mind in World

Essays on John McDowell's *Mind and World*

Brambauer
Pécs

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To Richard Rorty

This volume contains the papers presented at a conference on John McDowell's *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1994), in Pecs, Hungary, 1, 2 May, 1998.

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Barry Allen

Epistemological friction

McDowell's Minimal Empiricism

Thought needs “friction”. Thought must be answerable to the world. Why? “If our activity in empirical thought and judgment is to be recognizable as bearing on reality at all, there must be external constraint”.[1] Without such friction thoughts concern only themselves, in a frictionless coherence of belief. Since we *do* enjoy objective experience, McDowell argues transcendentally to the conclusion that friction, answerability *must* exist. Experience is the tribune before which knowledge is tried. That is a minimum, obligatory “empiricism”.

The friction in McDowell's metaphor is a special, epistemological friction. It is not like the friction which destroys meteors in the atmosphere. False beliefs do not burn up and disappear like falling stars. Imagine rather the silent protest of the things themselves, when descriptions that suit us fine somehow fail to fit them as they are. Epistemological friction doesn't actually stop us from believing anything we want. It is, as it were, *de jure* friction, a purely speculative resistance, a fifth wheel. It is like the “friction” of the House of Lords. Nothing is law without their assent, but nothing that matters depends on their deliberations.

This special, “epistemological” friction, like the minimal, obligatory “empiricism”, and the metaphor of confrontation before a tribune, is an artifact of certain assumptions about knowledge and truth – assumptions that put McDowell in unusual company; he is, for

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[1] McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994, 9; further references parenthetically embedded.

instance, the most "heideggerian" of English philosophers. McDowell and Heidegger are both by tradition contemplationists after Aristotle's model. For Aristotle, knowledge begins with passive reception, an impression, "just as characters may be said to be on a writing tablet. This is exactly what happens with the mind".[2] Stoics followed up with their idea of the "apprehensive appearance" *(phantasia katal'ptik'),* which comes to us "from a real object, in accordance with the object, stamped and sealed, such as could not come from an unreal object".[3] The theme recurs in Thomas Aquinas and Locke and, much modified, in Heidegger and Gadamer, and in McDowell; for instance when he says, "in enjoying an experience one is open to manifest facts, facts that obtain anyway and impress themselves on one's sensibility" (29).

"We need", he says, "a conception of experiences as states or occurrences that are passive but reflect conceptual capacities" (23). Why? So that "experience can be conceived as openness to the world" (111). He adds that "the sort of position that the image of openness conveys [is] the idea of a direct hold on the facts" (113). The origin of knowledge is a compelling impression. Knowledge begins with our retreat into stillness, a posture of passive reception. McDowell moves in a direction pioneered by Aristotle, systematized by Aquinas, modernized by Kant, and reclaimed from subjectivism by Heidegger. The theme of the group is less empiricism than contemplationism, conceiving cognition as our ultimately passive "openness" to something self-identical, a veritable being, received with mimetic fealty in undistorting stillness.

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[2] Aristotle, *De Anima* 430a.

[3] Stobaeus, *Eclogae* II; cited in Julia Annas, "Stoic Epistemology", *Epistemology,* Everson, Stephen ed., Companions to Ancient Thought, vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 188.

1

Historically, and in McDowell's case too, the attraction of cognitive passivity is a contemplative conception of knowledge and truth. Here is a major difference with Davidson, who says, "truth is beautifully transparent . . . and I take it as primitive".[4] To "take it as primitive" means that the supposedly elucidating talk of openness, disclosure, unveiling, or *Lichtung* is to no purpose. Truth seems enigmatic only because it is given a mystifying redescription, in terms of a singular accomplishment. To say that "true" is "primitive" is, in part, to say that "representation" is not an obligatory term in the description of what language accomplishes. "Beliefs are true or false", Davidson says, "but they represent nothing. It is good to be rid of representations, and with them the correspondence theory of truth, for it is thinking that there are representations that engenders thoughts of relativism".[5]

McDowell seems unsettled by Davidson's thought that any interpretable body of belief cannot fail to be largely true. The promised truth is a poisoned fruit. It is "truth" insensitive to the friction of facts, indifferent to the empirical constraint by which alone thought acquires objectivity. The hermeneutics of radical interpretation revolve entirely in the intersubjective sphere of belief and perception. A radical interpreter must attend to what others say, as well as to his own perception and understanding of the world, but the question whether the thought he is trying to interpret is constrained by fact and reality never comes up.

Radical interpretation must disregard what, for McDowell, is a minimal empiricism. Recalling Davidson's idea that nothing but a belief can be a reason for a belief, McDowell casts suspicion on what he calls Davidson's "bland confidence that empirical content can be

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[4] Davidson, Donald, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", *Reading Rorty,* ed. Malachowski, Alan, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990, 122.

[5] Davidson, D. "The Myth of Subjectivity", *Relativism,* ed., Krausz, Michael, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1988, 165–166.

intelligibly in our picture even though we carefully stipulate that the world's impacts on our senses have nothing to do with justification" (15). Davidson *is* bland about truth. It is a guaranteed upshot of charitable interpretation. If they are interpretable at all, thoughts are largely true. Of course, the reason for this claim has everything to do with Davidson's idea of interpretation, and nothing to do with mind-to-world correspondence. That is precisely the difficulty. There is something inevitably and fatally missing from the frictionless coherentism of Davidson's hermeneutics. The *world* is missing. Thought must have its object, to which it is answerable and co-responds. Thought stands open to the world, open to refutation, not by others in argument, but by the demure silence of the things themselves.

In search of a conception of truth more to his liking, McDowell turns to the ontological hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger. Heidegger described the occasion of true assertion as an "unveiling letting-be-encountered".[6] McDowell prefers to speak "of experience as openness to the layout of reality" (26). "Impressions are, so to speak, transparent" (145). He also follows the hermeneutical thinkers in identifying language and tradition as the source of this amazing power to see things as they are. "Languages and traditions", McDowell says, should not be considered "as *'tertia'* that would threaten to make our grip on the world philosophically problematic", but rather as "constitutive of our unproblematic openness to the world" (155).

McDowell reinscribes Sellars' "psychological nominalism" in the contemplationist tradition of epistemology he favors. What is ultimately impressive in knowledge comes to us in concepts we already

[6] "An assertion lets that which is talked about in it be seen in the way of determinative predication . . . This predicative exhibition of a being has the general character of unveiling letting-be-encountered . . . This unveiling, which is the basic function of assertion, constitutes the character traditionally designated as being-true". Heidegger, Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology,* Albert Hofstadter trans., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, 215.

understand. Things, facts, exist in the world, they enjoy a "for-themselves" self-identity and being. Through language, tradition, cultural second nature, this world is somehow disclosed to us. In short, it is Kant without transcendental consciousness, and without an *unknown* thing in itself. One objection to the Kantian "thing in itself" is to the "in itself". The objection concerns the very idea of a self-identical "being in itself" that an entity enjoys all by itself, regardless of our existence. That is the Hegelian and Pragmatic objection. McDowell makes the Aristotelian-Wittgensteinian objection to the *unknowability* of the thing. The thing itself, knowable as it is for itself – that is the "fact" for which McDowell postulates our peculiar "openness".

Davidson might turn this empiricism aside as a relic of the idea that truth is a transcendent virtue, implying metaphysical restrictions on what counts as "true". For Davidson, "truth" is not a natural property, not a substantial respect in which truths are the same. Tarski swept all that away, including the metaphysical problem of explaining, *via* a theory of truth, how any language acquires its "objective validity". But McDowell doesn't buy this. There is something inevitably and fatally missing from Davidson's coherentism. Friction. The world. It is the nature of thought to stand open to the world – open to refutation, not by others in argument, but by the world being as it is. Consider this extraordinary passage from *Mind and World:*

The very idea of representational content brings with it a notion of correctness and incorrectness: something with a certain content is correct, in the relevant sense, just in case things are as it represents them to be. I can see no good reason not to call this correctness "truth" . . . [I]t seems a routine thought that there can be rational connections between the world's being as a possessor of one bit of content represents it and the world's being as a possessor of another bit of content represents it, independently of what kind of content is in question. (162)

In the first part of this passage, McDowell "blandly" explains that truth is representational correctness, an impressive, receptive, passive, mimetic adequacy. That is what Davidson does not supply. The rest of the passage is a wonderful example of what Michael Williams calls

"epistemological realism".[7] It is a wonderful example of supposedly objective epistemological relations, relations of "knowing", "evidence", and "representation" that obtain regardless of content or context, solely in virtue of any thought being empirically, objectively true. Here again it is McDowell who is suspiciously bland, calling it "routine" to suppose that, abstracting from all circumstance, there is a further fact concerning thought's epistemological relation to "the world". The only routine into which this idea falls is the contemplative tradition of Western theories of knowledge.

McDowell says the "distinctive passivity of experience" (29) involves conceptual capacities "passively drawn into operation" (30). What, though, is passive about experience? There is so much activity going on in the mere having of an experience – I mean neurological activity, not conscious or rational – that I don't see how "passivity" can be anything but a name for our ignorance. At some level, of course, we do not choose our experience. Sensations strike us and we can't stop them by wishing. But even the most striking experience is already an interpretation, already a response, hence partly our activity. There is no experience until we have reacted. Our response is merely the other side of the stimulation; without some response, it was no stimulus.

It would be convenient for a theory like McDowell's if we were passive only before non-intentional, "external" reality, but inner sense can be just as compelling. How do we tell the passivity that signals external reality from passivity that is purely internal? Why is *tree* outer, and *envy* inner? McDowell says, "The fact that experience is

[7] Williams, Michael, *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Skepticism,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1991. Williams discusses McDowell's "epistemological realism" in his Critical Study, "Exorcism and Enchantment", *Philosophical Quarterly* 46, 1996, 99–109.

passive, a matter of receptivity in operation, should assure us that we have all the external constraint we can reasonably want" (28). But what connects passivity with externality, when we can be equally passive before our own inscrutable subjectivity?[8]

Michael Friedman suggests that McDowell has no answer to this question, except to say that there are experiences *we call* "external" and others *we call* "internal", and that that is all the difference there is. Passively received impressions are "objective" or "external" when spontaneously interpreted that way by our understanding. Hence, as Friedman says, "the very idea of experience of the world – the idea, that is, of impressions of outer sense – is itself a product of spontaneity: the impressions in question *become* expressions of constraint by an independent world precisely though the integrative activities of the understanding". The objectivity or intentionality of thought is not secured by the idea of receptivity, as McDowell supposes, "but rather by the spontaneous conceptual activities of the understanding as it rationally evolves an integrated picture of the world".[9] Save for a greater lean toward transcendental idealism, the upshot differs little from the frictionless coherentism criticized in Davidson.

Despite a conspicuously Kantian terminology, McDowell's dialectic of receptivity and spontaneity may be more directly inspired by a problem from Wittgenstein. Here is one much-discussed passage from the *Philosophical Investigations:*

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

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[8] Freud drew the conclusion that "it is [mental] reality which is the decisive kind ... We should equate fantasy and reality and not bother to begin with whether the childhood experiences under examination are the one or the other". *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* Harmondsworth, Pelican Freud Library, 1973, vol. 1, 415.

[9] Friedman, Michael, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition", *Philosophical Review* 105, 1996, 444–445.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows, of course, is that *there is an understanding of a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "following the rule" and "going against it" from case to case of its application.*[10]

Here we see McDowell's "receptivity", his ultimate passivity – "an understanding of a rule which is not an interpretation". To say, contrariwise, that "every action according to the rule is an interpretation" is in effect Kant's transcendental position: apprehension, synthetic mental activity, is ultimate. Cognition begins with our initiative. By contrast, an understanding that is "not an interpretation" is like an intuition that is already, originally conceptualized, which is exactly McDowell's idea. "We should understand what Kant calls `intuition' – experiential intake – not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content . . . The conceptual contents that are most basic . . . are already possessed by impressions themselves, impingements by the world on our sensibility" (9–10).

McDowell makes a lot of his agreement with Sellars against "the myth of the given", yet you might think the intuitive receptivity McDowell favors is as good as any "given" Sellars questioned. What more is there to "the given"? This question requires a digression on the epistemology of "the given". The idea called for something that could do two things no one thing can do. It is a force, a cause, an impact, irritation, impression, or impingement. Yet it also has to be ideational, to have a determinate meaning or empirical content, directly (and uniquely) translatable into formal language, where it provides foundational premises from which to derive the rest of knowledge. The difficulty is that, inasmuch as the given is a stimulus, it has no

[10] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations,* 3d, Anscombe, G. E. M. ed., trans., Oxford, Blackwell, 1967, 201; emphasis added.

specific rational weight and cannot justify one against another belief, while inasmuch as it is significant and justifying, sensation or intuition is already belief.

To do what foundational epistemology requires, "the given" would have to be an outsider to all our concepts, its identity or determination being metaphysically prior to human thought and action. Only then could "the given" avoid the taint of artifactuality. The given is an alien, confronting concepts as a whole from another place or, as McDowell puts it, from sideways on. The difference between this repudiated givenness and McDowell's receptivity is that in his case the given is not alien, not an out-and-out Other.[11] What we take in, the gift we are given, comes from a familiar place, decked out in familiar conceptual garb. We already understand it, the first time we see it, as if recollecting something we have always known.

I don't mean to imply that Wittgenstein held a contemplative theory of knowledge. To infer "a way of following a rule that is not an interpretation" is to argue that the distinction between what we should do and what we do is not ultimate, does not go all the way down. Fact and norm, contingency and reason, *is* and *ought* cannot be so indifferent to each other that, for all we know, every move in every game is wrong, every perception delusive, every belief false. Mistakes, errors, falsity, and the like are possible only against the backdrop of wider practice. To speak of an understanding that is not an interpretation is to situate intentionality in the natural history of human beings. At a certain point one acts, when it is no longer a question of *whether* you shall act, but of how. Hence Wittgenstein's gestures toward historical facts about training and "forms of life".

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[11] For Hegel, "spirit is . . . in its every act only apprehending itself and the aim of all genuine science is just this, that spirit shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and on earth. An out-and-out Other simply does not exist". *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften,* Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1970, '377 *(Zusatz).* At the conference on his work in Pécs, Hungary (May 1998), McDowell unambiguously indicated his philosophical affinity with Hegel's absolute idealism.

McDowell goes a step further, interpreting the "second nature" we acquire through culture and language after Heidegger and Gadamer as an opening onto the things themselves. It is unlikely that Wittgenstein would see this as a move in the right direction.[12] Truly, Rorty is closer to Wittgenstein's later thought. Any "epistemic constraint", any "normative friction", is a matter of answerability to a way of life. McDowell tries to overcome this ethnocentrism of knowledge by arguing in the manner of ontological hermeneutics that ethnocentric answerability to others (cultural second nature) *yields* epistemological answerability to the world. Cultural second nature lifts us out of the environment in which other animals are sealed, offering access to the space of reasons, the realm of freedom, the kingdom of the things themselves.

2

According to what McDowell calls "Gadamer's Thesis", there is a profound difference between us and any other animal. Other animals expend themselves in a ceaseless "succession of problems and opportunities", their lives "structured exclusively by immediate biological imperatives" (115).[13] We are different. We transcend that. The animal's exigent environment gives way to an unbounded world. According to the hermeneutical philosophy of Gadamer and Heidegger, the advent of the human world is a lighting *(Lichtung),* a clearing, a site for the self-disclosure of beings. Such "openness" radically ("ontologically") distinguishes our human being from the being of a stone or a star. Those things are simply extant (if they *are* at all).

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[12] I expand on this point in a chapter on Wittgenstein in my *Truth in Philosophy,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993.

[13] Gadamer is not reliable on ethology or ecology. The supposed exigency of animal environments, like Darwin's mythical "struggle for existence", is generally dismissed by ecological biologists. Environments are typically luxurious, the living easy, competition negligible. For one version of the argument, see Paul Colinvaux, *Why Big Fierce Animals are Rare,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, 140–144.

For them, to be is to be somewhere sometime self-identical and fully present. It is never like that for us. Our *being* is different. Our possibilities are not timelessly defined. In the traditional sense of *essentia,* we lack essence. There is no *what* which a human is metaphysically made to be. Our being introduces a *not* among beings, a need or nullity which paradoxically has the power to disclose the world.

Unlike us, Heidegger says, "plants and animals are lodged in their respective environments, but are never placed freely in the lighting of being which alone is `world.'"[14] That is "Gadamer's Thesis". Rising to his zoological theme, Heidegger makes an extraordinary pronouncement concerning our relationship to other animals. He speaks of "our appalling and scarcely conceivable bodily kinship with the beast". He thinks that "of all the beings there are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are in a certain way most closely related to us, and on the other hand are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss". Hence his observation on the human body, which he finds to be "essentially other than an animal organism". What is the big difference? Heidegger's answer will be Gadamer's, and McDowell's too. It is language. Language is the house of being. "In its essence language is not the utterance of an organism; nor is it the expression of a living thing . . . Language is the lighting-concealing advent of being itself".[15]

Language, tradition, the space of reasons are not just more environment and more coping. As Gadamer puts it, "language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world. But this world is verbal in nature".[16] That's unsettling idealist-talk to "analytic" philosophers, whom McDowell wants to reassure. "Of course, it had better not be

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[14] Heidegger, Martin, "Letter on Humanism", *Basic Writings,* Krell, David Farrell ed., New York, Harper & Row, 1977, 206.
[15] Heidegger, M. "Letter on Humanism", 206, 204.
[16] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method,* trans. Weinsheimer, J. and Marshall, D. G., New York, Crossroads, 1989, 443.

that our being in charge of our lives marks a transcendence of biology" (115). To invoke the ontological difference between world and environment is not to overlook our animal nature – he says. "It is part of what I want to insist on that we are animals too, not beings with a foothold outside the animal kingdom" (183). Yet I should think it is obvious that the opposition of "world" and "environment" must be viewed skeptically by anyone who takes Darwin seriously. Heidegger openly provokes the antagonism of such skeptics. He follows Nietzsche, for whom anti-naturalism is merely consistent atheism. "Nature", too, does not exist. McDowell nods in the other direction. Yet it is not clear that he evades Heidegger's implicitly anti-evolutionary bias.

McDowell says human life "is lived in the world, as opposed to consisting in coping with an environment" (118). He interprets this hermeneutical idea of "world" in terms of Sellars' "space of reasons". The difference becomes one between the system of natural law and the life of reason. It is still enough of a difference to make us different from every other outcome of evolution. Our "world" is not an ecology, not a contingent evolutionary circumstance. It is not an ecological, but a logical, discursive space. The advent of "the space of reasons" would be what Heidegger calls *das Ereignis* – world-disclosure, letting what-is be. So singular an "Event" is not intelligible as an outcome of evolution. Instead, it would be the inscrutable Origin of evolution and everything else. It was not for nothing that Heidegger revived Leibniz's question why is there something, not nothing at all?

You don't have to be a scientistic positivist to take Darwin, evolution, seriously. Indeed, I think the burden lies on the other side, to justify philosophizing about "mind" and "world" as if it were a matter of indifference that this "mind" and its "world" are the outcome of a completely contingent evolution. Such indifference is certainly Heidegger's practice, and McDowell seems to follow him here as elsewhere. In a remarkable statement, he says, "an environment is essentially alien to a creature that lives in it" (118). It would hard to make a more biologically ill-conceived remark. So much for adaptation, natural selection, symbiosis, coevolution, or the very idea of ecology!

Unfortunately, though, taking evolution seriously leads to conclusions incompatible with McDowell's. Two of the best philosophers to grapple with Darwin – Nietzsche and William James – both drew what still seems like the right conclusion, namely, that it renders untenable the idea of the "in-itself", the "self-identical", or "substantial".[17]

For us, for life, for an *evolving* universe, there is no static, relationless, substantial self-identity. The very "laws of nature" are an outcome of an evolution that has not stopped. As for us, like everything alive, we see as we are, ecologically. This evolutionary "friction" may well constrain what we recognize as knowledge, but its tangible, corporeal, kinesthetic constraint is not at all what McDowell has in mind as the "tribune" of knowledge. We never withdraw so far from ourselves (our evolution) that "beings" finally come into view "just as they are", in their own self-sameness. The neurology that makes our thought and perception possible is the outcome of a completely contingent environmental history, which rules out the transcendent disinterestedness of ultimate cognitive passivity.

3

One alternative to ultimate cognitive passivity is Kantian spontaneity, where knowledge begins with our synthetic activity. Yet Kant's model never was coherent. There is no sensible way to explain what it is we synthesize, where it comes from, or how it affects us. To "explain" any of that would inevitably misunderstand (as empirical) the supposedly transcendental conditions of empirical understanding. Dewey offers a second alternative to the contemplative line. Knowing is making, an intervention, a deliberate change. It begins with our initiative, though that initiative is not "spontaneous", that is, uncondi-

[17] "For the Darwinian, the thing-in-itself seems to be, not so much a false notion, as an incoherent one". Ruse, Michael, *Taking Darwin Seriously,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, 194.

tioned or pure, but is instead an adaptive response to an evolved environment. Knowledge implies not disclosure but deliberate disturbance, not receptivity but intervention, not openness but effectiveness. For Dewey, knowing is all about overcoming passivity, overcoming unaided sensation, or "philosophical" resignation before "reality".[18]

McDowell does not discuss Dewey in *Mind and World.* He says little of pragmatism at all, apart from Rorty, whom he surprisingly criticizes for a platonic "dualism of nature and reason" (153). The context is Rorty's view of "radical interpretation". As I think Rorty understands it, what a radically-interpreting field linguist first describes in terms of environmental causes eventually comes to be redescribed in terms of speakers' reasons. The difference between the linguist newly arrived and later on, when the language is mastered, is like the difference Dennett describes between mechanical and intentional levels of description. On arrival, the linguist has "mechanical" information about what is causally salient in the environment (as he perceives it), and "program" information about what (by his lights) rational people would say in different situations. The task is to ascend to the intentional level, when he can appreciate his speakers' reasons for what they say and do.

Bearing in mind McDowell's charge of "dualism", the important point is that there is no ontological correlate for these different levels of description. A true causal or mechanical description is not "made true" by a different entity than verifies an intentional description. In part, that is because, as Davidson argues, nothing, no one thing, makes sentences true or false.[19] Add the long-standing pragmatist argument that concepts are not mirrors, but sets of operations with different uses

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[18] These ideas are ubiquitous in Dewey's philosophical writings. See for instance the chapter, "Arts of Acceptance and Arts of Control", Dewey, John, The *Quest for Certainty, Later Works,* vol. 4, Carbondale, Ill., Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

[19] Davidson, D., *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, 194.

and limitations; and Rorty's idea of "true" as praise rather than description; and we are clearly far from any ontological "dualism of nature and reason". The transition from understanding causal interactions to understanding rational belief is not an epiphany. It is one of those "light dawns over the whole" transitions, as when an infant learns to speak, or when any hermeneutic effort begins to yield coherent interpretations. Such "transitions" are, in fact, retrospective, "reconstructed" (that is, *constructed*) when we reflect on the difference between where we are and where we started.

What looks to McDowell like Rorty's platonic dualism is more properly nominalism and pragmatism. Nothing is "intrinsically" physical *or* normative. Concepts such as *law*, *nature*, *cause*, and *reason* are not categories of being, nor even "modes of intelligibility". They are forms of description, on par epistemologically with other tools, conceptual or physical. Reasons are no more *"sui generis"* as compared with natural law, than a stone blade is *sui generis* compared with a microprocessor. As a pragmatist, Rorty would prefer to "abandon the Kantian dichotomy between kinds of intelligibility, and talk instead about techniques of problem-solving".[20] Reason-endowing descriptions and cause-imputing ones are different instruments, evaluated in terms of pragmatic convenience, not mimetic fealty. They describe and redescribe the same order of events. And as it is the same events being described and redescribed, no epistemological "tertia" are required to connect how we stand causally with where we start cognitively.

Rorty seems not to feel the obligation McDowell may think any philosopher must to embrace a concept of experience – sensitive to the friction of fact – as the tribune of knowledge. He thinks social inter-

[20] Rorty, Richard, "The Very Idea of Human Answerability to the World: John McDowell's Version of Empiricism", *Truth and Progress, Philosophical Papers,* vol. 3, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 150. As an example of what Rorty is objecting to, McDowell writes, "we must sharply distinguish natural-scientific intelligibility from the kind of intelligibility something acquires when we situate it in the logical space of reasons" (xix).

subjectivity supplies all the "friction" there is to constrain truth or knowledge. As he says in reply to McDowell, "normativity", meaning the "possibility of correctness and incorrectness", is strictly a matter of "human beings' answerability to one another".[21] That is not exactly frictionless, but the friction is all self-generated, social, practical friction, not the epistemological friction which imposes mimetic fealty.

So for McDowell, it won't do at all. What he seems to find disagreeable about Rorty is his indifference to the "intuition" that in knowing, thought is tethered, tied to the things themselves.[22] The name of that tether is, generically, *representation,* specifically, *truth.* Answerability, the epistemological friction of "the world", is a minimum, obligatory empiricism. On McDowell's "hermeneutical" account, the social friction Rorty allows *yields* epistemological answerability, *yields* the world. Given what Rorty acknowledges, we get an empirical realism he thinks he has to deny.

Rather than taking up – or taking seriously – McDowell's mind-world problematic, Rorty sets dialectic discreetly aside, "to talk in fuzzy world-historical-cum-psychoanalytic terms about the need to bring mankind to full maturity by discarding the image of the fierce father-figure". American pragmatism comes late in a line from Bacon and Bentham to Comte and Mill, appearing after 1870, after Darwin and, for Rorty, after Freud. Rorty situates its rise in a movement of modern thought which, as he puts it, aims to "wrest power from God – or, more placidly put, dispense with the idea of human answerability to something non-human". From this point of view McDowell's mind-world problematic is factitious, the argument irrelevant, compulsive, even infantile. Once we see McDowell's "need for world-directedness" as "a relic of the need for authoritative guidance", we can set the "problem" aside.[23] Where id was, there pragmatism shall be.

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[21] Rorty, R., "McDowell's Empiricism", 139.
[22] Plato, *Meno* 97e–98a.
[23] Rorty, R., "McDowell's Empiricism", 143.

It is not surprising that McDowell and Rorty should be at an impasse. McDowell wants a self-disclosing world to vouchsafe its facts to us. This is the minimum. It requires ultimate cognitive passivity, and truth as the disclosure of antecedent being. There is little or no defense of these assumptions in *Mind and World,* and they are ideas that American pragmatists have opposed from Peirce down. McDowell thinks we must have friction or lose the world. Rorty dismisses that as a neurosis of reason – compulsive, fetishistic, a metaphysical boogieman. We won't stop loving truth, hating lies, or respecting science if we drop the idea of answerability to "the world". For Rorty, *conversation* is "the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood".[24]

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As I see their impasse, McDowell is right to ask for more and different constraint on knowledge, and Rorty wrong to refuse it. Nevertheless, McDowell is wrong about the tribune of knowledge, and Rorty right to say that, like "true", the word "knowledge" is a sort of compliment, a term of praise. The question is, *what* do we so compliment, and for what *quality?* For Rorty, what the word "knowledge" compliments are beliefs, which it compliments for their prestigious, ethnocentric agreeability. "Knowledge" is a word for "beliefs which we think so well justified that, for the moment, further justification is not needed".[25]

Despite his well-known criticism of "epistemology", Rorty visibly shares most of their assumptions about what knowledge is. Western theories of knowledge have for a long time been so many variations

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[24] Rorty, R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979, 389.

[25] Rorty, R., *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth, Philosophical Papers,* vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 24.

on the *belief-plus* model.[26] What has to be added, to raise belief to the rank of knowledge? Justification, truth, some causal relation to the object of knowledge? There are, of course, many theories. Instead of challenging this whole approach, Rorty seems concerned to make the smallest, most conservative adjustment possible, taking pains to retain as much of the belief-*plus* framework as is consistent with his rejection of representations or truth-as-correspondence. The result is the idea we just saw: knowledge is belief that meets with the agreement of others who matter.

McDowell turns back to classical traditions, Aristotelian and Stoic. Rorty invokes the tradition of Pragmatism, though with a "linguistifying" bias inherited from the logical positivists. I hold out hope for a third way. My suggestion is that the object of knowledge is artifactual, unlike McDowell's manifest facts, but the field of knowledge cannot be confined to language, or what we can have a conversation about, as Rorty supposes.

I think Rorty takes the wrong lesson from Sellars on "the given". Sellars' good point, as I see it, is that experience, consciousness, belief, and knowledge are *mediated* through and through, all the way down. We never reach a point where experience is im-mediate, coalescent, purely receptive, or ultimately passive. The good point, then, concerns mediation, its ubiquity, not the ubiquity of discourse. The ubiquity of mediation certainly implies the ubiquity of media, but that doesn't mean (just) language. What it means, I think, is the ubiquity, for knowledge, of *artifacts.* It is a defining characteristic of an artifact to be a medium of cognitive, knowing, intelligent mediation between a human being and some aspect of its environment.[27] For us, for

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[26] I elaborate on this model, its variations, and the reasons for dissatisfaction with the entire approach to knowledge which it exemplifies in "What Was Epistemology?", *Rorty and his Critics,* ed. Brandom, Robert, Oxford, Blackwell, forthcoming.

[27] The defining characteristic is to be mediating in the suggested way, *or* to be an effect or byproduct of such mediation. This analysis is tentative, as the subject is fraught with difficulties. For an admirable survey of them, see the discussion of the analysis of the concept of artifact in Gracia, Jorge, *A Theory of Textuality,* Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995, 44–51.

knowledge, for human consciousness and experience, it is artifacts all the way down – down to the modern *sapiens* neurology, which is an artifact of earlier experiments in human evolution.

My take on the "myth of the given" does not, I admit, sit well with another of Sellars' ideas, the "space of reasons", especially when he uses it to define knowledge.[28] He thereby inscribes knowledge within linguistically mediated belief, ignoring (or wrongly regarding as significantly different) any cognitive mediation apart from the symbols of language. It is a short step to Rorty's thought that conversation is the ultimate context for knowledge. Sellars replaces the myth of the given with an exaggeration of language unfortunately common to twentieth-century thought. "Reasons" are linguistic, discursive, verbal things. But cognitive mediation is neither invariably, nor preeminently, linguistic, nor are the values realized by knowing limited to the conversational, dialectical, or discursive. The *good* that knowledge is, is realized in any *superlative* artifactual performance. Language is one domain of artifact, conversation one family of performances, and any knowledge they express is part of a wider economy of artifacts and knowledge.

Knowledge "compliments" a range of performances as wide as technical culture, the entire world of human artifacts. The "friction" which constrains what we call knowledge is friction that we feel when things go wrong; it is the tangible friction of failure, not the intangible impress of an inherent fact. I am not saying knowledge is grounded in something behind language, something more immediate and less distorting. The point is to place language (and "the space of reasons") in a wider "technological" field of artifacts and knowledge. The ulti-

[28] "[When we characterize] an episode or a state as that of *knowing,* we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says". Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", *Science, Perception, and Reality,* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, 169.

mate context within which knowledge is to be understood is nothing less than the global human ecology, an artifactual ecology made to work according to knowledge.[29]

Reply of John McDowell

I do not recognize myself in the depiction Allen gives of me.

He says that for me "knowledge begins with our retreat into stillness". This attribution of a "contemplationist" conception of the knowing human subject is a wild extrapolation from the role of the idea of receptivity in my talk about perceptual experience. According to a perfectly ordinary conception, if one, for instance, sees that things are a certain way, the fact that things are that way – that way anyhow, independently of one's taking them to be that way – impresses itself on one's visual capacities. Nothing in that intuitive idea, which is all I need for my talk of receptivity to be appropriate, implies a contemplative posture. There is nothing here to threaten the thought that the paradigmatic context for taking in facts in experience is active engagement with one's surroundings.

Complaining about my talk of the passivity of experience, Allen points to the neurological activity that goes on in the having of experiences. But that is irrelevant to the claim that we are not active in experience. We are not necessarily active when our brains are, any more than we are necessarily active when our digestive systems are. Allen acknowledges something in the area of what I mean by this when he admits that "at some level … we do not choose our experience". The plain fact is that there is no level at which we do choose our experience (except in the irrelevant sense that we can choose, say, what direction to look in).

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[29] I am grateful to Richard Rorty, Michael Williams, and John McDowell for comments and discussion. I elaborate on the argument concerning artifacts and knowledge in "Forbidding Knowledge", *The Monist* 79, 1996, 294–310; and "The Chimpanzee's Tool", *Common Knowledge* 6, no. 2, 1997, 34–51.

Certainly we, the rational, concept-using creatures we are, are involved in our experience in a way in which we are not involved in, say, a conditioned reflex. That is what I try to capture by insisting that the spontaneous understanding needs to figure, inextricably intertwined with receptive sensibility, in an acceptable picture of our experience. Of course Allen is right that our experience is a response. But that does not warrant going beyond my point about the involvement of the understanding, and saying, as Allen does, that our experience is "partly our activity". Looking, say, can be activity on our part. But there is no good sense in which its result, visual experience, is our activity.[30]

Why does Allen saddle me with the picture of a "retreat into stillness"? I surmise that at least part of the reason is that he makes nothing of my aim – though I profess it explicitly and frequently – to unmask supposed philosophical problems as illusory. Allen implies that I think truth is "enigmatic", whereas I am fully in agreement with Davidson, whom Allen cites in a supposed correction to me, that truth is "transparent". In one particularly striking passage, Allen implies that I regard our openness to the world as "amazing", even though just a few lines later he actually quotes me describing it as "unproblematic".

[30] This opens into a passage in which Allen rehashes a misreading of me by Michael Friedman. Friedman takes it that in my picture objective purport is conferred on sensory impressions by interpretation engaged in by the spontaneous understanding. But nothing in my picture matches the items that in Friedman's reading "*become* expressions of constraint … through the integrative activities of the understanding", and hence must in themselves be less than "expressions of constraint". Friedman concocts this story on my behalf in response to what seems to me to be a non-issue, and Allen follows him here. They proceed as if I am committed to differentiating inner and outer experience on the basis of nothing but the bare structure of sensibility and understanding – as if in distinguishing inner and outer experience I am debarred from appealing to the specifics of what this or that experience reveals, for instance echoing Kant in saying that outer experience discloses things as spatially organized. (The external constraint that receptivity suffices for, according to me, is constraint from outside thinking, not necessarily constraint from the external world.)

I am not, as Allen supposes, "unsettled" by Davidson's argument that any body of belief must be largely true. On the contrary, I think Davidson's point is conclusive against the shallow sort of sceptic who thinks we can grant that something is a body of belief all right, but still query whether any of it amounts to knowledge. The trouble is that that sort of scepticism is indeed shallow. In my book I suggest that the underlying thought it ineptly gropes towards is something that would seem to threaten the idea that what we are dealing with is a body of belief at all. And Davidson's argument does not address that. It is not that I think the underlying thought brings out a real philosophical problem. But it brings out something it is easy to take to be a real philosophical problem. This appearance needs to be unmasked, and Davidson's argument, since it presupposes what this supposed problem seems to put in doubt, does nothing to help with that. In fact Davidson's "coherentism" positively encourages the illusion that there is a problem there. My point in taking issue with Davidson's "coherentism" is to uncover the source of the illusion. But Allen reads me as supplying positive philosophy, a "contemplationist" picture of mind and world, to address a supposedly real "metaphysical problem".

Allen's stance here is Rortyesque, in at least two ways. One is the idea that to be immune to the supposed problems of ordinary philosophy it suffices to be dismissive of them, whatever else one says. I attribute to Rorty a dualism of nature and reason, and Allen is unconvinced. (It is certainly a surprising accusation.) Allen pays no attention to the details of the ground on which I make the accusation. Rorty distinguishes two attitudes, the descriptive and the normative, and claims that it is impossible to speak from both at once. I argue that this reflects just the style of thinking that underlies a certain appearance of a problem about how our beliefs can even aspire to capture how things are, so Rorty encourages traditional philosophical worries even while he is trying to squelch them. Allen is so far from seeing that there might be something wrong with this prohibition on speaking simultaneously from both a descriptive and a normative attitude that he uncritically duplicates it, in his own disquisition on what is wrong

with the idea of the Given. There he talks as if it were obvious that an impression or impingement cannot be "ideational". It is not obvious at all; everything depends on how the notion of an impression or impingement is handled. And my claim is that to avert a certain danger of seeming to be beset by illusory philosophical problems we need to find a way to see experience as, precisely, an impingement that is at the same time "ideational".

The second Rortyesque feature of Allen's stance is the idea that anyone who thinks more is needed than the dismissive attitude must be entangled in the old supposed problems. This shows especially in a characteristic knee-jerk reaction to the use of terms from a certain philosophical vocabulary. If someone so much as utters a word from the proscribed list, for instance "representation", he is accused of lapsing into a philosophical picture that deserves to be debunked. There is no responsiveness to the possibility that the utterance might come from someone who agrees on the need for debunking, but aims to rehabilitate the vocabulary. (Again, I do not see how I could have been more explicit about this.) It is taken for granted that the vocabulary is beyond redemption. The most striking case of this in Allen's paper is his treatment of a passage from me that he holds up for opprobrium as "extraordinary". In fact the passage is innocuous. Its first sentence attempts a general formulation to cover, for instance, the following truism: if someone believes that things are a certain way, the belief is correct just in case things are indeed that way. The second attempts a general formulation to cover, for instance, the following truism: the fact that things are a certain way (for instance, that smoke is visible from where one is) can be a reason for supposing that things are a certain other way (for instance, that there is fire in the vicinity). Davidson, in work Allen cites, focuses his dissolution of some illusory philosophical difficulties on a particular use of the word "representation". It is absurd to proceed, as Allen does, as if Davidson has shown that any use of that rather serviceable word reveals the presence of the kind of philosophy Davidson aims to show us how to do without.

Of course if things are not the way one is, say, shaping up to believing them to be, that cannot prevent one from going ahead and believing that things are that way. But it is crazy to conclude, as Allen does, that friction against the world is "a fifth wheel", that "nothing that matters" depends on how one's beliefs compare to how things are. Very often it matters in the most obvious ways whether one's beliefs are true; one's projects go disastrously wrong if they are not. Having it matter to one whether things are as one believes them to be belongs to the very idea of judging, of deciding what to think about how things are. That is all the image of being answerable to the world comes to. The idea is truistic, not a reflection of a picture in which the world is invoked to meet some infantile need for authority, as the result of a relocation of the power that has been, in the image Allen cites from Rorty, wrested from God.[31]

When I appropriated from Gadamer the idea that animal life is structured by immediate biological imperatives, I tried to make it clear that the point is not to depict animal life as a struggle. Allen pays no attention. He thinks he can cast doubt on the idea I borrowed from Gadamer by noting that animal environments are typically easy. There is the same point-missing when he expostulates at my saying "an environment is essentially alien to a creature that lives in it". Here Allen is reacting to my wording without considering the context that fixes its significance. The point, to repeat, is not to claim – what would indeed be biologically idiotic – that an animal's environment is, just as such, unfriendly, or unsuitable to serve as a milieu for the sort of life that is characteristic of animals of the relevant kind. The point is that an animal's environment is not an arena for a life that is free in the sense of being made up of responses to reasons, acknowledged as such by the creature that lives the life.

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[31] Allen says I think the social friction Rorty allows yields answerability to the world. I have no idea why he attributes that idea to me. It would imply that the idea of answerability to one another is intelligible in advance of the idea of answerability to the facts. Brandom has a view on these lines; I reject it.

I cannot understand why Allen thinks caring about this distinction is incompatible with "taking Darwin seriously". (If that is indeed what he thinks. It is hard to be sure, since he does not get the distinction I care about into focus.) My aim is to find a way to acknowledge the distinction without letting it entice us, as it easily can, into seeming to be confronted with philosophical tasks of a familiar kind. Of course it is obvious that, as Allen insists, it is no more than an evolutionary contingency that there are creatures whose lives are free in that sense at all; I acknowledge that in my book (123). Allen does nothing to explain how Darwin might have been helpful to me in separating the distinction I care about from the unwanted philosophical implications it can easily seem to have. (As I urge in my book, it is not enough to insist, rightly so far as this goes, on the uselessness of the philosophy that results.) So far as I can see, Allen does not even register that my aim is to avert a certain specific danger of falling into unprofitable philosophy. It is only with that purpose that I go in for "philosophizing about 'mind' and 'world'" at all, and there is no slight to Darwin in not exploiting his thought in the therapeutic philosophy I engage in, no onus on me to justify getting no help from the fact that it is only a contingency of evolution that the activity is there to be engaged in at all.

Lilian S. Alweiss

The Myth of the Given[1]

I. Introduction

'It still remains a scandal to philosophy and to human reason in general that the existence of things outside us [...] must be accepted merely on *faith,* and that if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof'[2]. This complaint raised by Immanuel Kant in 1787 could hardly be more pertinent today. Two hundred years after Kant, we seem to have come no closer to solving the problem of the external world. Moreover, unlike Kant, we no longer appear to be troubled by the fact that the existence of things outside us can still only be accepted on faith. Quite the contrary, for some contemporary philosophy, the scandal is not so much that a proof for the existence of things outside us is still outstanding, but that we are seeking to provide such a proof again and again.

Thinkers as diverse as Husserl, Heidegger, Sellars, Davidson and McDowell agree on this one issue. They argue that the 'problem' of the external world is only a problem so long as we presuppose a subject that is distinct from the world. Such a presupposition, they claim, can never be proven or shown, and thus remains without foundation. In view of this, Husserl objects to the dualism

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[1] I am grateful to Steven Kupfer and Alan Montefiore for their comments upon earlier drafts of this paper.

[2] Kant, I, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Norman Kemp Smith, London, Macmillan, 1933., B XL. All references are the standard First and Second Edition pagination. (Hereafter, *Critique of Pure Reason* = CPR).

between thought and its object[3], Heidegger objects to the dualism between the worldless subject and the world[4], Davidson to 'the dualism of total scheme (or language) and uninterpreted content'[5], Sellars to the dualism of the 'logical space of reasons' and the non-conceptual impacts that arise from outside the realm of thought, namely the (natural) world[6] and McDowell to the dualism of thought and the Given[7]. There is a general agreement that scepticism is a problem only if we presuppose that we are dealing with a subject that is unsure of the existence of the external world. Should these thinkers be proven right with their claim that the rigid dualism between the subject and its world is a presupposition that remains without foundation, then Kant's pressing question 'how do we know that things exist outside us?' could become less urgent. McDowell's response to Kant's question should therefore not come as a surprise: 'I know why you think that question is peculiarly pressing, but it is not' (MW, 113).

Against this trend, this paper seeks to show why the problem of the external world should remain a pressing issue. However, before we can reawaken an understanding of the significance of the question, we first need to explore what has led to its silencing. We shall claim

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[3] Husserl argues that it is only in the natural attitude that we regard consciousness and the world as distinct. In the natural attitude we take for granted the possibility of cognition, namely how knowledge can transcend itself and reach its object reliably. Cf. Husserl, E., *The Idea of Phenomenology,* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1964. Lecture I, 18–21. All the references to Husserl are keyed to the page numbering of the original German text found in the marginalia.

[4] Cf. Heidegger, M., *Being and Time,* trans. – based on the seventh edition – by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962. 206 ff.

[5] Davidson, D., 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984., 187.

[6] Cf. Sellars, W., 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science,* Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (eds.), Vol. 1. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1956.. 253–329.

[7] Cf. McDowell, J., *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1996. (Hereafter *Mind and World* = MW.)

that philosophy succeeds in silencing the problem of the external world only by reducing the significance of the external world to the level of sense.

II. The Myth of the Given

In addressing the problem of the external world, we presuppose, explicitly or not, a subject that is distinct from the world. The existence of the external world is assumed as something given, waiting to be discovered. Yet the trouble with this position is that, so long as we regard the world as distinct from thought, it is impossible to know the world, the paradox being that thought could never *reach* what is meant[8] by a world that is 'other' to thought. We could never adequately understand this externality, for as soon as we attempted to articulate what we meant by the 'external' world, it would have been superseded. Inevitably, therefore, a philosophy that attempts to provide a cogent proof for the existence of the external world turns out to be a very poor philosophy indeed. It can be concerned only with the myth or non-rational assumption that there is a world with which we are, however, never acquainted and which we can never adequately understand.

That is a fallacy that has been well argued by Husserl. According to Husserl, any form of dualism leads to scepticism. So long as we regard thought and the world, or thought and that about which we think, as radically distinct, we can refer only to our representations and would be unable to show *how* these representations relate to an

[8] Edmund Husserl therefore claims that an investigation must first be 'directed toward what consciousness 'means'' (Husserl, E., 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', trans. Quentin Lauer, *Husserl Shorter Works,* Peter McCormick and Frederick Elliston (eds.), Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press / Harvester Press, 1981, 173).

actual object that exceeds our mode of representation. The question would amount to: 'How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object?'[9].

Empiricists might counter that this is too simplistic: Empirical thinking is answerable to the empirical world. The relation between the mind and the world can be represented in terms of a dualism of conceptual scheme and empirical content. Causal impacts from the outside world motivate possessors of sensory capacities to modify or correct their belief system. According to this position, in order to know whether my representation of a table is of an actual table that exists independently of my mode of representation, I only need to touch it. I can feel that it is rectangular, that it has a rough surface, that it is made of wood, and so forth. Indeed, the truth of my representation can be tested. I can knock against a real table but can never knock against an imagined one. Hence, it is consistent to claim that our representations relate to an external world. Our sensations prove that our representations refer to actual objects that have caused these representations in us, even though they remain other to our mode of representation. The claim that there is a world that is extra-conceptual is thus far from being non-rational.

Husserl, however, believes that even this position lies within the realm of doubt. True as it is that we have sensations, these alone do not prove that they are caused by an object that exceeds our mode of representation. Drawing on Hume's insight that it is impossible to perceive causation, Husserl argues we can only sense that we are sensing; we can never sense the cause of our sensations[10]. My hand, when touching the table might feel roughness, but it does not feel that

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[9] Ibid., 172.

[10] We find a parallel argument by Donald Davidson: 'We have been trying to see it this way: a person has all his beliefs about the world – that is, all his beliefs. How can he tell if they are true, or apt to be true? Only, we have been assuming, by connecting his beliefs to the world, confronting certain of his beliefs with the deliverances of the senses one by one, or perhaps confronting the totality of his beliefs with the tribunal of experience. *No such confrontation makes sense, for of course we can't get outside our skins to find out what is causing the internal happening of which we are aware'* (Davidson, D., 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', *Truth and Interpretation; Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* Ernest Le Pore (ed.), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986., 312, my emphasis.)

it is the rough surface of the table that has *caused* this sensation in me[11]. We can prove that we have these sensations, yet, we can never prove or sense the cause of these sensations. In this manner it is impossible to prove that there is a causal relation between the mind and the world. Through induction, association, opinion or habit we might infer that a sensation proves the existence of an object yet this proof can never be shown.

Moreover, so long as we seek to understand our relation to the world causally we revert back to what Sellars has called the Myth of the Given[12], namely the myth that it is possible to show how non-conceptual impacts arising from outside the realm of thought can exert a normative constraint on thinking. If we conceive the subject's experience as made up of impressions, sensations or impingements by the world and argue that these impressions do not belong to what Sellars calls 'the logical space of reasons', then it is impossible to show how our beliefs could ever be answerable to experience. To think that causal impacts from the outside world could have any normative bearing on our belief-system is to confuse causal relations with logical relations.

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[11] To follow Husserl: 'In perception the perceived thing is believed to be directly given. Before my perceiving eyes stands the thing. I see it, and I grasp it. Yet the perceiving is simply a mental act of mine, of the perceiving subject. [...] How do I, the cognizing subject, know [...] that there exists not only my own mental processes, these acts of cognizing, but also that which they apprehend? How can I ever know that there is anything at all which could be set over against cognition as its object?' (Husserl, E., *The Idea of Phenomenology,* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1964., Lecture I, 20). This observation is analogous to Hume's: 'As to those impressions, which arise from the senses, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produced by the creative power of the mind, or are derived from the author of our being' (Hume, D., A *Treatise of Human Nature,* Selby-Bigge (ed.), third revised edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975., Book, I, Part III, Section V, 84.)

[12] Cf. Sellars, W., 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science,* Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (eds.), Vol. 1. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1956.. 253–329.

We must therefore conclude that if we regard the world as utterly distinct from our mode of representation or apprehension, it is impossible to escape the dangers of scepticism. Indeed, so long as we conceive the relation between the mind and world as a causal one, we fail to be able to prove that thought is answerable to what Quine has called 'a tribunal of sense experience'[13].

III. Transcendental Arguments

This should not deter us from our desire to prove the existence of the external world. Rather we need to draw the consequence from this critique and realise that we can only have an adequate understanding of the world if we do not regard it as other to our mode of representation. We can glean this insight from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* According to Kant, rather than speculating about a world that is other to our mode of representation, we should turn our attention to that which can be known. Philosophy should be a '*critical* enquiry concerning the limits of my possible knowledge' (CPR, A 758 / B786). Hence, if we wish to provide an intelligible account of the world, *we should not look at the object, but at the mode in which we experience the object as given.* The problem of the external world can be raised only if it is related to our mode of representation, for apart from it, it remains unintelligible.

This insight allows Kant to articulate a coherent and intelligible account of the external world free from any presupposition[14]. Kant thereby both adheres to and departs from the tradition. He adheres to the tradition insofar as he claims that the spontaneity of thinking needs to relate to a particular given content that is 'other' to thought. Since the nature of thought is to synthesise, to combine and to struc-

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[13] Quine, W. O., 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', *From a Logical Point of View,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1980., 41.

[14] Kant thereby seeks to avoid both a bad scepticism (which is the result of direct realism) and a crude idealism.

ture it can only function if something is present in the first place. Something needs to be presupposed as given in order for our understanding to act. Kant departs from the tradition insofar as he emphasises that the given, though 'other' to thought, does not exceed our mode of representation. Kant's intriguing position is that he interiorises this distinction by claiming that our mode of representation not merely concerns thought, but equally concerns receptivity, namely the content of thought. We should no longer differentiate between our mode of representation and the world, but realise that the world can be understood only in relation to our mode of representation. Knowledge springs from two sources: intuitions and thought. Both have a pure a priori form that structures experience. We refer to the forms of intuitions, namely space and time and the laws of thought, namely the categories of the understanding. 'Through the first an object is *given* to us, through the second the object is *thought'* (CPR, A50/B74).

According to Kant our mind is structured in such a way that it is ready to receive a particular and immediate given. Our intuitions thus contain the *mode* in which we are affected by objects. Whatever is given and intuited cannot be understood independently of this capacity, for it provides the form under which something can be intuited or given in the first place. To be given is to conform to our form of intuition – our mode of representation, namely the forms of time and space. In this manner Kant is able to show how thought is in service for intuition, without falling prey to the Myth of the Given. For the dualism between thought and the given (world) is inherent to our mode of representation. We can thus conclude that our representations do not conform to the world, but that whatever is given needs to conform to our mode of representation (Cf. CPR, Bxx). To follow Kant 'Objects must conform to our knowledge' (CPR, Bxvi).

IV. The Loss of the Object

In this manner Kant appears to be able to affirm the difference between thought and its object without falling prey to the Myth of the Given. The given in question must conform to our mode of representation and is never external to it. McDowell, however, remains dubious about the success of Kant's story. It appears that Kant is only able to rescue the object if he ignores the external world. In McDowell's view, Kant still operates with a dualism insofar as he differentiates between the world of appearances that conforms to our knowledge, and the world as it is in itself, the noumenal world which remains unknown to us yet has supposedly caused these representations in us[15]. In this manner McDowell believes that Kant is unable to fend off scepticism for he still affirms an external 'real' (noumenal) world that is supersensible. This noumenal world cannot exert any restrictions on our thinking and therefore 'the fundamental structure of the empirical world [...remains, L.A.] of our making' (MW, 42). Kant thus fails to supersede traditional philosophy, because he either argues that our representations refer to a given content that remains unknowable to us (Myth of the Given), or he renounces external constraints on our thinking and thus falls prey to what Davidson has called a coherentist position where we can no longer argue that experience can have any bearing whatsoever on a subject's judgement or belief. It is then that 'nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief'[16].

[15] It seems that Kant's position is however more complex. For Kant contends that he cannot even know that our representations have been caused by a noumenal world. This paper will not discuss the adequacy of McDowell's reading of Kant. Cf. note 17 below.

McDowell believes that the latter position 'threatens to make what was meant to be empirical thinking degenerate [...] into a frictionless spinning in a void' (MW, 66).

To avoid the strictures of transcendental idealism[17] and to allow for recalcitrant experience, McDowell advocates what he terms a 'minimal empiricism' (MW, xvi) by dropping Kant's 'transcendental framework' (MW, 43–4). McDowell believes that, in relation to empirical thinking, Kant's philosophy provides a tool to overcome the problem of the Myth of the Given without dismissing the idea of the given completely. Important to McDowell is that Kant not only argues that the given needs to conform to our mode of representation (the transcendental argument that McDowell seeks to ignore), but that the given is dependent on thought (in empirical judgement)[18]. Just as thought needs a content or experiential intake upon which it can act, so intuitions need to be mediated in order to be experienced. This interdependence is expressed in Kant's remark: 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (CPR,

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[16] Davidson, D., 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', *Truth and Interpretation; Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* Ernest Le Pore (ed.), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986., 310. This, however, does not commit Davidson to relativism rather he contends that a 'belief can be seen to be veridical by considering what determines the existence and contents of a belief' (ibid., p. 314). In this manner Davidson believes that though patterns of sensory of stimulation cannot govern interpretation we have not lost a criteria for truth. For 'we must, in the plainest and methodologically most basic cases, take the objects of a belief to be the causes of that belief' (ibid., pp. 317–18).

[17] Here, we are neither concerned with the problem of transcendental idealism, nor the adequacy of McDowell's reading of Kant. We merely wish to explore whether there is an adequate way in which we can address the problem of the external world. Graham Bird has shown how McDowell's Kant is Strawson's Kant which, in turn, is not Kant. Further, he has shown how McDowell fails to acknowledge the extent to which he himself sets out to describe a defensible version of transcendental idealism. Cf. Bird, G., 'McDowell's Kant: Mind and World', *Philosophy,* 1996, 71, 219–43.

[18] McDowell thereby ignores the fact that Kant differentiates between a priori forms of intuitions and formal intuitions. Indeed, McDowell uses the terms 'sensation', 'impression', 'intuitions' and 'appearances' interchangeably without marking their distinction which is understandable since he seeks to jettison Kant's transcendental turn. Cf. Bird, G., 'McDowell's Kant: Mind and World', *Philosophy,* 1996, 71, 234.

A51/B75). In empirical judgement thought is constrained insofar as it is dependent on sensible intuitions which ensure that an object is *given* to us in the first place[19]. McDowell thus emphasises the interdependence between thought and intuition and ignores Kant's transcendental story, namely that they have a pure and a priori form that structures experience.

Curiously, however, this restricted reading of Kant commits McDowell to a far stronger idealist position than Kant's 'transcendental story' ever does. By emphasising the interdependence between thought and intuition, McDowell needs to argue that everything that is, or could be, is ready to be thought. Unlike Kant, he thereby does not argue that the given needs to conform to our mode of representation, but only that the given needs to conform to thought. 'The world is not external to the space of concepts' (MW, 146). In this manner McDowell seeks to rescue the claim that thought remains answerable to the tribunal of experience. The experience in question is conceptual and thus no longer lies outside of the space of reasons. McDowell's position can be read in two different ways: Either we argue that the given is *always already* subsumed by the spontaneity of thinking, or that the given should never be regarded as extra-conceptual but is *always already* meaningful, though it is 'external to the exercises of spontaneity' (MW, 146). The first reading emphasises the moment of spontaneity and the second the moment of passivity. In either case, however, it appears that McDowell fails to escape the strictures of idealism.

Following the first reading[20], it appears that, for McDowell, the intuitions in question need to be *shaped* in such a manner that they *serve* the understanding. If thought and intuition are interdependent, then the being of the intuitions, as definite, is dependent on the understanding. For McDowell repeatedly emphasises that the given in ques-

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[19] According to McDowell, there is an 'obligation' to think. Thought has to exercise 'something like humility' (MW, 40) in so far as it constantly has to work on a given content – for without content thought could not function. It seems questionable, however, how we can refer to a moment of humility or, indeed, obligation.

[20] We shall look at the second reading in section VII below.

tion never exceeds 'the sphere of thinkable content' (MW, 39). The capacities that are passively drawn into operation *fit* (cf. MW, 33) thought. In a curiously Hegelian fashion McDowell thereby affirms the given only in so far as it is already rationally organised[21]: 'Since the deliverances of receptivity already draw on capacities that belong to spontaneity, we can coherently suppose that the constraint is rational' (MW, 41). We can no longer refer to a pure immediacy, receptivity, sensibility or indeed presence[22], since the given can be understood only in view of conceptual mediation. It is difficult to see how it is possible to refer to a minimal empiricism at this stage. For McDowell goes so far as to claim that 'we must not suppose that receptivity makes an even notionally separable contribution to its co-operation with spontaneity' (MW, 51). If this is so, then it becomes questionable how McDowell could ensure that empirical thinking does not 'degenerate into a frictionless spinning in a void'. It appears that McDowell falls prey to the criticism that he himself raised against Kant: 'the fundamental structure of the empirical world remains, of our making'.

V. Kant's Dualism

In view of this, Kant's transcendental idealist position appears far more suggestive. Contrary to McDowell, he insists that intuitions and concepts are utterly distinct both in their function and their contribution. According to Kant, we have to think of two distinct powers: the intuitions which are the particular and immediate given and the understanding which is by definition spontaneous. We are told: 'These two powers or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The under-

[21] Indeed, McDowell acknowledges his indebtedness to a Hegelian position. Cf. MW, 44.

[22] Whatever we call given is no longer pure immediacy indeed McDowell 'reject[s] the idea that tracing back the ground for a judgement can terminate in pointing to a bare presence' (MW, 39)

standing can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing' (CPR, A51/B75). In this manner, Kant emphasises the crucial difference between thinking and intuitions.

However, if there is a gulf separating thought from intuition, then we seem to have fallen prey to an internal scepticism that McDowell has managed to avoid. As soon as we refer to a dualism between thought and intuition we return to the problem that initiated our investigation; namely: *how* can thought ever reach what it intends or means, if the intuitions are by definition 'other' to thought? Kant though aware of this problem, refuses to collapse intuitions into thought. If we do not wish to become bad idealists by 'degrading bodies to mere illusion' (CPR, B71), then we need to be able to provide a positive account of the given without falling prey to scepticism. Scepticism, however, can be avoided only if we can show *how* thought can reach that which is other to itself. To ensure the difference between thought and intuitions without falling prey to scepticism Kant needs to guarantee the 'link' between these two distinct sources of knowledge[23]. Kant realises that he needs to account for an original or basic ground that incorporates that difference. Once he refers to 'a common, but to us unknown, root' (CPR, A15/B29)[24]. We are looking for a ground that expresses the difference between thought and intuition, and is therefore *both conceptual and sensible.* Kant accords this function to the transcendental imagination.

However, Kant's account remains ambiguous. We can find passages where he argues that the imagination belongs to sensibility and others where he identifies it with the understanding: First Kant argues that 'since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, owing to the subjective condition under which alone it can give to the concepts of understanding a corresponding intuition, belongs to *sensibility'* (CPR, B151). However, the problem is that Kant fails to sustain this position.

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[23] Cf. Heidegger, M., *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics,* trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990., §6, 24. All quotations and references are keyed to the page numbering of the original German text found in the marginalia.

[24] Also cited by Heidegger, ibid.

He soon realises that the transcendental imagination, or the common root cannot be *given,* since its function is to guarantee the synthesis (or what we have called the link) between thought and intuition; and synthesis, for Kant, is by definition spontaneous. To follow Kant 'inasmuch as its synthesis is an expression of spontaneity [...] This synthesis is an action of the understanding on the sensibility' (CPR, B152). The transcendental imagination that provides the common ground between thinking and that about which we are thinking, turns out to be the function of the understanding alone.

Even though Kant emphasises that thought is in service for the intuitions this does not question the spontaneity of the understanding. Rather the emphasis is merely on the fact that in empirical judgement, the understanding is in service *for,* not in service *under,* intuition[25]. Moreover, if the common root that links the intuition with the understanding needs to be spontaneous and thus a function of the understanding alone, Kant can only argue that the given is always already shaped by thought, but not that thought is constrained by the given. To follow Kant: 'imagination is [nothing but ... LA] a faculty which determines the sensibility *a priori'* (CPR, B152). If this is so, then we have failed to show how thought is constrained by intuitions. It seems that we encounter a similar problem as that which we came across in our reading of McDowell. Once again, the claim is that the given can be affirmed only if it 'draws on capacities that belong to spontaneity'. In this manner the given is nothing but a predicate of thought.

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[25] Cf. Cassirer, E., 'Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics; Remarks on Martin Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant', *Kant: Disputed Questions,* Moltke S. Gram (ed.), Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1967., 141. Cassirer here criticises Martin Heidegger's reading of Kant who emphasises the dependency of thought upon intuitions. According to Heidegger: 'Insofar as the judging [act] of determination is essentially dependent upon intuition, thinking is always united with it by virtue of its service to intuition' (Heidegger, M., *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics,* trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990., §5, 28). However, Cassirer has convincingly shown this service does not question the freedom and spontaneity of the understanding: 'Understanding aims at intuition, but understanding does not simply make itself subservient to intuition' (Cassirer, E. ibid., 141).

VI. Kant's Epistemological Presuppositions

We, however, believe that Kant only fails to articulate the 'link' that expresses the difference between thinking and intuitions because he cannot allow for synthesis to be passive. Kant's position is problematic only because he believes that thought is always spontaneous and that intuitions always refer to passively received non-conceptual particulars. It is for this reason alone that the common root that incorporates the difference between thinking and that about which we think remains unknown to Kant.

For Kant the given is other to thought. Intuitions are actual and particular whilst thought is spontaneous, general and possible. This definition, however, is merely posited, yet never shown. It would appear that Kant arrives at this distinction through his appropriation of the tradition of modern philosophy. Kant divides the tradition into two camps: empiricists (led by Locke and Hume) and rationalists (led by Spinoza and Leibniz). According to Kant, empiricists such as Locke derived knowledge claims purely from intuitions, whilst rationalists such as Leibniz arrived at truth claims through thought alone. 'In a word, Leibniz *intellectualised* appearances, just as Locke [...] *sensualised* all concepts of the understanding, i.e. interpreted them as nothing more than empirical or abstracted concepts of reflection' (CPR, A271/B327).. Kant saw his own philosophy, in turn, as a synthesis of these two traditions by 'seeking in understanding and sensibility two sources of representations' (ibid.). Kant does not merely take it for granted that we can divide the tradition of modern philosophy into these two camps, but more importantly that these two camps reflect the two different aspects of our mode of representation. He thereby inherits the epistemological presupposition that whatever is given is a singular representation *(repraesentatio singularis)* that 'relates immediately to the object' (CPR, A320/B377). Human intuitions are by definition sensible and non-conceptual.

Kant proclaimed that philosophy should be the 'Queen of all the sciences' (CPR, A viii) and 'dismiss all groundless pretensions' (CPR, A xii). 'In this kind of investigation it is in no wise permissible to hold

opinions. Everything, therefore, which bears any manner of resemblance to an hypothesis is to be treated as contraband' (CPR, A xv). This maxim has led Kant to argue that philosophy should be free from any presupposition, even the presupposition that there is a (transcendentally real) world 'out there' waiting to be discovered. Rather than speculating about the nature of a world that exceeds our mode of representation we should describe the world as it appears to us. If we wish to ensure that philosophy does not turn into a speculative science, then '*certainty* and *clearness* are two essential requirements' (CPR, A xv).

Yet curiously enough this does not lead Kant to question the epistemological assumption that 'our *intuition* can never be other than sensible; that is, [that, LA] it contains only the mode in which we are affected by objects' (CPR, A51/B75). As soon, however, as we adhere to Kant's maxim and investigate not the object, but the mode in which we experience an object as given – without making any presuppositions about the nature of this given – then we realise that Kant's definition of the given, as non-conceptual, actual and particular remains without foundation. That is to say, once we take Kant's maxim seriously we come to realise that his philosophy is not critical enough, since it merely speculates about the nature of the given, 'a hypothesis that needs to be treated as contraband'.

At this stage we must return to McDowell's re-reading of Kant. Initially we have argued that McDowell reduces the given to thought and thus appears to succumb to speculative philosophy. However, McDowell invites us to reverse the reading. Rather than emphasising the spontaneity of the understanding, he wishes to emphasise the moment of passivity. McDowell seeks to argue that the given is not extra-conceptual, as Kant assumes, but 'that conceptual capacities are passively operative in experience' (MW, 29). Only in this manner can experience act as a tribunal. To follow McDowell: 'If we conceive experience as made up of impressions [...] it cannot serve as a tribunal, something to which empirical thinking is answerable' (MW, xv). The given can be rescued from the Myth of the Given, only if it is regarded as more than merely sensible. Indeed McDowell goes so far

as to claim that there are no 'non-conceptual deliverances of sensibility. Conceptual capacities are already operative in the deliverances of sensibility themselves' (MW, 39). The mode of operation of conceptual capacities is thus 'passive, a reflection of sensibility' (MW, 62). Here McDowell provides a radical redefinition of the notion of the given: The given is no longer extra-conceptual and blind; it is meaningful. We are told: 'The misunderstanding is to suppose that when we appeal to passivity, we insulate this invocation of the conceptual from what makes it plausible to attribute conceptual capacities in general to a faculty of spontaneity' (MW, 29).

McDowell believes that it is Kant's transcendental story that prevents him from articulating such a positive account of the given. According to McDowell, Kant's standpoint was restricted because he conceded too much to the 'pressures of modern naturalism' (MW, 96). McDowell illustrates this by drawing on Kant's distinction between reason that is transcendent to experience and nature[26]. Kant thereby upheld the distinction between the logical space of the realm of law and the logical space of the realm of reasons (Cf. MW, 78). Nature, for Kant, remained what McDowell calls 'disenchanted', that is devoid of meaning and reason whilst the source of meaning belonged to the supersensible or extra-natural realm. According to McDowell, Kant in this manner fails to articulate the interdependence between the mind and the world and thought and the given.

McDowell seeks to overcome Kant's restrictions by arguing for the possibility of what he calls a second nature, namely a nature that is imbued with meaning that is not of our making. It is only in this manner that he can ensure that the understanding is no longer distanced from sensibility. The aim is thus to 'bring understanding and sensibility, reason and nature back together' (MW, 108). It is difficult to see how McDowell achieves this goal. However, it appears that if

[26] According to McDowell, against Hume who 'denied not only the intelligibility of meaning but also the intelligibility of law [...] Kant aims to regain for nature the intelligibility of law, but not the intelligibility of meaning' (MW, 97). It is because Kant relies too much on Hume's conception of nature that reason had to be attributed to an extra-natural realm.

successful, it could provide a solution to the problem of the external world. It could show how the world, though external, is not outside thought. Indeed, we could show how thought is in service to the world that is not of our making.

VII. A Philosophy of Intuition

By drawing on the work of Husserl, we believe that it is possible to show how such a position can be sustained. Husserl allows us to rescue the object without falling prey to the Myth of the Given. According to Husserl, if we perform an epistemological reduction[27] and suspend all our judgements and presuppositions about the nature of the given and merely investigate what can be seen clearly and distinctly, we recognise that what is given is far more than sensible intuition. What is given and can be immediately intuited is never a particular object or a particular sense-datum but the interdependence between thinking and that about which we think.

Husserl thereby uses an insight that he gleans from Descartes. If we make no presuppositions about the nature of the given, but just observe what is given clearly and distinctly, then we shall come to recognise that we can never doubt that we are thinking. 'It is at once evident that not everything is doubtful, for while I am judging that everything is doubtful, it is indubitable that I am so judging'[28]. I cannot doubt that I am doubting. Unlike the case of Descartes, however, this is not the final ground; rather more importantly we realise that we

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[27] This is the term Husserl uses in *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1905), Cf. Husserl, E., *The Idea of Phenomenology,* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1964., Lecture III. Later he will call it the transcendental reduction. Cf. Husserl, E., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology;* Collected Works Vol. II, trans. F. Kersten, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982. Quotations and references are keyed to the page numbering of the original German text found in the marginalia.

[28] Husserl, E., *The Idea of Phenomenology,* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1964. 30.

can never think without always already thinking of something[29]. Whether real or imagined what is essential to cognition is that thought is always already directed toward something. Husserl calls this directedness or interdependence intentionality.

What is immanent or given is never some meaningless datum which needs to be conceptualised, rather what is given is meaning, the movement of thought toward an object that it intends as other to it. What is given is the *nexus* of the act of perception *(noesis)* and that which is intended or meant by the act (the *noema*). The consequence of this insight is radical. The reduction discloses what Kant touches upon, but does not dare to think: the common, yet unknown root that bridges the differences between thought and its content. The reduction shows that what is given is the nexus of thought and that about which it thinks. For each *cogitatio,* i.e. act of thinking bears in itself what is meant, i.e. its particular *cogitatum.* What is necessary to all cognition is the directedness of thought to an object.

Through the epistemological reduction Husserl shows that this claim is not dependent on the actual existence of an object, but is essential to all actual and possible object perception. Husserl thereby makes a scandalous move: for not only does he argue that what is given is the directedness of thought to something that is other than thought, namely the object qua intended, but that what is given is not only what is actual and particular but also what is possible and, indeed, ideal. At this point we need to locate the significant breakthrough of Husserl's phenomenology which

[29] Husserl gleans this insight from Franz Brentano who has coined the term intentionality.

McDowell seems to repeat. As Heidegger once observed, this insight allows Husserl to *broaden* both the notion of intuition and the idea of what is given[30].

If we suspend all our presuppositions about the nature of the given and just observe the manner in which an object is experienced as given we come to realise that what we immediately intuit is far more than what is actually or genuinely given[31]. When I perceive an object, for example a die, be it an imagined or a real die, I do not merely perceive one side of the die that is genuinely given, I only perceive the die because I additionally perceive the sides that are 'meant' but not genuinely given. Husserl therefore claims that *'every actuality involves its potentialities,* which are not empty possibilities, but rather possibilities predelineated in respect of content'[32]. That is to say, I cannot see a die without having certain expectations or anticipations about what the die could look like from the other side. These anticipations (intentions) are of a peculiar kind. We are not trying to make present the sides which are absent rather the sides which are absent are seen as absent. We do not need to re-present or imagine what the

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[30] Here, Heidegger refers to Husserl's notion of categorial intuition that he developed in the *Logical Investigations.* Cf. Husserl, E., *Logical Investigations,* trans. by J. N. Findlay, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970 a, Vol. II, Investigation VI. According to Heidegger: the categorial: ' is 'seen' – even if it is seen differently from that which is sensorily visible. And if it is to be *seen* in this manner, it *must* be *given*' (Heidegger, M., *Zähringer Seminare, Seminare zu Zähringen,* Frankfurt a M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973., 114 / 376).

[31] The crucial question is what does Husserl mean when he refers to something that is genuinely present. Husserl still adheres to the tradition in so far as he appears to affirm a matter-form dualism. For he refers to the distinction between *hyletic* data and intentional *morphe,* which is then repeated on a higher level, when he refers to the *noetic-noematic* correlate. For a detailed discussion on the problem of affectivity in Husserl. Cf. Alweiss, L. S., 'The Presence of Husserl', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology,* 1999. January, (forthcoming).

[32] Husserl, E., *Cartesian Meditations – An Introduction to Phenomenology,* trans. Dorion Cairns, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1960., §19, p. 82. Quotations and references are keyed to the page numbering of the original German text found in the marginalia.

die would look like from the other side; rather what we intuit are our anticipations which bear their object (i.e. what is meant) in them intentionally[33].

This is not to say that we already 'know' what the object will look like from the other side, but that it is impossible to intuit one side of an object without intuiting at the same time what the object *could* look like from all the other perspectives. Our actual perceptual angle of an object is possible only because it is accompanied by the perception of the object as such. We intuit not only what is actual, but the form or style of the appearing of an object. Our perceptions are motivated by possibilities which are perceived as present even though they are not actual. Indeed, our anticipations might be disappointed; the die might look completely different from what we had initially anticipated; however, that we are disappointed proves that our perceptions were guided by certain expectations in the first place. The 'not having expected a particular side' is not a negative moment, but a positive characteristic because it affirms a vague expectation – which can either be confirmed or disappointed. The previous expectations, in turn, are retained. It is only in relation to these expectations that we can come to judge a perception *as* disappointing or unexpected. *i.e., as* the crossing out of that which we expected. That which has been crossed out, however, is retained and hence continues to exist[34]. The previous expectation is either intensified or retained as cancelled[35]. There are a multitude of perceptual acts *(noeseis)* which are all striving toward (intend) one and the same object, which is *meant (noema).* That is to say, when I move around I do not constantly see a new die, but I am aware that I am perceiving one and the same die from dif-

[33] This could explain McDowell's claim that experiences embrace non-visual experiences. Cf. MW, 32.

[34] Husserl refers to this as the 'retroactive crossing out of earlier predelineations which are still consciously retained' (Husserl, E., *Analysen zur Passiven Synthesis – Husserliana Vol. XI;* (Aus Vorlesungs– und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–1926), Margot Fleischer (ed.), The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1966., §7, p. 30).

[35] Indeed, without previous expectations, disappointments would not be possible (neither would surprise or shock).

ferent aspects. The die as such, i.e., the *noema,* is the ideal synthesis of all perceptual acts. It guides and makes possible the manifold of *noeseis.* Its function is a regulative one; as the correlate it ensures that my acts of perception are never chaotic, but always *reasonably* structured. To return to McDowell's terminology Husserl affirms the given only in so far as it is already rationally organised.

Husserl is trying to articulate that we always already see more than the parts that are genuinely *(reell)* given. What we see is not only what is actual, but at the same time what is possible. Furthermore, Husserl believes that we can only see what is actual because each perception is accompanied by these expectations[36]. I cannot see a side of the die without instantaneously intending the unity and identity of the die as such.

This fundamental form of synthesis, namely identification, is passive. That means, I do not need to walk around the die and add up all its sides in order to perceive its unity, rather I perceive the unity of the die as soon as I perceive a particular side of it. Here Husserl is following Kant insofar as the emphasis is on the moment of synthesis[37]. However, unlike Kant, Husserl believes that not all synthesis is

[36] This leads Heidegger to claim that: 'Higher than actuality stands *possibility'* (Heidegger, M., *Being and Time,* trans. – based on the seventh edition – by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962., §7, p. 38).

[37] Indeed, as Iso Kern points out: 'The most significant of Kant's discoveries according to Husserl was his doctrine of *synthesis'* (Kern, I., *Husserl und Kant; eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus, (Phaenomenologica 16*), The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff., 1964., 247.).

active[38]. There is a synthesis: '(which is not to be thought of as an active and discrete synthesis)'[39]. Synthesis is given and indeed is passive[40]. That is to say, what is given are not only the really inherent *(reell)* components of perception but the possible ones. Object perception is teleologically structured, it strives for a continuous *synthesis* of appearing – a synthesis that is not constructed but given.

This intentional structure is not limited to individual object perception, rather every perception is accompanied by an indeterminate yet determinable horizon. The *noemata* are not only limited to particular perceptual acts, but refer to the absolute interpretative horizon. To follow Husserl:

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[38] The problem for Husserl was that Kant only accounted for an active synthesis: ' Husserl always understood Kant's 'synthesis' as *creative or productive'* (ibid. p. 257). It should therefore not surprise us that Husserl emphasises the A version of Kant's transcendental deduction. In *Ideas I,* Husserl pays the following tribute to Kant: 'Thus, for example, the transcendental deduction in the *first* edition of the CPR, was actually operating inside the realm of phenomenology' (Husserl, E., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology; Collected Works* Vol. II, trans. F. Kersten, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982., §62, p. 119, my emphasis). The A version of the transcendental deduction is also emphasised in his later writings Cf. Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* trans. David Carr, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970., §28. We can assume that Husserl, like Heidegger later, emphasises the A version of the transcendental deduction since it is there that the difference or gulf between intuition and understanding is reduced through the function of the transcendental imagination. Cf. Heidegger, M., *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics,* trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990., esp. §31.

[39] Husserl, E., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology; Collected Works* Vol. II, trans. F. Kersten, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982., §118, 246.

[40] I take it that this is what McDowell is referring to when he is arguing that meaning is not necessarily of our making. McDowell refers to this as a moment when spontaneity is naturalised. Cf. MW, Lectures IV & V.

"Any actual experience points beyond itself to possible experiences which, in turn, point to new possible experiences and so ad infinitum. [...] Any hypothetical formulation in practical life or in empirical science relates to this changing but always co-posited horizon whereby the positing of the world receives its essential sense."[41]

Every perceiving not only intends the unity of an individual object as it is meant, but co-intends other objects and, indeed, the being of the world as such. Every perception co-apprehends the horizon of all horizons; perceptions, therefore, are teleologically structured as striving towards the unity of the being of the world. Every perception and perceiving always already intends the world as *given,* which, however, can never be turned into a really inherent component of perception. What accompanies each object perception and, indeed, what is anticipated with each object perception is the style of the world as such[42].

With the help of Husserl we are thus able to substantiate McDowell's position. Husserl shows us that what is given is never a non-conceptual appearing, but what is given is meaning, the manner in which an object is intended in its unity. In McDowell's terminology: conceptual capacities are already operative in the deliverances of sensibility themselves and it is only in view of these conceptual capacities that we can even refer to deliverances of sensibility. The given thus does not refer to what is actual, but to what is possible and indeed ideal. For though anticipated, the unity of the object is never a really inherent or actual component of perception, but intuited only as intended (meant). Further, we have seen that what is given exceeds any individually ideal intended object. Thought always already co-intends the spectacle of the world as such. 'For indeed their particularity is particularity within a unitary *universe,* which, even when we are directed to and grasping the particular, goes on 'appearing' unitar-

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[41] Husserl, E., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology; Collected Works* Vol. II, trans. F. Kersten, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982., §47, 90.

[42] As Wittgenstein tellingly observed: 'To understand a sentence means to understand a language' (Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958., §199).

ily. [...] This consciousness is awareness of the world-whole in its own peculiar form, that of spatio temporal endlessness'[43]. It is within the transparency of the world that objects can be experienced in the first place. We move from the unity of object perception to the unity of the world as such, that makes possible all actual and possible object perception.

We thereby appear to have solved a problem that has troubled us at the beginning of our investigation. Thought does not need to reach a given, rather thought has always already reached the given *before* it is ever expressed. In this manner we can uphold McDowell's picture: The world is no longer opaque to reason rather experience has become transparent (Cf. MW, 145). Rather than referring to the poverty of the given, what phenomenology discovers is the infinite excess of meaning that accompanies any object perception. Further, we can sustain McDowell's position that 'the world is not external to the space of concepts, [although, L.A.] it is external to exercises of spontaneity' (MW, 146). Meaning is given and not constructed. What is given is how thought is always already outside itself and directed toward the world. What is given is how thought drowns in the infinite wealth of the world for which no bounds can be found. Husserl allows us to move from an idealism that devours everything that is other to thought to a philosophy that affirms the essential 'otherness' of the world.

VIII. The Strictures of Idealism

In this way Husserl shows why we should do away with the problem of the external world. Philosophy is mistaken if it attempts to *prove* the existence of the world. 'We do not say: things are outside. How can we know them? We do not say as *Kant* did in 1772: What is the basis for the relationship of that in us, which we call representa-

[43] Husserl, E., *Cartesian Meditations – An Introduction to Phenomenology,* trans. Dorion Cairns, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1960., §15, 75.

tion to an object, which is in itself'[44], rather we show *how* thought is always already directed to the world. What we learn from Hume, according to Husserl, is that 'the problem is no longer: How is cognition of the transcendent possible? But rather, How do we account for the prejudice which ascribes a transcendent feat to cognition?'[45].

At first sight we thereby seem to have dampened our anxieties about McDowell's idealism. Through Husserl we seem to have succeeded in upholding the distinction between thought and its content by disclosing that the given refers to the intentional structure, that allows for the nexus between thought and its object. What is given is the difference between thinking and that about which we think; what Kant has called a common but to us unknown root that allows us to bridge the two distinct sources of knowledge, namely thought and intuitions. Moreover, we have shown how thought is *dependent on* and thus serves the object – it is always already directed to what is other to it. With the help of Husserl we thereby succeed in rescuing a notion of a given that is free from spontaneity though rich in meaning. Husserl appears to accomplish McDowell's project by showing how conceptual capacities can be passively drawn on in receptivity (Cf. MW, 10). In this manner, we can sustain McDowell's claim that 'conceptual capacities are already operative in the deliverances of sensibility themselves'. Everything that is given is not only thinkable but is 'not external to the space of concepts'. It is now that 'we achieve an intellectual right to shrug our shoulders at sceptical questions' (MW, 143). For what has come to light that experience is only fallible 'if there is a sense that it intervenes between us and the world' (MW, 143). It is only because experience is always already open to the world that disappointment and indeed doubt is possible.

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[44] Husserl, E., *Ding und Raum,* Karl-Heinz Hahnengress and Smail Rapic (eds.), Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1991., §40, 139. Cf. Kant's letter to Marcus Herz dated 21. February 1772 (editor's note)' (ibid., footnote 2).

[45] Husserl, E., *The Idea of Phenomenology,* trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1964., 38.

Although Husserl and McDowell broaden our notion of the given, and thereby emphasise the moment of passivity and receptivity over and against spontaneity, they do not seem to be able to overcome the problems of idealism. McDowell and Husserl need to claim that everything that is, can only be because it is always already meaningful. Nothing can be that would not fit, to use a Heideggerian expression, the 'fore-structures of understanding'[46]. In this manner they fail to account for a moment that could be truly other to thought. The otherness of the world is affirmed only in so far as it fits our conceptual capacities and apart from that, it is nothing. It is unimportant at this stage, whether we argue that the given is as *always already* subsumed by the spontaneity of thinking, or that the given should never be regarded as extra-conceptual but is *always already* meaningful though it is external to the exercises of spontaneity (MW, 146). For in either case, whether the emphasis is on spontaneity or passivity, it appears that we fail to escape the strictures of idealism, for any constraint or restriction is intelligible only within the space of concepts. Indeed McDowell repeatedly urges us 'to embrace the Hegelian image in which the conceptual in unbounded on the outside' (MW, 83. Cf. MW Lecture II, §8). In this manner I do not see how McDowell can truly argue that he has succeeded in affirming what he calls an 'external friction' (MW, 11). For the externality that is affirmed is always already internal to the space of reasons. Any friction or disappointment is *intelligible* only if it is already thinkable. In this manner, we can no longer uphold the possibility, that was so crucial for Kant, that 'we can present something as given, even though we have *as yet* no concept of it'[47].

Maybe it is time to realise that if we address the problem of the external world, we should be less concerned with the question of activity and passivity but with the distinction between possibility and

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[46] Heidegger, M., *Being and Time,* trans. – based on the seventh edition – by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962., §32, 151.

[47] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgement* – Including the First Introduction, transl. by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987., §76, 285, my emphasis.

actuality. Indeed, we need to recall that for Kant the differentiation between concepts and intuition is crucial since it is analogous to the differentiation between freedom and actuality. Kant believes 'it is indispensable [and] necessary for human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things, and this fact has its basis in the subject and in the nature of its cognitive powers. For if the exercise of these powers did not require two quite heterogeneous components, understanding to provide concepts, and sensible intuition to provide objects corresponding to these, then there would be no such distinction (between possible and the actual)'[48]. By reducing the phenomenon of the world to the level of sense, we have ignored the fact that the *motivation* which leads us to address the problem of the external world lies in the fact that the actual and the possible do not necessarily coincide. It is in this fundamental disappointment which describes our finitude, namely the fact that we do not have intellectual intuition, that we can locate the upsurge for philosophy.

Reply of John McDowell

Alweiss credits Husserl with the insight that synthesis can be passive. According to her that provides an ingredient that my thinking about experience needs and lacks. Without this help from Husserl, she thinks I am unable to depict the given (in contrast to the Given) – reality as it is present to us in experience – as anything but "a predicate of thought". That would surely be in tension with its being, in any genuinely intelligible sense, a reality present to us in experience.

Of course I am happy to accept help from any source, and I find much of the material that Alweiss invokes from Husserl congenial. But I do not understand why Alweiss thinks "passive synthesis" is anything but a different wording for what I already have, in my insistence that experiences, while being actualizations of conceptual

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[48] Ibid., §76, 284.

capacities, are operations of sensory receptivity. She remarks that in my picture of experience "we can no longer refer to a pure immediacy, receptivity, sensibility, or even presence", and if "pure" is glossed in terms of independence from the understanding that is clearly right. But that does not prevent us from crediting experience to an impure (mediated) receptivity. Such an idea yields an intelligible conception according to which experience involves the direct presence to us of independent states of affairs, states of affairs whose obtaining is in no way a product or reflection of our intellectual activity. Direct presence to us of the independently real does not require pure immediacy. On the contrary, it positively requires conceptual mediation.

My thinking about experience is much closer to Kant's than Alweiss recognizes. She says Kant "believes that thought is always spontaneous and that intuitions always refer to passively received non-conceptual particulars". I think this makes no sense of the way Kant is explicitly handling the topic of intuitions at least by the time he gets to the Transcendental Deduction in the first Critique. This is perhaps particularly clear in the B version, whereas Alweiss follows Heidegger and Husserl in focusing especially on the A version. But both versions follow, and exploit, what Kant calls "The Clue to the Discovery of All Pure Concepts of the Understanding", where he explains the idea of categories in terms of functions that give unity both to judgements and to intuitions (A79/B104–5). Intuitions in a sense that that remark fits – intuitions as categorially unified – cannot be prior to and independent of the involvement of conceptual capacities.

As Alweiss reads Husserl, his given is "the intentional structure that allows for the nexus between thought and object", or "the difference between thinking and that about which we think". We should probably not quibble over the label. But I find it natural to say, as I did above, that what is present to a subject in experience – what is given to her in experience – is part of how things are in the world. Self-consciousness, including an awareness that thinking, of its very nature, steps outside itself towards its object, is a condition for being able to have environmental states of affairs present to one. But what

can be present to one if the condition is met – what is in that innocent sense given to one – is in the first instance the environmental states of affairs themselves.

I think this way of talking harmlessly presupposes "a subject that is distinct from the [rest of the] world". Alweiss's opening suggestion that I join a long list of thinkers, in supposing that the key to not having a problem about the external world is to discard such a presupposition, strikes me as rhetorical overkill.

Alweiss thinks that even if my picture of experience is reinforced with the Husserlian material she rehearses, it cannnot escape "the problems of idealism". "McDowell and Husserl", she writes, "need to claim that everything that is can only be because it is always already meaningful … In this manner they fail to account for a moment that could be truly other to thought." I suspect the supposed problem here, at least in so far as it impinges on me, comes from a misreading of the idea I express by saying the conceptual is unbounded. That the earth orbits the sun is something I can think, and say. If I say it, I speak meaningfully. And what I say – that the earth orbits the sun – is something that is the case. (See my response to Williams.) It seems infelicitous to try to express this by suggesting that the earth, or the sun, or even the fact that the earth orbits the sun, are "always already meaningful". See *Mind and World* 97, where I explicitly disown an intention to "rehabilitate the idea that there is meaning in the fall of a sparrow or the movement of the planets, as there is meaning in a text", and where I endorse the idea that "the realm of law is as such empty of meaning". The image of unboundedness expresses the idea that my thought reaches all the way to the fact. That leaves the obtaining of the fact exactly not a product or reflection of thinking. In the only sense that could matter, the obtaining of the fact is "a moment that is truly other to thought".

János Boros

Concepts, Intuitions and the World – McDowell's Rational Empiricism

McDowell says at the beginning of the first chapter that "the overall topic" he considers in his book "is the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world". The fundamental question of epistemology is the relation between minds and the world and the topic of all epistemic discourses is, *what* this relation is. McDowell proposes that concepts mediate. If we read the phrase attentively, we find concepts mediate not between minds and the world, but they mediate the relation. McDowell proposes here an ontology with four kind of "entities": concepts, relations, minds and world. Concepts are in minds, so we have quickly a three-pole ontology. Then we have reduced the first phrase as follows: *the topic of this book is the way minds mediate the relation between minds and the world.* That means minds mediate between themselves and the world. With this formulation however the kind of mediation is not clear: will it be mindlike or worldlike? Probably mindlike, since minds mediate. But what happens then with the world? Or to put in other words: where *is* the world: out there or in mind? If it is in mind, then there is no need for mediation. If out there, then it is not clear how minds (or concepts) can reach out there. With Davidson's word, "The problem is to say what the relation is, and to be clearer about the entities related."[1] There is a third, Davidsonian possibility for the world, that minds are in world. In that case we do not need mediation.

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[1] Davidson, D., "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* Oxford, Clarendon, 1984, 191.

Kant thought he overcame transcendentally classical empiricist and rationalist epistemologies. His fundamental idea was that truth and knowledge should not be founded exclusively either on sensibility or on understanding. The task of theoretical philosophy is for him the investigation of the human mind, the "pure reason" as the condition of possibility of all knowledge. In his system both rationality and receptivity have their well defined function: there is no knowledge without the use of reason and understanding, but there is also no knowledge without input from the world. If the condition of possibility of knowledge depends on the structure of the subject (forms of intuitions, understanding, schemes, pure theoretical reason), then receptivity and spontaneity are not knowable – they are only thinkable. On the other hand, if the "thing out there" is the condition of the inputs, then the thing as it is cannot be known. We know what comes in, but not what remains out there. We have then according to Kant the transcendental subject and the transcendental object, *das Ding an sich,* which remain unknowable for all knowledge. The subject and the thing can be thought but they cannot be known. This is unsatisfying, but the strict and coherent Kantian system requires it so.

There are several efforts to solve this unhappy situation from Hegel up to Strawson and our days. To get quickly to McDowell I mention here only the propositions of Strawson and Davidson.

I have the general impression that Strawson misinterprets Kant's transcendental thinking, especially the notion of the transcendental object and subject. The misinterpretation is formulated in his famous book, but reformulated in his review of McDowell's book in the *Times Literary Supplement.*[2] Here he says: "It is true, ... as McDowell also correctively remarks, that the conceptual linkages which form part of 'the space of reasons' oblige us to adjust our judgments so that they form part of a coherent picture of an objective reality, independently existing, though empirically accessible to us. We have no general rea-

[2] Strawson, P. F., "At home in the 'space of reasons'", *Times Literary Supplement,* November 25, 1994, 12–13.

son to question such a picture; and that is, after all, a sufficient rebuttal of the charge [of idealism – J. B.] But it is here that the unacceptable aspect of Kant's philosophy displays itself. For though he too would accept that picture, he sets the whole within a framework of a supersensible reality radically beyond our empirical and conceptual reach – a framework which calls into question the genuine independence of what we are bound to conceive of as objective reality. So we must purify Kant's great insights, freeing them of their transcendental idealist integuments. All this McDowell makes admirably clear."[3] "A supersensible reality radically beyond our empirical and conceptual reach" – this is a misinterpreted Kant, since for Kant there is no supersensible reality in an ontological or metaphysical sense. It seems to me that Strawson does not distinguish between ontology or metaphysics and epistemology. There is for our knowledge no supersensible reality. If we construct our epistemological system, we have to think of a *residue* of an unknowable something, which is an epistemological necessity, but not an ontological reality. My thesis here is that for Kant the thing in itself is not an ontological entity but an epistemological necessity. The "thing in itself" is a concept which is necessary to ensure that what is known is really something and not only an imagination or a product of subjective cognitive capacities. There is something, what is independent from the empirical or a priori subjectivity. That concept is an epistemological hypothesis and no more. It cannot be said what it is or what are the characteristics of it. For the theoretical reason the thing in itself is only a "limitative conception": it is "merely a limitative conception and therefore only of negative use. But it is not an arbitrary or fictitious notion, but is connected with the limitation of sensibility, without, however, being capable of presenting us with any positive datum beyond this sphere."[4] The thing in itself is the transcendental object which is only thinkable as an empty concept as an X[5], but it is never knowable, since what is known needs

[3] Strawson, op. cit. 12.
[4] Kant, I., *The Critique of Pure Reason,* B310. Transl. Meiklejohn.
[5] Kant, I., op. cit. A104–6.

the senses and the categories, which are directed toward that which is taken through receptivity into the intuitions. If Kant had not supposed this limitative conception he would have fallen back into subjective idealism. In the Kantian system the entities of the world out there are supposed, which are the conditions of the knowledge of them and of the world. This is also the thesis of Adickes who says that the thing in itself has the role of an unproven premise, which is a completely secure basis for knowledge.[6]

Quine rejected the analytic-synthetic distinction of propositions and Davidson rejected the so called scheme-content distinction of sentences. He proposed this rejection to make secure the world for his coherentism. There is no scheme-independent content of sentences for him: sentences are directly made true or false by the "facts". Davidson says "The sentence 'My skin is warm' is true if and only if my skin is warm. Here there is no reference to a fact, a world, an experience, or a piece of evidence".[7] In other words sentences, as certain kinds of functioning of people are directly connected to the world: "In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false."[8] (Analyzed by McDowell.[9]) Sentences and especially beliefs are part of the world and their truth is a question of causality. That is why McDowell's analysis of this proposition is not correct. McDowell says: "for Davidson, receptivity can impinge on the space of reasons only from outside, which is to say that nothing can be rationally vulnerable to its delivrances."[10] For Davidson there is no outside in this sense. His "subject" is open, not rationally as McDowell's, but causally. However causality alone is for Davidson not enough. Our sentences must also cohere with each other.

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[6] Adickes, E., *Kant und das Ding an sich,* Berlin, Pan Verlag, 1924, 157.
[7] Davidson, D., op. cit. 194.
[8] Davidson, D., op. cit. 198.
[9] McDowell, J., *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Harvard, 1994, 138.
[10] McDowell, J., op. cit. 139.

Davidson elaborates his coherence theory in his essay "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge"[11], where he shows that he is neither a pure coherentist, nor a pure correspondist, since "coherence yields correspondence"[12] and causal correspondence must correlate with rational coherence. Davidson's coherence theory concerns "beliefs and not propositions or sentences".[13] This remark is important for him because he can so reintegrate the "people" or the knower "subjects" into the world: "Beliefs for me are states of people with intentions, desires, sense organs; they are states that are caused by, and cause, events inside and outside the bodies of their entertainers."[14] And if beliefs are states of people with intentions and organs, then they have two faces: an internal and an external, or a rational and a causal. The rational side is where there is meaning and belief, justifications of beliefs, where "holding the sentence true is ... the vector of two forces", of meaning and of belief.[15] In this sense belief belongs to the "internal perspective" – to use an expression of Thomas Nagel. The causal, the external side of beliefs is that they are states of a highly complicated organism, which is through and through biological and as such is without any separation *in* the world. Davidson says "the relation between a sensation and a belief cannot be logical, since sensations are not beliefs or other propositional attitudes. What then is the relation? The answer is, I think, obvious: the relation is causal. Sensations cause some beliefs and in *this* sense are the basis or ground of those beliefs. But a causal explanation of a belief does not show how or why the belief is justified."[16] This is the task of rational or logical analyses. Here McDowell says, "in experience the world exerts a

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[11] Davidson, D., "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1993 (first publ. 1986), 307–319.
[12] Davidson, D., op.cit. 307.
[13] Davidson, D., op. cit. 308.
[14] Davidson, D., op.cit. 308.
[15] Davidson, D., "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation,* Oxford, Clarendon, 1984, 196.
[16] Davidson, D., "Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", op. cit. 311.

rational influence on our thinking". The subject-object relationship is not causal, but rational where experience "requires us to delete the outer boundary from the picture." The experiencing subject receives impressions on the senses which are "already equipped with conceptual content."[17] I think it is difficult to imagine a world which prepares for us "the impingements of the world on our sensibility" with conceptual structure. Conceptual structures are attributes of subjects, so rationality can only evolve *in* the subject, even when it is continuous with the world. This is why it is not clear how it is possible to have a borderless subject, where the deletion of the border is done by rationality, that is, the subject would be rationally continuous with the world.

For Davidson beliefs and meanings can be rational, but not the world. So for example he says, "Since we can't swear intermediaries to truthfulness, we should allow no intermediaries between our beliefs and their objects in the world. Of course there are causal intermediaries. What we must guard against are epistemic intermediaries."[18] And McDowell does not guard against those intermediaries. And later: "I suggest we give up the idea that meaning or knowledge is grounded on something that counts as an ultimate source of evidence. No doubt meaning and knowledge depend on experience, and experience ultimately on sensation. But this is the 'depend' of causality, not of evidence or justification."[19] With the rejection of fundamental epistemic intermediaries as senses and rationality, the human being becomes an epistemologically "unproblematic" entity, whose beliefs are mostly true.

McDowell builds up a Kantian epistemic model without the transcendental object and subject. Concepts and intuitions do their work as they do it for Kant: "receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation"[20] with spontaneity. If they

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[17] McDowell, J., *Mind and World,* Cambridge MA, Harvard UP, 1994, 34.
[18] Davidson, D., op. cit. 312.
[19] Davidson, D., op. cit. 313–4.
[20] McDowell, J., *Mind and World*, 9.

are not different notions, why does McDowell use them as different concepts and why he does not use one single notion? Concepts in his model reach the outside boundary of the epistemological structure. Experience is passive and active at the same time. It is passive as receptivity and active as spontaneity. "The conceptual capacities that are passively drawn into play in experience belong to a network of capacities for active thought, a network that rationally governs comprehension-seeking responses to the impacts of the world on sensibility."[21] The experiencing epistemological subject is through and through rational, even its receptivity is rationalized.

Davidson's thesis is that the world has only a causal influence on our beliefs and sentences, whereas McDowell proposes that the influence is rational. I think that there is a possible mediation between the two ideas.

In Davidson's case it is hard to explain how causality becomes suddenly rational when its influence gets into beliefs. For him beliefs are "supervenient on facts of various sorts, behavioral, neurophysiological, biological and physical."[22] Beliefs are caused and they stand in a coherent or rational system. Consequently rationality and coherence are supervenient on causality. To be sure, causality and rationality are different, but they are interconnected in beliefs which are caused and which are rationally justified. Rationality and causality are the two sides of the same coin. What I want to emphasize here echoes Davidson's suggestion that belief and meaning are interdependent: "Take for example the interdependence of belief and meaning. What a sentence means depends partly on the external circumstances that cause it to win some degree of conviction; and partly on the relations, grammatical, logical or less, that the sentence has to other sentences held true with varying degrees of conviction. Since these relations are themselves translated directly into beliefs, it is easy to see how meaning depends on belief. Belief, however depends equally on mean-

[21] McDowell, J., op.cit. 12.
[22] Davidson, D., op. cit. 314.

ing".[23] Because of the interdependence and of the fact that there is no belief without meaning and no meaning without belief and we cannot start with one to reach to the other, and because meaning is embedded in a rational structure and belief also in a causal structure, we should take, following Quine and Davidson, "*prompted assent* as basic, the causal relation between assenting to a sentence and the cause of such assent. This is a fair place to start the project of identifying beliefs and meanings, since a speaker's assent to a sentence depends both on what he means by the sentence and on what he believes about the world."[24] Davidson in "prompted assent" expresses the interdependence of meaning and belief and of causality and rationality.

With the notion of prompted assent we have a possible relationship of causality and rationality. It helps us to understand the view that the subject is structurally embedded in the world as a very complicated entity. Rationality is the "internal" system of beliefs in an entity which responds to the exigences and influences of the causal world. In this view rationality is a result or consequence of complicated processes and relationships.

McDowell speaks about rationality, where Davidson supposes causality. I do not see in McDowell's book any answer to the question, *how* the causal world can be rational. If rationality reaches the world and if our rational beliefs about the world show us how the world is *out there,* then the world is rational. Rationality of the world means that all the relations in the material world are not only causal, but also rational. However, this supposition requests too much. First, we know that our notion of rationality changed in the past and there is no reason to suppose that it won't change in the future. Hence the question is legitimate, which rationality reaches the world and which rationality we attribute to the world *out there.* When our rationality changes historically does the rationality of the world change also? Or should we suppose a naturalistic notion of rationality, which does not change

[23] Davidson, D., op. cit. 314–5.
[24] Davidson, D., op. cit 315.

during the centuries? Secondly rationality is not a quality of the world, it is a quality of our thinking. Kant knows that when the categories mediate for us a world, it is not the world there, but the world as it seems to us. But the world as it is without this seeming, remains for us unknowable. This unknowable world, the origin of our empirical intuitions is what Kant calls thing in itself. Strawson abandoned the *Ding an sich* and so does McDowell. That is why he must suppose that not only the world *for us* but also the world *there* is not only causal, but also rational.

To face this absurdity McDowell opens the outer boundary of the conceptual realm: "the conceptual is unbounded; there is nothing outside it"[25]. If we reshape the phrase "the conceptual is unbounded, *for us* there is nothing outside it", then I could not argue against it. This phrase brings McDowell very near to idealism, since what is, is conceptual ("there is nothing outside it"), the world is conceptual. The world has a conceptual structure, but to have it, it needs also language and mind, who thinks it, since concepts are expressed in languages and are understood in minds. Without language and without mind there are no concepts. If there is nothing outside the conceptual, then there is nothing outside language and mind. We arrive in this way from a conceptual world to minds thinking over the world and as such identified with the world, since this conceptual world exists only in the thoughts of these minds. The world is in mind and this seems to be a kind of idealism, to paraphrase McDowell, a bald idealism or a "rampant Platonism".

Reply of John McDowell

Some of Boros's points about my use of Kant are close to points that are also made by Krisztián Pete, and I shall not repeat what I say about them in my response to Pete.

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[25] McDowell, J., op. cit. 44.

Boros takes issue with my saying that "for Davidson, receptivity can impinge on the space of reasons only from outside, which is to say that nothing can be rationally vulnerable to its deliverances". This remark, which he quotes, includes its own gloss on "from outside". Given what seems to be clear, that all that sensory receptivity can amount to for Davidson is the capacity to undergo mere sensations, my remark simply rephrases Davidson's claim, which Boros himself cites, that the relation between sensation and belief is merely causal, and not such as to show how a belief is justified. I agree with Davidson about that, but I reject his restriction of receptivity to mere sensation. The point of the remark Boros objects to is precisely what Boros himself says as if to correct me, that Davidson's knowing subject is open, in perception, to "the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true" only causally, not rationally.

Boros is also wrong to imply that I disobey Davidson's advice to "guard against … epistemic intermediaries". A great deal of the point of my image of openness is precisely to insist that when experience does not mislead us, we are in touch with states of affairs in the world directly, not by way of intermediaries whose truthfulness or otherwise would have to be in question for us, as in the picture Davidson rightly rejects. (See 143.)

Boros attributes to me a picture that simply inverts Davidson's picture. For Davidson the subject-object relation – to put it in Boros's terms – is causal, not rational. Boros says that for me the subject-object relation is rational, not causal. This reflects an idea I reject, that we have to choose between seeing the relation as rational and seeing it as causal. For me the relation is rational, and not thereby shown not to be causal. Indeed in the case of beliefs based on perceptual experience the relation is causal. (See my response to Jaroslav Peregrin.)

Boros attributes to me a conception of experience as "passive and active at the same time". That seems scarcely even coherent. But in the passage he quotes from me in the immediate context, the invocation of activity is in connection with active thought, as what the capacities that are passively operative in experience are capacities for.

Experience is, simply, passive. But it actualizes capacities that are necessarily such as to be exercised in intellectual activity – which, as activity, is distinct from experience.

Boros thinks I need an answer to the question "how the causal world can be rational". But of course I do not think the world, as such, is rational. (It contains rational beings, but huge stretches of reality are quite devoid of rationality.) The point of the image of the conceptual as unbounded is not a crazy "mentalizing" of the world. The relevant conception of the world is the one Wittgenstein expresses when he says – I think utterly naturally – that the world is everything that is the case. Something that is the case is something that can be truly thought to be the case. But of course a true thinkable does not need to be actually thought by any mind, so there is not the implication Boros thinks there is, that the world is "in minds".

Sacha Bourgeois-Gironde

Conceptual determination and orientation in McDowell's *Mind and World*

1. Deictic and egocentric determination of content

According to McDowell, and according to his reading of Kant, all experience is through and through conceptual. It means that our faculty of spontaneity – which is the free use of concepts in representations – is active in the presentation (or self-presentation, if special focus is placed on its passive aspect) of experience to the mind. Conceptuality of experience not only means that all that we experience are thinkable contents, which is pleonastic if, in a Cartesian way, we define thinking as encompassing all mental occurrings and happenings, but it also means that the whole of experience is determinate. Determinacy, as I will continue to use it, echoes the Kantian effort, in McDowell's exposition of the problem, to escape blindness of intuition. What sense would there be in saying of something falling short of conceptualization that is determinate? To put things together : thoughts, as reflecting thoroughly conceptual experiences, are filled with determinate contents. Content and determinacy go hand in hand in explicating the idea, largely emphasized in *Mind and World,* that receptivity and spontaneity do not make even notionally separable contributions to the shaping of experience. And they never part company ; in its farther outreaches and its finest details experience is conceptually determinate – shades of colours as well as faint second-level perceptions of what passes in our minds. This equation of thought with determinateness is the main theme McDowell's book suggests on which I will try to reflect.

Determination does not receive in *Mind and World* one of its most usual definitions, which is: for whatever property P, a content C is determinate for a subject S if S can tell whether C has P or not. This is an ontologically, rather than epistemically, grounded characteristic of objects – and here we take contents to be mental objects. Actually in an even more usual definition, an object is complete or incomplete relative to a set of properties, with no consideration of any informal and attributional system, like a subject telling whether the considered object has such a property or not. This criterion normally insulates grounded ontological properties of objects from the question whether properties are being apprehended. Ontology is not relativized to subjective apprehension of its basic items. Ontology aims to describe an independent realm of objects and forms. So, what lacks the characteristic of having a given property P or its negation is usually called incomplete *simpliciter,* or indeterminate in relation to that property.

At first blush all that is conceptual in McDowell's perspective is hardly complete. Take for example contents of memories. They are fully conceptual. Memories need not be considered bare presences: they are recognized, can be called up, and even mere reminiscences are not simply given : in general one would not recognize anything, had one not the relevant concepts being active in order for one to experience what one is being presented with, albeit in a passive way. Yet objects of memory are ontologically incomplete. I just can't tell how many seams and patches of colour those particular clown dungarees I remember wearing when I was three had. The fact that my dungarees were not themselves incomplete does not make their memory complete in turn. The fact that some image of them occurs in my mind – sometimes with a flash of precision – does not make their memory complete either. Mental representations are not fully determinate. Images in general are not; dreamed, hallucinated, painted, filmed objects are ontologically incomplete in the above sense. Objects represented cannot be scrutinized in their finest details, which they just lack. They have no clearly determined shades.

Why not just say when a represented object lacks a detail – expressed, say, by a very finely grained property ψ – that it just lacks ψ and that in instantiating non–ψ, it is actually determinate under ψ? The problem is that answers seem to oscillate according to the type of represented objects we deal with. Generally deemed incomplete objects, such as filmed, painted and perhaps dreamed ones, would be judged complete under this criterion. Such represented objects are said to lack certain properties they would have if instead of being parts of fictions, they were their own counterparts in the concrete world. So their lacking certain properties *simpliciter* does not make these objects determinate under these properties. Rather we think that, as objects of a certain type, they normally instantiate those properties in one way or another and since they fail to do it in the context through which they appear, they are incomplete. In the representational contexts in which fictional men appear to us, they are incomplete in the sense that we are generally unable to tell whether they have "n hairs on their skulls".

This is where some epistemic ingredient might become relevant in attributing such ontological characteristics as completeness or incompleteness to objects of experience. We take some objects as pertaining to certain ontological categories, because we are able or unable to endow them with certain properties or their negations. But I take our epistemic position vis-a-vis those objects to be a fundamental reason why we come to deem some of them complete and others incomplete. Incomplete objects exist in worlds or states of affairs in which we do not. It is in fact a remarkable enough opportunity that we can cast more or less acute glimpses over those objects, or parts thereof. Still we have no privileged or complete access to the whole context (a set of possible worlds for instance, or a full-fledged merryland) in which they take part. We are located in a given world, and nowhere else. In the world we inhabit, we perceive only partial aspects of objects we call incomplete. Our situation causes such imperfection of perception, which we transfer to ontological structures of what we perceive.

But such an exculpation is something McDowell would refuse for objects we perceive and which fully belong to the same and only world as us. Objects in mental representations – perceived or

remembered ones – belong to the same world as objects of which they are the mental correlates. Occurrences in mental representations do not place objects represented in a world of mere fiction and fantasy. Which criteria of ontological determinacy or indeterminacy are we going to apply in the context of mental representations? Represented objects are intentional, and *doxa* in this matter inclines us to consider them as incomplete as their counterparts in fiction. Some clarification of what and how the objects we have in mind are must be in order here. A first distinction is that a lack of fine details does not make mental contents (images or propositions) themselves incomplete, but only what they represent. Images or propositions we have or mentally grasp are complete in themselves, in the same way outer objects are. They are objects in our world and as such they are determinate under all conceivable sets of properties, even though they positively possess a (perhaps) limited number of them (no seams or patches of colour apply here). Objects represented are incomplete, but images or mental contents are not represented objects, they are representations. They are in principle fully determinate.

Two problems arise from this assertion. First, talk of conceptual determinacy of experience is about our way of representing how objects of experience are in themselves, not simply of bearing representations of these objects in mind. How are we to accomodate the claim of an experience to be about the world in addition to its being a mental occurrence? Second, it is not clear that we are always in a position to decide whether a representation has a property? or not. Representations are typically elusive relative to certain properties. In consequence our epistemic proximity to representations does not seem to play as much in favour of their completeness as would be expected from our preceding remarks. How are we to insulate epistemic or psychological elusiveness from the alleged completely conceptually determined nature of representations?

Concepts are abstract links between objects in the world and our thoughts. More precisely they are ways things are mentally presented (ways being abstract things). Concepts are also dependent entities –

they depend for their existence on the entities they relate, broadly: features of minds and the world. When McDowell speaks of conceptual determinacy of thinkable contents he means that these abstract and dependent entities ensure that our representations are about outer objects and that they make what is represented fully conceptually determinate. So what is it for a concept, overlapping between mind and external objects, to make representations of the latter fully conceptually determinate? It means that the mind is active in the shaping of whichever features of the world it experiences as its own contents. Not that the mind shapes the external world, but rather that mentally represented external features or items are such that no parts or aspects of them stand short of conceptual extension and determination. If that were the case, they would not be represented at all. Thus, because concepts are ways worldly things are connected to the mind and exist therein, there is no further possibility to say those represented things are indeterminate. The residual problem is still: how can we be sure external objects are completely (and accurately) mentally represented? They are not, but that does not make their being represented incomplete in turn. Don't we have then to admit the existence of things in themselves, *noumena,* to which we are incapable of relating via concepts and senses? The preliminary answer we can give to this problem is that if we are to draw such a conclusion in favor of the supersensible, it is due to a call or need of the understanding when it reflects on its own operations, and it is not grounded in the way the world is. Thus we have to assign limits to such claims and needs.

The second point we raised was about a seeming paradox, in regard of previous considerations on objects in fictional contexts, concerning our epistemic proximity with representations making them instantiate a kind of indeterminacy, typically under the guise of elusiveness. We interpreted fictitious objects' incompleteness as due to our being epistemically situated outside the context (say world) wherein those objects take place. No such ontologically grounded epistemic distance lies between us and our objects of perceptions or memories. So incompleteness, if any, cannot be given the same explanation here as in the case of non mental representational “media“. In the case of inner

objects, attributions of completeness or incompleteness seem to depend more tightly upon the capacities of an informational, and attributional, system; i.e. a subject bearing in mind those representations. No feature of a representation can be said to attach or not to attach to it in the absence of a subject mentally relating to this feature. And, in view of our conception of concepts, it seems quite natural to call conceptual the way a mind relates itself to features of its own representations. The problem here is not with accepting in principle the conceptual character of inner experiences, but with stating what their determinacy consists in. I understand something conceptually determined both to be conceptual and determined. Conceptual determination must be reflected not only in the way objects or contents are presented to us, but also in the way objects and contents are, while they are presented to us. And it precisely appears that the elusive way some mental contents are presented to us does not put us in a position to clearly decide, relatively to many properties, whether they have or lack them (think for instance of temporal properties), which does not put us in such a privileged position to state how such objects are.

Elusiveness of contents attaches, in a different way, to our direct links with perceived objects too. Imagine a shade of colour onto which I have no definite concept to apply. This is a perceptual experience of which Evans typically said it is non-conceptual and indeed merely given. I am not in a position here to clearly declare whether such or such property, taken out of an array of determinations which apply to short lengths of the spectrum, apply to that shade of colour. Imagine some hue of colour between red and orange. In other terms, this shade is not conceptually determined for me, at least to the extent I am experiencing it. Nonetheless McDowell contends that such a content of experience is conceptually determined. According to our view of what concepts are, McDowell's contention is acceptable in so far as we can abstract out of this experience a way through which we could systematically mentally refer to its content. So even when contents of my experience of perceived objects are not conceptually definite, they are conceptually determinate as soon as I am able to abstract my way of relating to them from their sheer givenness. This

is precisely what I do through the sequence consisting successively in an act of pointing to the shade of colour in its presence, the uttering of the phrase "that shade" (conceivable as the logical name of the freshly instantiated relation between my mind and the shade), the remembering of this pointing and its correlate, and the re-using of the phrase "that shade" in presence of an experienced content of the same type. But in what sense does this sequence make the experienced content conceptually determinate? And how does such conceptual determinacy encompass both outer and inner lives, so to speak? Will any comparable demonstrative conceptual relations reduce the seeming vagueness of mental correlates of inner operations of the mind?

This sequence based on a demonstrative relationship with our contents of experience allows our exercises of thinking be attuned with the world's finest structures. Thinkable contents should conceptually preserve the ontological structure of what is actually experienced. This at least is a requisite for the conceptually determined nature of direct links with external objects, like perceptual ones, that they should preserve the whole structural information concerning those objects. This is what makes possible the formation of demonstrative concepts in the presence of fine-grained objects of perception. However, in light of our considering mental contents as objects of internal operations of the mind, the situation looks again a little paradoxical. Perceptual systems are *prima facie* better objective information preservers than inner mental operations. For two reasons: because it is practically easier to locate an object or a feature or aspect thereof in the world than to grasp and fix an occurring mental event, and because information, in the case of perception, is associated with a better notion of objectivity, needed in order to warrant that the mind is not confined within its inner limits with no grasp of the world.

We need some notions of object and content independent from operations of the mind, if we want to deny that our thoughts float around in the void. On the other hand we want objectivity and receptivity not to make any even notionally independent contribution to the possibility of thought. One feels here that the mere notion of an informational system won't be enough to fulfill all the required tasks and

this might be taken as a first motive behind McDowell's critical remarks, in §§2–6 of his third lecture, on Evans' proposals on demonstrative and non-conceptual contents. Perceptual contents are not mere intakes moving along informational links betwenn minds and the world. But we can refine the nature of those links. After all, concepts, defined as abstract relations between mental events and objective contents, are informational links. What we cannot accept, in order to make the contents of experience fully conceptual, is that our informational connections to the world be achieved only through senses. Rather sensorial links have to be conceptual ones. If, in particular, we associate with every sensorial connection to the world a demonstrative and expressive sequence of the type sketched above, those connections become fully conceptual.

Not having Leibnizian complete notions of external objects individuated in our minds does not necessarily imply that our experience of them is partly non-conceptual. On the contrary demonstrative relations to objects permit that we instantiate in mind as finely grained concepts as our experience requires. McDowell states that for all experience we have, conceptual capacities are drawn into operation so that its content can be made available to us. But what does this mean about the nature of our faculty of spontaneity, about the way concepts are mentally individuated and about our inner life in general? A conceptual capacity, in order to be conceptual and to be a capacity, must maintain a certain distance from what is directly attained and articulated through its exercise at the very moment of a particular experience. It has to perdure and extend beyond the presence of the experience and cannot be expressed as the concept of that experience unless it can otherwise be expressed, when for instance it is recalled, as the concept of *an* experience which can have that particular feature as its content or take that particular aspect. A conceptual capacity is at least a recognitional capacity. The recognitional nature of concepts is what psychologically makes sense of their transcending the demonstrative (spatial and temporal) marks of experience. But this cognitive abstraction from indexical immediacy leaves partly unearthed the proper subjective component that lies behind our exercise of conceptual capacities in experience. If every content of experience is

conceptually determinate, because we can demonstratively relate to it and individuate the corresponding concept, it is a crucial aspect of this experience that it is ours. Our perspective on what happens in our mind and on what stands in our surroundings might be the fundamental and common condition of the conceptuality of content.

Demonstrative concepts must be coupled with egocentric or perspectival concepts in order to make the conceptuality of experience fully intelligible ; both, after all, refer to the two aspects and directions of the ways through which things and minds are related. Demonstrativeness and egocentricity are ways in which ways things and minds relate. In a sense they are proper determinations of conceptual links themselves. It is natural that in the discussion of perceptual contents, demonstrativeness, rather than egocentricity, is in the foreground. But in the analysis of our inner relations to mental occurrings instead of outer objects, conceptual egocentricity might play the *premier rôle.* Pointings at objects ensure their experience is conceptual and determinate in all its aspects; because we can imagine no part of an object to which we cannot point and because this is enough to come up with a relevant demonstrative concept. Contents are not indeterminate so long as we are able to deictically refer to them or any part thereof. What I can discriminate is a *de facto* thinkable content. Determinateness, thus, is at least based on a deictic discrimination of content. But, even more basically, the applicability or non-applicability of a property to an object involves that I direct my attention to some part of the object where the property would fit. If I wonder whether a piece of cloth is blue, I know I have to look at its surface. Ontological completeness, based on demonstrative or non-demonstrative concepts, relies on such a pre-understanding of the ontological structure of objects. This pre-understanding can be interpreted as a conceptual tuning between the things and our mind ; but it precedes demonstrative uses of concepts *stricto sensu* and it is more tightly connected to the way things, as structured entities, are presented to us.

Inner demonstratives are also conceivable. I mentally point to some of my thoughts, but with a lesser degree of precision than with features of my environment. Still vagueness of mental correlates of

inner acts of pointing is not a threat to the conceptual determinacy of our mental life if we couple egocentric or perspectival concepts with merely demonstrative ones in the determination of contents. There is no indeterminacy in the contents of my mental life to the extent that I know where and when to point at something and when such an operation is useless: that is, if egocentric relations to my mental events determine the way the latter are presented. The same remarks that prevail with the passivity of experience apply to its vagueness. Passivity and vagueness are ways experiences are lived, and it does not prevent our conceptual capacities being active in the self-presentation of experience, nor its non merely given character, and its full determinacy. So egocentric determination of experienced contents, I maintain, guarantees full conceptual determination of contents in McDowell's Kantian perspective on the relationship between mind and world.

2. Orienting oneself in space and thought

Egocentric conceptual determination of contents not only vindicates the fully and thoroughly conceptual determinateness of experience – in its details and its phenomenological variety – it also sets some proper limits to the realm of experience, making sense of Kant's remarks on the supersensible. The need for the existence of the supersensible is felt when what, after Sellars, McDowell calls the "space of reasons" is considered wider than the space of concepts (defined as relations between thoughts and sensible objects). When reasons exceed concepts, rational constraints we exert on our thinking lack their grip on the products of sensibility: excess of reasons entails loss of conceptuality and understanding of an object which is supposed to provide the mind with a clear intuition of content.

In §5 of his third lecture McDowell recalls Evans's phenomenological point according to which fine-grainedness of experience does not apparently meet a corresponding fine-grainedness of a subject's conceptual capacities and that, as a consequence, some contents of experience – paradigmatically shades of colours – are not conceptual

contents. Here the details of experience, and not the excess of reasons, was supposed to make experience indeterminate. On one hand thoughts play in the void, on the other hand perceptual intakes are simply given and intuitions are blind. In order to get thoroughly conceptual contents and fill our thoughts with actual contents "we must not suppose that receptivity makes an even notionally separable contribution to its co-operation with spontaneity". Such a slogan-like *desideratum* is fulfilled, I contend, if the conceptuality of contents – and specially fine-grained ones – is accounted for in terms of egocentricity as well as demonstrativeness, which is close enough to many other points Evans makes on the matter of location and orientation in geographical space.

When I point at an object in the world I can immediately infer that the object is here now. Even though I ignore where "here" is and when "now" is in an objective or larger spatio-temporal frame of reference, I can surely say I have identified the present object in that spatial and temporal locations are identity-conditions of every standard object in the world. But demonstrativeness alone or mere pointing does not suffice. In absence of an objective frame of reference through which the object can be located and identified, my viewpoint on this object is what locates it, minimally, in the world. Not that in my absence the object would vanish from the surface of the world, but in that its "now"- and "here"-characteristics (which indexically allow it to receive a sort of minimal identity) are directly dependent on the perspective I have on this object. A minimal indexical identification of an object in the world is made possible through my being situated in the same world as this object. And reciprocally, even though I have no access to the rest of the positions in the world, even though my sight is limited to this particular object, even though I am lost and can see nothing but one thing or a part of it, I still not ignore my situation in relation with this thing. My contention is that such a minimal egocentric connection- a Russellian relation of acquaintance – to one single thing in the world is enough in order to conceive the whole of human experience as conceptually determinate.

We can envision the possibility of egocentric determination of contents even in the absence of outer objects to exert a perceptual grip on. Suppose you are absolutely lost in an empty landscape – such a predicament might happen in dreams – you can still think about the place where you are, that is the space your body – even your oneiric one – fills, under a perspectival mode of presentation expressible by "here". This mode of presentation is not in itself perceptual (it needs no objective correlate) and as the dream example shows, it is even made available to one's thinking independently from any actual perceptual connection with the place where one stands. This minimal egocentric relation to the world is itself conceptually determinate and it directly reflects the need for reason to set the limits of possible experience. It can be shown by first recalling the name Kant has popularized for this egocentric grip on positions in space : "orientation", which is curiously absent from *Mind and World*'s Kantian lexicon. Orientation in space – as well as in the space of reasons – requires only two things: an inner subjective principle of differentiation (like between righthand and lefthand) and one single grip upon an object of experience or a place. What makes Kantian "orientation" a relevant theme in an eventual reconciliation between Evans and McDowell on the nature of perceptual content is that it provides a possibility of complete conceptual determination of contents (in all their guises) with conceptuality being inherently grounded in basic informational links we entertain with our environment.

Imagine someone lost in darkness – there are no shades of colour to be perceived. It is nonetheless possible for her to perspectivally orient herself through the attuning of her subjective feeling of the difference between her left side and her right side and her delineating some spatial regions in her surroundings through which she is making her way. Her experiences are fully conceptual, even if there is no object to locate and identify and thus no demonstrative concepts to come up with. Still "behind me", "in front of me", "on my right", "on my left", are egocentric concepts that make perfectly determinate what I experience when I am lost in the dark. They have the same pragmatic properties as demonstrative concepts like "that shade": they can be formed

in context and reused in similar contexts. But unlike demonstrative concepts they are not elusive and are anchored in our most basic conceptual abilities. Imagine now that an object is faintly felt in this obscure environment. I can start to conceptually exploit a demonstrative grip on this felt object. If it is felt, it has some salient traits which I can demonstratively name and recognize. However, in the present context, it seems a realistic statement to consider our demonstrative relation to this object as being made possible on the basis of the background my egocentric delineating of a landscape has drawn. Perspectival relations to places, and times, lie at the core of our identifying objects – and as such they form conditions of possibility of our concepts, demonstrative or not, latching onto them – and they must contribute in some significant way to make experience of such objects fully conceptually determinate. Yet they are informational systems, and they play the role Evans lent to informational systems: they form causal chains between perceptual intakes and representations. But what is made available to our usual conceptual capacities through these causal chains are not blind intuitions, but rather egocentrically conceptually structured entities – those causal chains being themselves conceptual links between basic features of a subjective environment and mentally represented objects.

Kant, in *Was heisst sich in Denken orientieren,* makes an analogical step which can be adapted to *Mind and World*'s recurrent concerns on the supersensible, the nature of nature, and the limits of experience. The egocentric concepts being used in spatial orientation could, metaphorically, apply to orientation in thought, i.e. logical orientation in the space of reasons. Analogically, Kant states that orientation in thought is a function of pure reason when it attempts to elevate itself from the objects of experience and tries to transcend the latter's limits, but eventually finds in its free course nothing as an object of intuition but an empty framework for an alleged one. Then, in evaluating its own power of judging, reason cannot but submit its judgements to a constraint (Kant says a positive maxim) derived from the objective and empirical elaboration of knowledge. What it builds out of a network of fully conceptual contents of experience is precisely an

inner capacity of self-orientation analogically conceived after the perspectival capacity to orient oneself in space. Self-orientation in the space of reasons allows for rational self-scrutiny in the absence of an object of intuition that would satisfy reason in her craving for elevation and extension. Orientation in thought makes sensible for reason itself the outer limits of the space of reasons. It also invites reason, as Kant emphasizes, to focus on wordly causes *(Ursache in der Welt)* "which are manifested to the senses", rather than to try to embrace non-existent supernatural causal links. It is unclear whether actual mental contents, fully determined through the use of our faculty of spontaneity, encompass all that is possible, and whether some supernatural entity cannot be envisioned – which need is echoed in reason's effort to raise itself above experience – but it is explicit enough in *Mind and World* that our being situated in a natural world is enough for this world not to be "disenchanted" and to provide efficient and sufficient constraint for the full determinacy of human natural experience. As such, McDowell's project could be interpreted as providing a critical landmark in view of a rational ecology.

Reply of John McDowell

Bourgeois-Gironde ends his first section by acknowledging that vagueness is a "way experience is lived", and that this does not stand in the way of my conception of experience as an actualization of conceptual capacities. This strikes me as clearly right. It leaves me puzzled about the point of his raising questions about conceptions of determinacy in terms of "completeness", perhaps with respect to some set of properties, so that a determinate item is one concerning which it is settled, for any relevant property, whether the item has it or not. The objects that figure in our perceptual experience are surely determinate in some such sense. (That is how they are in themselves, qua real objects.) But I do not see why it should even for a moment seem that, when I claim that the content of experience is conceptual, I imply that an experience must, by virtue of its content, purport to contain an

answer to all the questions that might be relevant to the determinacy of the objects that figure in it. In this respect an experience can be just like a statement. If I say "Robert Brandom is bearded", the claim I express is fully conceptual. It says nothing about whether Brandom's beard is, say, brown, or more than a foot long, even though it is in the nature of beards that, given that my claim is true and Brandom is indeed bearded, there must be answers to those questions. Nor do I see why an issue should even seem to be raised about the determinacy, in some sense involving "completeness", of the states or episodes that are experiencings, as opposed to the objects ("intentional" objects) that they purport to disclose to us. It is not that I object to what Bourgeois-Gironde says about these questions; it is just that I find it hard to see how they are relevant to my conception of experience as "through and through conceptual".

Sometimes "determinate" in Bourgeois-Gironde's parlance seems simply to mean "conceptually shaped". For instance, Evans tries to exploit the fineness of grain of perceptual experience in arguing that the content of experience is non-conceptual, and Bourgeois-Gironde casts this as an attempt to argue that experience is indeterminate. It might be more natural to express Evans's thought by saying that experience has more determinacy than a subject's conceptual capacities could capture, not less. Of course Bourgeois-Gironde is at liberty to let "determinate" mean no more than "conceptual". But that just accentuates the difficulty of seeing why issues about "completeness" should seem to be relevant to the question whether experiential content is conceptual.

Bourgeois-Gironde says my conception of experience "means that our faculty of spontaneity – which is the free use of concepts in representations – is active in the presentation (or self-presentation, if special focus is placed on its passive aspect) of experience to the mind". Here the parenthetical mention of the "passive aspect" seems to me to come too late to undo some damage done by saying our faculty of spontaneity is active in experience. Later Bourgeois-Gironde says that in my picture "the mind is active in the shaping of whatever features of the world it experiences as its own contents", and this

seems to me to strike the same wrong note. According to me, the capacities actualized in experience do indeed belong to spontaneity; it is essential to their being the capacities they are that they can be actively employed by the mind that possesses them. But the point of connecting experience with receptivity is that their actualization in experience is not itself a case of that mental activity. The shape of our experience is not up to us.

Bourgeois-Gironde suggests that a capacity for orientation, as elaborated by Gareth Evans, is a necessary condition for the possibility of experience as I consider it, as an actualization of conceptual capacities in sensory receptivity. This strikes me as plausible, and helpful. (I meant to appropriate the material in Evans that Bourgeois-Gironde is alluding to, for instance at Mind and World 106–7.) But I am puzzled by Bourgeois-Gironde's implication that one of his aims, in invoking a capacity for orientation, is "an eventual reconciliation between McDowell and Evans on the nature of perceptual content". I do not see how making more than I do of Evans's reflections about orientation could make any difference on the one point on which I take issue with Evans about perceptual content. On all other points I find Evans's thinking profoundly right-minded, and I stand in no need of being "reconciled" with him. On that one point, I urge that in combining the claim that perceptual content is non-conceptual with the claim that perceptual judgements are based on it, Evans falls into a version of the Myth of the Given. The implication is, as Bourgeois-Gironde indeed has it, that Evans's reflections about orientation belong rather in the background of an understanding of perceptual experience as conceptually contentful. That leaves my single criticism of Evans unaltered.

Vojislav Bozickovic

Contenting and discontenting

In his seminal paper 'On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name' (1977), John McDowell advanced the view that the content of the subject's belief, and thereby of his thought, concerning a sentence containing a proper name such as 'Hesperus', is Russellian or object-dependent. This view, which, together with Evans, he subsequently applied to other singular thought-contents as well, is the conjunction of the following two theses:

Identity Thesis (IT): The identity of the appropriate singular thought-content depends on the identity of the object thought about.

Existence Thesis (ET): There is no appropriate singular thought-content if there is no object for it to be about.

Concentrating on demonstrative thought-contents as the prime contenders for the title of object-dependent thought-contents, I will argue that while McDowell's and Evans's line of argument to the effect that these contents are object-dependent does not establish this, neither do the counter-arguments of their opponents establish that these thought-contents are not object-dependent.[1] In point of fact,

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[1] See Evans, Gareth, *The Varieties of Reference,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982.; and McDowell, John, '*De Re* Senses', *The Philosophical Quarterly,* vol. 34, no. 136, 1984., 283-94.; and McDowell, John, 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space', Phillip Pettit and John McDowell eds., *Subject, Thought and Content,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986., 137-68., for their defence of the view that demonstrative thought-contents are object-dependent. For a criticism of this view see Blackburn, Simon, *Spreading the Word, Groundings in the Philosophy of Language,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984., chapter 9; Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', Mind, vol. 96, 1987., 18-36.; Noonan, Harold, 'Russellian Thoughts and Methodological Solipsism', Butterfield, J. ed., *Language, Mind and Logic,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986., 67-90., and Noonan, Harold, 'Object-Dependemt Thoughts and Psychological Redundancy', Analysis, vol. 51:1, 1991., 1-9.; Pendlebury, Michael, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* vol. XLVIII:4, 1988., 669-82.

demonstrative thought-contents are object-dependent in both the foregoing senses due to some facts unaccounted for both by McDowell and Evans and by their opponents.

1. McDowell's and Evans's Position

In outline, McDowell's and Evans' main arguments in favour of the Identity Thesis and Existence Thesis are based on their global theory of meaning whose role is to enable somebody to reflectively and systematically make sense of what speakers say and understand unreflectively. The central place in this picture is occupied by the figure of the interpreter who makes sense of the subject's behaviour in terms of ascribing belief-contents to him.[2] With reference to demonstrative belief-contents, this view is further accompanied by the requirement that in order for the interpreter to be able to ascribe a certain belief-content to the subject, he needs to be able to describe it 'from the inside', by means of a that-clause. A description of belief-content thus takes the form 'S believes that *that* is G', or (more transparently) 'S believes of *that* that it is G', where it is important that the description includes the specification of the object itself. It is assumed that it is only by means of this kind of belief-content description that a sincere assertive utterance of the subject can be understood as expressing a belief-content correctly describable as a demonstrative belief-content. And, as it is held that the belief-content (sincerely) expressed by the subject's utterance amounts to the actual content of his belief, the identity of the content of his belief turns out to be tied to the identity of the object specified by the interpreter's description of that content. Now, since the subject's utterance of a demonstrative sentence standardly concerns the object on which he has perceptually focused (provided there is such an object), the Identity Thesis concerning demonstrative belief-content follows, amounting to:

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[2] See McDowell, John, 'On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name', *Mind,* vol. 86, 1977., 172–3.

(DIT) A demonstrative belief-content entertained by a particular subject concerns a particular object on which he has focused and it never concerns a different object while still being the same belief-content.

This is to say that the interpreter's description of the subject's belief-content would involve a different object and, consequently, concern a different belief-content had a different object been the one on which the subject was focused.

The suggestion as to how the description of belief-content is to be provided also entails that if no appropriate belief-content could be ascribed along the suggested lines, because e.g., the subject is hallucinating an object, then his utterance expresses no belief-content (which it purports to express). In other words, the inability of the (non-hallucinating) interpreter to make sense of the subject's utterance by appealing to some particular object on which the subject is focused – for there is none such – entails that the subject's belief is devoid of content, i.e., that the Existence Thesis is true concerning demonstrative belief-contents, which is to say that:

(DET) The subject's demonstrative belief is devoid of its content if he has not perceptually discriminated the relevant object even if he takes himself to have done so.

What seems to be wrong with these two related arguments, in the first place, is that they assume that the identity and existence of demonstrative belief-contents is a matter of the interpreter's relevant ability or inability to ascribe them to the given subject by tying them to a particular object. However, these arguments at best show that the object referred to in a demonstrative that-clause is, on the one hand, the object that the subject's belief is, on this particular occasion, concerned with due to their being in a suitable relation with each other, rather than that the identity of its content is tied to the identity of its object; and, on the other, that the content of his belief cannot be stated by means of such a that-clause if the object of his belief is missing. The given arguments, though, do not rule out the possibility that the subject's belief has content without having an object to be about nor the possibility that the content of his

belief be (of) the same (type) whether the object of his belief is missing or whether his belief is about one or about some other object.

2. Existence Thesis vs. Content Principle

Underlying both McDowell's and Evans's reasoning in favour of (DET), as well as that of their opponents, is the following assumption which is, as we shall see, also wrong; I call it the Content Principle

(CP) A mental state is not a belief if it has no content.

In view of this requirement, it is agreed that the truth of the thesis (DET) would entail that the relevant mental state of the hallucinating subject is not a belief. Finding the foregoing argument in favour of (DET) objectionable on grounds sketched above, the opponents of the object-dependence thesis point out that in the hallucinating case certain features concerning the subject (to be specified shortly) qualify his mental state as a belief which, in view of their adherence to (CP) means that it has content, i.e., that (DET) is false.

But, why should we stick to (CP)? Evans holds that we need to do it because the subject's thought-episode aims at nothing if the content of his belief is missing (1982, pp. 139–40, p. 173). This is because in the absence of an object (due to his hallucinating or his not noticing that several different objects succeed each other) the subject has no coherent Idea of an object, i.e., he has no capacity to identify it. However, Evans's and McDowell's opponents point out that this is wrong, for in the hallucinating case the subject's actions would not be the actions characteristic of demonstrative belief had his capacity to identify objects been deficient, yet, they are.[3] In their view, this capacity is to be understood as the subject's capacity to target an

[3] See Noonan Noonan, Harold, 'Russellian Thoughts and Methodological Solipsism', Butterfield, J. ed., *Language, Mind and Logic,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986., sect. IV; Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Mind,* vol. 96, 1987., sect (A).

object (if any) in virtue of its being located at a certain place in his egocentric space, which he has due to his having a perceptual experience (as) of an object. The fact that the subject can sincerely assent to an utterance of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having' and, say, reach for a butterfly net, although he is hallucinating a certain butterfly, shows that he has dispositions concerning a certain location or locations where the putative (stationary or moving) butterfly appears to be situated, just as if there were a real butterfly in front of him. It is then in virtue of these dispositions that the subject's capacity to identify an object comes to concern an object, if any. This capacity is taken to amount to (or at least issue in) what Evans calls the mode of identification of an object, which is in turn held to be a constituent of the content of a demonstrative thought or belief (Noonan, op. cit., p. 84); or else it is seen as 'the projection of a purely subjective thought-content onto a determinate individual' (Carruthers, op. cit., p. 32), if there is one such. Yet, again this thought-content is taken to depend for its existence upon the existence of this capacity itself (Curruthers, op. cit., p. 18).

If it turned out that this tie required that this capacity depended for its existence on the existence of belief-content, then together with the assumption that there is nothing left of a mental state to qualify as a belief (thought) if it lacks this capacity, this would entail that a mental state is not a belief if it has no content, thus making (CP) true. There is a good reason to accept this assumption for when this capacity is lacking, the subject's mental state is not a belief since this results in his incoherent actions. Suppose a person wants to voice his purported demonstrative belief by uttering the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', but, due to his being drugged or due to some other disorder, his capacity to identify an object is destroyed by making it impossible for him to set his mind on one particular (purported) object in his egocentric space. His ensuing action thus becomes one of, say, trying to pick up an apple from a nearby fruit-basket, and then, say, to catch a door-knob together with a pair of sunglasses lying next to it, and the like. Furthermore, neither this person nor we could have an idea of what it would be for this project to end in success. In view of this, we

can safely say that the relevant mental state of this person, related to his foregoing utterance, is not a belief which amounts to saying that it does not result in his assent to the foregoing utterance.

To make sure that a mental state is not a belief when its content is missing, as stated by (CP), the anti-Russellians embrace the view that if the subject that the relevant mental state is ascribed to is assenting in the appropriate way (i.e., if it has belief) then it has content. This move enables them to secure a direct link between the content of the subject's belief and the world that demonstrative belief-contents are expected to have. It is secured due to the fact that it is one of the features of the broad functionalist account of demonstrative belief-states, based on our folk-psychological conception of them, that normal causes and effects which define this kind of a mental state (in terms of the causal and explanatory role that we attribute to it in virtue of the subject's assent or dissent) are very often physical ones.[4] In other words, unlike contents pertaining to beliefs concerning sentences containing (pure) definite descriptions, demonstrative belief-contents – being more basic and more directly linked to the world than the descriptive ones – generally, although not always, require the existence of appropriate objects of belief.[5]

The given tie that the content of demonstrative belief is meant to have with the subject's assent also enables the anti-Russellians to stick comfortably to their view that the subject's belief can have content, and therefore be a belief, in the absence of appropriate objects of

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[4] See Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Mind,* vol. 96, 1987., 29; also Noonan, Harold, 'Russellian Thoughts and Methodological Solipsism', Butterfield, J. ed., *Language, Mind and Logic,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986., 67–90., and Pendlebury, Michael, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* vol. XLVIII:4, 1988., 669–82.

[5] See Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Mind,* vol. 96, 1987., section (B), and Noonan, Harold, 'Russellian Thoughts and Methodological Solipsism', Butterfield, J. ed., *Language, Mind and Logic,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986., section IV, and Noonan, Harold, 'Object-Dependemt Thoughts and Psychological Redundancy', Analysis, vol. 51:1, 1991., section II. By contrast, Blackburn, Simon, *Spreading the Word, Groundings in the Philosophy of Language,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984. chapter 9. seems to allow for the possibility that demonstrative thought-contents can be accounted for in descriptive terms.

belief, since the subject can assent in the appropriate way without an object for his assent to be about. This is due to the subject's having the capacity to identify an object, which we saw is the subject's capacity to target an object (if any) in virtue of its being located at a certain place in his egocentric space, which he has due to his having a perceptual experience (as) of an object. What this shows is that Evans was wrong in thinking that this kind of capacity is lacking whenever the object of the subject's purported belief is missing, suggesting that in the given circumstances the subject's mental state is a demonstrative belief. Before a further justification of this conclusion is offered, let us establish first whether his opponents are right in insisting that, being a belief, this mental state of the subject also needs to have content, i.e., whether (CP) should hold. To examine this, consider the (widely adopted) view that the content expressed by (an utterance of) a certain (declarative) sentence is determined by giving its truth-conditions, i.e., that to grasp its content is to know the conditions under which it is true. In accordance with this, the condition under which the content expressed by an utterance of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', in a given context, is true is that a *particular* butterfly is worth having. And the knowledge of this condition amounts to the grasp of the content of this utterance of the sentence. It is, in turn, a prerequisite of this knowledge that the subject perceptually discriminate the given butterfly from all other things in his egocentric space because he needs to know which butterfly it is in order to know what it is for it to be worth having. According to the anti-Russellians, such a discrimination would need to be provided by the subject's perceptual experience of a certain real or imaginary butterfly as occupying a certain location in his egocentric space, which in turn supplies him with the capacity to identify a real or imaginary butterfly as occupying that location. It then appears that the truth-condition of the utterance of the foregoing sentence is there to be known by the subject no matter whether he has discriminated a real butterfly or not.

However, although the subject's perceptual experience of a butterfly can provide him with relevant beliefs no matter whether the butterfly is real or imaginary, the butterfly needs to be real in order for

him to be able to discriminate it (provided that he takes the given butterfly for a real one). The fact that the hallucinating subject has relevant beliefs about a purported real spatio-temporal butterfly meant to be located amongst other spatio-temporal objects in his egocentric space, i.e., that his underlying capacity to identify an object concerns a purported external object, suggests that in this kind of case his discrimination of the relevant object also needs to concern an external spatio-temporal object as the relevant object. He has attempted to single out a *particular* object, which he takes to be an object amongst objects in his egocentric space, as, so to speak, *that* particular object. Since his attempt reaches no such object, his attempt at gaining a discriminating knowledge of such an object has failed.[6]

The same thing applies to the way we demonstratively refer to objects: if, by his use of the demonstrative phrase 'this butterfly' the subject attempts to refer to a purported spatio-temporal butterfly in front of him, then – if the butterfly is missing – by his use of this phrase (aided by various contextual cues) he has referred to nothing.

Having not referred to/discriminated a butterfly, which is necessary in order for him to know what it is for it to be worth having, the subject has not availed himself of the knowledge of the truth-condi-

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[6] That such an object needs to be external can be further accounted for by the insight due to Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, Arthur, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason,* Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1974.) provided it is correct, that in every sensory perception the subject posits objects as external causes of his visual experiences of them, this positing being a condition of that perception rather than its subject-matter. In Schopenhauer's view, this occurs by an operation that is immediate rather than conceptual. He also holds, though, that perception itself does not involve our application of concepts in which respect he sides with Evans (Evans, Gareth, *The Varieties of Reference,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982.), who, unlike McDowell (McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994.), takes the content of perceptual experience to be non-conceptual. Note, however, that the claim that the subject's positing of objects as external causes of his visual experiences of them is not conceptual can still be true even if, following Kant, McDowell is right in urging that the content of perceptual experience is itself conceptual.
See my 1996 for a critical discussion of these issues in relation to Schopenhauer and Kant with direct bearing on Evans's and McDowell's views.

tions of the content supposed to be expressed by the utterance of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', in the circumstances described. This, in turn, amounts to saying that he has grasped no content as expressed by it, i.e., that (DET) holds.

Since, on the other hand, the subject's having the capacity to identify an object based on his having a perceptual experience as of a real butterfly, qualifies his mental state as a belief, (CP) has to be abandoned. In view of this, one should note that this capacity does not depend for its existence upon the existence of the content of demonstrative belief.

Like demonstrative belief-contents, demonstrative beliefs are also linked to the world and so are their truth-conditions, although there are differences in the way this is accomplished in the two cases. In the case of a demonstrative belief-content this link is secured by its existence being tied to the existence of the relevant object, which is to say that we cannot frame its truth-conditions if the corresponding object is missing. (By the same token, its truth-conditions will shift with the object of belief, as will become clear in section 4 when I turn to my defence of the thesis (DIT)). As for demonstrative belief-states, the broad functionalist account of these states, trading on the subject's aforementioned capacity to identify an object (if any) involves, as we have seen, that normal causes and effects which define such a mental state are very often physical ones, which provides the link between these states and the world.[7] And, quite independently of whether it has content, it has truth-conditions which are also linked to the world. They can be stated as follows:

[7] One should note that the suggested broad functionalist account of demonstrative belief-states just encapsulates our folk-psychological insights into what it is for a subject to be in such a state without committing us to contentious forms of functionalism such as that urging that the subject's qualitative experiences are functional states. This is because our folk-psychological concept of belief is functional since we think about belief-states in terms of their causal and explanatory role.

S's belief corresponding to his utterance of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having' is true if and only if there is a butterfly corresponding to his belief state which is worth having; and it is false if there is no butterfly corresponding to his belief-state or if there is one but is not worth having.

3. Second-Order Beliefs

Consider now an objection designed to show that the very notion of object-dependent thought is incoherent. It concerns the possibility, endorsed by the advocates of object-dependence, that the subject who is hallucinating an object may have a second-order thought or belief that he is having a corresponding first-order demonstrative thought or belief. Evans thus admits that the subject can think that he is having or expressing a thought about an object while failing to do so (1982, pp. 44–5); similarly, McDowell says that it might appear to the subject that a relevant thought is present although this is not so (1984, p. 288), and that 'the subject may think that there is a singular thought at, so to speak, a certain position in his internal organization although there is really nothing precisely there' (1986, p. 145).

This view is in line with their rejection of the Cartesian picture of the mental which involves the idea that if the subject takes himself to be thinking a certain thought (i.e., having a certain belief), then he is thinking this thought (i.e., having this belief), considered to be erroneous even by some of their opponents (e.g., Carruthers 1987). Yet, the possibility that the subject may believe himself (falsely) to be having a corresponding first-order demonstrative thought (belief) is taken to betray an internal inconsistency in Evans's and McDowell's view. For they do not seem to be entitled to endorse this possibility in view of the fact that the second-order thought (belief) cannot exist without its first-order counterpart, since the latter ought to be includ-

ed in the former as its component.[8] In the light of their adherence to (CP), the underlying assumption here is the principle that the second-order thought-content ought to include its first-order counterpart as its component.

Appearances aside, they are not violating this plausible principle, for they are urging that when, due to his hallucination, the subject's first-order demonstrative belief (-content) is missing, the second-order belief (-content) that is triggered by his mind is in fact his corresponding existential belief (content) whose existence does not depend on the existence of the former one, whereas the second-order non-existential belief-content, which would have been triggered had the first-order demonstrative belief (-content) been not missing, is also missing. This existential second-order belief (-content) is what McDowell thinks makes the behaviour of the hallucinating subject intelligible, i.e.,

...the belief which makes the behaviour intelligible is a (false) second-order belief to the effect that the subject has, and is expressing, a first-order belief correctly describable in the transparent style. This second-order belief is manifested by the subject's action, not expressed by his words: they purport to express a belief which could be described in the transparent style, but since no appropriate belief could thus be described, there is no such belief as the belief which they purport to express (1977, p. 173).

Similarly, the first-order belief (-content) that is, on this view, manifested by the subject's action and is explanatory of his behaviour whenever (due to his hallucination) his first-order demonstrative belief (-content) is missing, is his first-order existential belief (-content). Now, although it is reasonable to credit the subject with having these existential beliefs, no matter whether he is hallucinating or not, it is implausible to urge that the subject's first- and second-order existential beliefs are triggered by his mind and manifested by his action

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[8] See Bell, David, 'Phenomenology, Solipsism and Egocentric Thought', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* sup. vol. 62, 1988., 51.

if it turns out that the object which he takes to be real is not real, while his non-existential (i.e., singular) first- and second-order beliefs are (directly) triggered by his mind and manifested by his action (as well as expressed by his words) if the object turns out to be real. This is implausible indeed, not because in the two cases the subject will, respectively, take himself to be having the same first- as well as second-order beliefs, which would be to fall back on the Cartesian picture of the mental, but because this proposal misconstrues the relevant facts about the subject. The evidence that McDowell adduces in its favour concerns two different ways in which, in the two cases, the interpreter makes sense of the subject's behaviour, which is to beg the question, as his behaviour will in both these cases be the same (regarding both his first- and second-order beliefs, respectively), demanding the same explanation. Furthermore, the subject's respective first- and second-order existential beliefs will be the same whether he is hallucinating a certain object, or not, such that if he is not hallucinating, these existential beliefs will be, respectively, generated by his corresponding non-existential (singular) beliefs; whereas if he is hallucinating, it is unclear where his existential beliefs come from if there are no corresponding non-existential (singular) beliefs to generate them. In point of fact, even if the subject is hallucinating, his first- and second-order existential beliefs are derived from his corresponding non-existential beliefs. His first-order existential belief is thus enabled by his having the capacity to identify an object, which we saw underlies his first-order non-existential (singular) belief. This is not to say, though, that the former belief is entailed by the latter, for in order for an entailment to hold between them the subject's non-existential belief would need to have content which is due to his hallucination missing here, but rather that as a rational agent he has a good psychological reason to derive his existential belief from his corresponding non-existential belief. In the same way, his non-existential beliefs can also give rise to his existential beliefs of the form 'There is something that is both F and G'. In contrast with this, it is mysterious how, on McDowell's view, according to which the hallucinating subject, deprived of his capacity to identify an object, has only his exis-

tential beliefs to hang on to, this subject can obtain this kind of existential belief if not by means of a logical move involving the invalid form of inference from 'There is an F' and 'There is a G', to 'There is something that is both F and G'?

It is also to be noted that the fulfillment of the rejection of the Cartesian picture of the mental to the effect that the subject may take himself to be having a certain belief although this is not so, carried out in terms of the second-order existential belief, turns out to be of a much more bland variety than McDowell and Evans would want it to be.

A natural way of acknowledging the fact that the subject's belief is the same whether he is hallucinating or not is through abandoning (CP), as I have urged. For, by not tying the existence of the demonstrative belief to the existence of its content, one is invited to acknowledge that the belief that the subject is having if he is hallucinating is the same as the demonstrative belief that he is having if he is not hallucinating, due to his underlying capacity to identify an object being in the two cases triggered in the same way, in spite of the fact that this belief will have content only if he is not hallucinating. Similarly, the subject may have a second-order non-existential belief with no content: in the light of the venerable principle that the second-order belief-content ought to include its first-order counterpart as its component, this will happen when his first-order demonstrative belief itself has no content, or when this first-order belief is altogether missing. Accordingly, a situation, unaccounted for both by the foregoing objection that the very notion of object-dependent thought is incoherent and by Evans and McDowell, may arise in which the subject has a (false) second-order non-existential belief that he is having a first-order demonstrative belief which he in fact does not have: if his capacity to identify an object is lacking, the subject will, as we saw above, have no demonstrative belief corresponding to his utterance of 'This butterfly is worth having'; yet, he might take himself to be having such a belief. As a result, the anti-Cartesian view of the mental that emerges from this is much more natural and straightforward than that emerging from McDowell's and Evans's view.

The same anti-Cartesian features characterize the subject's grasp of the content of his belief. Whether he grasps a belief-content corresponding to a demonstrative sentence is not a matter of how things seem to him, for, as we saw above, this depends on whether he has discriminated the relevant object which is not a matter of whether it seems to him that he has done so.

4. Identity Thesis

The fact that it is necessary that the subject discriminate an object in order to grasp such a belief-content also accounts for the truth of the thesis (DIT). Since, due to its underlying capacity to identify an object, the demonstrative thinking of the (non-hallucinating) subject concerns a *particular* object on which he has focused as on *that* particular object, the identity of the truth-conditions of an utterance of a demonstrative sentence, i.e., of the belief-content itself, will shift with the shift of the object that the subject is focused on. This is to say that the subject's discrimination of a *particular* butterfly, occupying a certain position in his egocentric space, furnishes his grasp of a *particular* belief-content as associated with his utterance of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', on a certain occasion.

Similarly to the thesis (DET), this has a parallel in the way we demonstratively refer to objects: if by his use of the demonstrative phrase 'this butterfly' the subject attempts to refer to a *particular* object that he is focused on, then (provided his reference is successful) he has referred to *that* and not to some other object.

The thesis (DIT) is upheld by the Intuitive Criterion of Difference which Evans (1982, pp. 18–19) derives from Frege. This criterion, which concerns the identity conditions of belief-contents, states that the content associated with one sentence S must be different from the content associated with another sentence S', if it is possible for someone (not anyone) to understand both sentences at the same time while coherently taking different epistemic attitudes towards them, i.e., accepting (rejecting) one while rejecting (accepting), or being agnos-

tic about, the other. Suppose that these two sentences are in fact two tokens of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', uttered immediately one after another (i.e., at the same time) concerning two different butterflies flying one after another in the same way throughout the same region of the subject's egocentric space such that he is under the impression that one and the same butterfly is in question. As a result of this, he will take the same epistemic attitudes towards the two utterances of this sentence (i.e., towards their contents). Yet, it is possible for someone else in his position to take different epistemic attitudes towards them, similarly to the case in which someone who does not know that two parts of the same ocean liner, whose middle is obscured by a large building, belong to the same ship might take different epistemic attitudes towards (the contents corresponding to) two utterances of the sentence 'This ship is sailing to Mombasa', in which the two utterances of the enclosed demonstrative expression refer to the same ship via its two different parts. Accordingly, in both these cases the belief-contents corresponding to the two utterances, respectively, are, by the Intuitive Criterion of Difference, different. As far as the former case is concerned, this difference results from the difference in objects as it is always possible that there be somebody who would (rationally and at the same time) take different epistemic attitudes towards (the contents corresponding to) the utterances of the relevant sentences when they are about different objects.

One who wishes to discredit the thesis (DIT) needs to deny that this criterion establishes that in the former kind of case the two belief-contents are different, since one needs to urge that the two thought-episodes here have the same content because they are based on perceptions representing the objects as being in, or moving through, the same regions(s) of the subject's egocentric space.[9] To claim this is,

[9] See e.g., Carruthers (Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Mind,* vol. 96, 1987., 18–36.), who claims that "...if Mary, in London, has perceptions of a butterfly moving from left to right immediately in front of her and thinks 'That one is valuable'; and Jane, in Leeds, also has perceptions of a butterfly moving from left to right in front of her (though the butterflies may be in other respect dissimilar) and thinks 'That one is valuable', they have entertained thoughts with the very same content" (pp. 34–5)..

however, to allow that the subject can at the same time take different epistemic attitudes towards one and the same content as expressed twice by the two utterances of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', thereby contradicting himself.

In order to block this undesirable outcome, the opponent of the thesis (DIT) ought to argue that the subject's taking different epistemic attitudes towards the same belief-content in this kind of case does not occur at the same time, as required by the Criterion, resulting thus in no contradiction on his part; or else that the content of the subject's belief undergoes a change when it is no longer based on his current perception. Consequently, if the subject's taking different epistemic attitudes towards the contents corresponding to the two utterances of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having' is to occur at the same time, then this involves that at least the content corresponding to the first utterance of this sentence has changed by the time the subject is in a position to take his epistemic attitudes, since it is no longer based on his current perception, requiring thereby additional identifying information to distinguish the object of his thought from others.[10]

Although it is true that a belief-content can change through time, it is implausible to urge that it will change within a couple of seconds elapsing between the subject's sighting of the first butterfly and his sighting of the second one, both in the same region of his egocentric space. The situation in the foregoing ship example, which might be seen by some as more straightforward, can be in this respect the same since the subject's sightings of the two parts of the same ship need not be, and sometimes cannot be, simultaneous (due to, say, the subject's location). After all, given the temporal nature of our thinking, there is always a temporal succession between the subject's entertaining one (occurrent) belief-content and his entertaining another (occurrent) belief-content arising from his perception of objects and their parts (such that the 'at the same time' requirement contained in the Criterion

[10] See Carruthers, Peter, 'Russellian Thoughts', *Mind,* vol. 96, 1987., 34–5.

can never be strictly met) and it does not seem right to insist that he needs to perceive both of them at exactly the same time in order for both his belief-contents to be perceptually based. It has, therefore, not been shown that in the given circumstances the two utterances of the sentence 'This butterfly is worth having', concerning two different butterflies, express the same perceptually based belief-content which undermines the attempt to discredit the thesis (DIT).

As the subject can have a demonstrative belief with no content, it also follows that the identity of his demonstrative belief is not tied to the identity of its content and hence to the identity of its object (the identity of its content being itself tied to the identity of its object). The fact that the subject can have the same belief no matter whether he is hallucinating an object or not, shows that he can also have the same belief with respect to two or more different objects (which will thereby also have different contents) as long as his underlying capacity to identify an object is in each of these cases triggered in the same way. The analogue of (CP) concerning (DIT), which is like (CP) assumed to be true both by McDowell and Evans and by their opponents, is thus also abandoned. This is the principle that the identity of the subject's belief (type) is tied to the identity of its content.

Unlike McDowell and Evans and like their opponents, I claim then that the subject's demonstrative belief is not itself object-dependent, whereas, like McDowell and Evans and unlike their opponents, I claim that its content is object-dependent.

Reply of John McDowell

Bozickovic's aim, which I suppose has its attractions, is to split the difference between Evans and me and our opponents about object-dependence. He agrees with Evans and me that the content expressible, in suitable circumstances, by an utterance containing a demonstrative expression, for instance “This butterfly is worth having”, is object-dependent. The identity of the content is tied to the identity of the particular butterfly in question. A different butterfly would

involve a different content. And if there is no butterfly (if, say, the subject is hallucinating), there is no content of the relevant sort at all. His concession to those who reject this thesis is to allow that the hallucinating subject, who thinks she can express a content by saying "This butterfly is worth having", does indeed have a belief, of just the kind that a non-hallucinating subject might give voice to by uttering those words. He makes this feasible by denying that beliefs need to have content.

The basic ground for the concession seems to be the idea that in the hallucinating case and the non-hallucinating case alike there will be a matching need to credit the subject with a belief in order to make sense of her behaviour. But I cannot see why Bozickovic finds this so plausible. No doubt the hallucinating subject will, for instance, reach for her butterfly net, just as the non-hallucinating subject will. But behaviour so described is easily accounted for in terms of the subject's belief that there is a butterfly worth having in such-and-such a region of her environment. Evans and I have no problem acknowledging that the hallucinating subject will have a belief to that effect. And Bozickovic is not suggesting that this belief, with its existential content, is the same as the belief that the non-hallucinating subject can express by uttering the demonstrative form of words.

If the non-hallucinating subject has a belief that the hallucinating subject does not have, the "broad functionalist account" of belief-states that Bozickovic appeals to would require that there is behaviour engaged in by the non-hallucinating subject and not by the hallucinating subject. Only so can there be explanatory work for the supposedly unshared belief to do. And indeed there are things the non-hallucinating subject does that the hallucinating subject does not do: for instance we shall be able to describe the non-hallucinating subject, if we are on the scene, as "trying to catch that butterfly" – a description that we cannot apply in the other case, where there is no butterfly for us to be referring to. In a slightly different context (talking about first-order and second-order beliefs) Bozickovic says that the subject's behaviour "will in both these cases be the same …, demanding the

same explanation", but that seems to ignore behaviour specifiable in terms of the object, which is simply absent and so cannot figure in the specification of behaviour in one of the cases.

In my 1977 paper I invoked second-order beliefs, rather than existential first-order beliefs, as above, to explain the behaviour of hallucinating subjects. The effect is much the same: the subject's reaching for her butterfly net can be explained by her belief that she has a belief with a content of the kind that can be expressed, in suitable circumstances, by saying "This butterfly is worth having", though she has no such belief. I am pleased that Bozickovic is not taken in by the idea that this violates some principle to the effect that such a second-order thought-content "ought to include its first-order counterpart as its component". But he finds it implausible that the hallucinating and non-hallucinating subjects can be distinguished like this, and I do not understand why. The supposed difficulty comes to a head when Bozickovic says, of the hallucinating subject, that "it is unclear where his existential beliefs come from if there are no corresponding non-existential (singular) beliefs to generate them". It is unproblematic that to the hallucinating subject it looks as if there is a valuable butterfly in front of her, and that makes it quite unmysterious where her belief that there is a valuable butterfly in front of her (that there is something in front of her that is both a butterfly and valuable) comes from. Its content is part of the content of her experience, and there is no need to see it as derived from a contentless belief belonging to a kind whose contentful instances can be expressed by way of a demonstrative.

Robert Brandom

Non-inferential Knowledge, Perceptual Experience, and Secondary Qualities: Placing McDowell's Empiricism

Empiricism can be a view in epistemology: without perceptual experience, we can have no knowledge of contingent matters of fact. Empiricism can be a view in semantics: propositional or more generally conceptual content is unintelligible apart from its relation to perceptual experience. Empiricism can be a view in the philosophy of mind: "experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all."[1] McDowell is an empiricist in all these senses. In this essay I want to highlight certain features of his concept of experience, first by showing how he avoids some pitfalls that notoriously ensnare traditional attempts to work out empiricist intuitions, and second by comparing and contrasting it with two other ways of construing perceptual experience-one wider than McDowell's and one narrower than his-that also avoid the classical difficulties.

I

McDowell's empiricism is distinguishable from classical versions in at least two fundamental ways. First, with Kant and Sellars, McDowell understands experience as a thoroughly *conceptual*

[1] McDowell, J., *Mind and World,* Harvard University Press, 1994, xii from the Introduction, added in the paperback edition of 1996.

achievement. Thus he insists that anything that does not have concepts does not have perceptual experience either. He also insists that anything that does not have perceptual experience does not have concepts either. That is, he endorses the view I called semantic empiricism above. Concept use and perceptual experience are two aspects of *one* achievement. In this, as in so many things, McDowell is a Kantian. Second, for McDowell perceptual experience is generally (though not in every case) immediately and essentially revelatory of empirical facts. That is, it is essential to McDowell's concept of perceptual experience that the fact that things are thus and so can *be* the content of a perceptual experience. When things go well, the fact itself is visible to us. It *is* the content we experience. The perceiving mind includes what it perceives.

Because he understands perceptual experience as requiring the grasp of concepts, McDowell avoids the Myth of the Given, which afflicts all classical versions of epistemological empiricism. The Myth of the Given is the claim that there is some kind of experience the having of which does not presuppose grasp of concepts, such that merely *having* the experience counts as *knowing* something, or can serve as *evidence* for beliefs, judgments, claims, and so on, that such a nonconceptual experience can *rationally ground,* and not just causally occasion, belief. In "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"[2], Sellars shows to McDowell's satisfaction (and to mine) that the project of making intelligible a concept of experience that is in this way amphibious between the nonconceptual world and our conceptually structured thought is a hopeless one. By contrast, McDowell is clear in taking perceptual experiences to have the same sort of content that perceptual *judgments* have-and hence to be conceptually structured. Since McDowell also takes concept use to be a *linguistic* achievement (in line with Sellars' doctrine that to grasp a concept is to master the

[2] Originally published in 1956, this classic essay has recently been reprinted, with an Introduction by Richard Rorty and a section by section *Study Guide* by Robert Brandom [Harvard University Press, 1997].

use of a word), he takes it that we learn to have perceptual experiences only when we come to have a language. Thus perceptual experience is *not* something we share with nonlinguistic animals such as cats and chimpanzees. No doubt there is some sort of broadly perceptual attunement to things that we *do* share with our primate and mammalian cousins, but it will not qualify as *experience,* according to McDowell's usage. In particular, he insists that we cannot understand what we have, perceptual experiences, by construing it as the result of starting with what we share with our sentient but not sapient animal relatives, and then *adding* something (say, the ability to use concepts). For what we would need to 'add' is not itself intelligible apart from the notion of perceptual experience.

Other thinkers who are careful to avoid the Myth of the Given do so by placing the interface between nonconceptual causal stimuli and conceptual response at the point where environing stimuli cause perceptual *judgments.* That is, they avoid the Myth by seeing nothing nonjudgmental that could serve to *justify* perceptual judgments, rather than just to *cause* them. Davidson notoriously takes this line, endorsing the slogan that nothing but a belief can justify another belief. I would argue that Sellars himself has a view of this shape.[3] And it is the line I take in my book.[4] McDowell, however, construes perceptual experiences as not involving the sort of *endorsement* characteristic of judging or believing: perceptual experiences have judgeable, believable contents, but they are not judgments or beliefs. When a perceiver *does* advance from perceptual experience to judgment or belief, however, the experience can serve to justify the resulting commitment.

The second feature that distinguishes McDowell's view of perceptual experience from those appealed to by empiricists of a more traditional stripe is his view that in favored cases, when perception is

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[3] What he calls 'sense impressions' are causal antecedents of perceptual judgments, but do not serve to justify them.

[4] Brandom, R., *Making It Explicit,* Harvard University Press, 1994. See especially the first half of Chapter Four.

veridical, the content of perceptual experience just is the fact perceived. McDowell endorses the Fregean approach, which construes *facts* as *true thoughts*-'thoughts' not in the psychological sense of thinkings, but in the semantic sense of the *contents* that are thought. The obvious pitfall in the vicinity of such a view is the need to deal with the fact that we make perceptual *mistakes.* That is, we sometimes cannot tell the difference between the case in which we are having a perceptual experience whose content is a fact and cases where there is no such fact to be perceived. Traditionally, the explanatory strategy for addressing such phenomena had the shape of a *two factor theory:* one starts with a notion of perceptual experience as what is *common* to the veridical and the nonveridical cases, and then distinguishes them by *adding* something external to the experience: the truth of the claim, that is, the actual existence of the fact in question. Epistemologically, this strategy sets the theorist up for the Argument from Illusion, and hence for a skeptical conclusion. McDowell's objection to the two factor strategy is not epistemological, however, but semantic. It is not that it makes the notion of perceptual *knowledge* unintelligible (though it does that, too). It is that it makes unintelligible the notion of *objective purport*-our experiences (and therefore, our thoughts) so much as *seeming* to be about the perceptible world. He thinks that constraint can only be met by an account that is entitled to endorse what is perhaps his favorite quote from Wittgenstein: "When I say that things are thus-and-so my meaning does not stop anywhere short of the fact that things are thus-and-so." McDowell's perceptual realism is his way of explaining how this can be so. (He thinks that if we can't make this feature of our thought and talk intelligible for perceptual experience, then we can't make it intelligible for any claims or beliefs.) On his view, the *only* thing a veridical perceptual experience and a corresponding hallucination have in common is that their subject can't tell them apart. There is no *experience* in common. We just are not infallible about the contents of our experiences, and can confuse being in the state of having one for being in the state of having another-for instance by responding to each by endorsing the same perceptual judgment. Once again, he insists, we cannot understand

veridical experience by construing it as the result of starting with a notion of what is common to the state that prompts a veridical perceptual judgment and the state that prompts a corresponding mistaken perceptual judgment, and then *adding* something (say, the truth of the claim in question).

The various features of McDowell's view that I have focused on are related. The revelation of perceptible fact in perceptual experience is 'immediate' in the sense that the conceptual abilities required (by the first condition above) are exercised *passively* in perception. They are the very same conceptual abilities exercised actively in, say, making a judgment as the result of an inference, but differ in that the application of concepts in perceptual experience is wrung from us involuntarily by the perceptible fact. The way in which concepts are brought passively into play falls short of judgment or belief, however. The content is presented to the potential knower as a *candidate* for endorsement. But an act of judgment is required to endorse it. So what is wrung from us by the facts is not *judgments,* but only *petitions* for judgments.

II

I want to situate McDowell's notion of perceptual experience by placing it with respect to two other notions, one broader than his and one narrower. The broader notion is *non-inferential knowledge acquired in response to environing stimuli.* The narrower notion is that of *immediate awareness of secondary qualities.*

I said above that thinkers such as Davidson, who reject the Myth of the Given, have typically rejected also the idea of any conceptually structured intermediary between causal stimuli and full-blown observational judgments. McDowell thinks that we need to postulate perceptual experiences, which are such intermediaries. His view is clearly coherent, but we might still ask what explanatory ground is gained by countenancing perceptual experiences, since we can avoid the Myth of the Given without them. One part of McDowell's answer

is that his notion of experience lets us distinguish cases of genuine perception from other cases of responsively acquired noninferential knowledge. I want to sketch an account of this broader class, and then say why McDowell thinks we must also distinguish a privileged species within this genus.

Quine suggests[5] that what distinguishes specifically *observational* knowledge is that observation reports are reliably keyed to environing stimuli in a way that is widely shared within some community-so that members of that community almost always agree about what to say when concurrently stimulated in the same way. This suggests that we think of there being two elements one needs to master in order to be able to make a certain kind of observation report, two distinguishable sorts of practical know-how involved. First, one must have a acquired a *reliable differential responsive disposition:* a disposition reliably to respond differentially to some kind of stimulus. Which stimuli we can come differentially to respond to depends on how we are wired up and trained. Humans lack the appropriate physiology to respond differentially to different radio frequencies, for instance, without technological aids. Blind mammals cannot respond differentially to colors. These capacities are something we can share with nonconceptual creatures such as pigeons-or as far as that goes, with photocells and thermostats. Second, one must have the capacity to produce *conceptually articulated* responses: to respond to red things not just by pecking at one button or closing one circuit rather than another, but by *claiming* that there is something red present. I think we should understand this latter capacity as the ability to take up a certain kind of stance in the space of reasons: to make a move in what Sellars calls "the game of giving and asking for reasons" of a sort that can both serve as and stand in need of reasons. A parrot could be taught to respond to red things by uttering the *noise* "That's red," but it would not be *saying* or *claiming* that anything was red. I think we can understand what it is lacking as the ability to tell what it would be commit-

[5] In "Epistemology Naturalized"

ting itself to by such a claim, and what would entitle it to that commitment-that is, what follows from the claim that something is red (for instance, that it is colored and spatially extended) and what would be evidence for it (for instance that it is scarlet) or against it (for instance, that it is green). But nothing in what follows depends on this particular way of understanding the dimension of endorsement that distinguishes observational reports from mere differential responses.

If it turns out that I can reliably differentially respond to a certain sort of state of affairs by noninferentially reporting the presence of a state of affairs of that sort, and if I know that I am reliable in this way, then I think that true reports of this kind deserve to be called observationally acquired *knowledge.* This is in some ways a fairly radical view-though, I think, a defensible one. For one consequence of thinking of observation this way is that there is no particular line to be drawn between what is in principle observable and what is not. The only constraints are what a reporter can be trained under some circumstances reliably to differentiate, and what concepts she can then key the application of to those responsive dispositions. Thus a properly trained physicist, who can respond systematically differently to differently shaped tracks in a cloud chamber will, if she responds by noninferentially reporting the presence of mu mesons, count as genuinely *observing* those subatomic particles. She may start out by reporting the presence of hooked vapor trails and *inferring* the presence of mu mesons, but if she then learns to eliminate the intermediate response and respond directly to the trails by reporting mesons, she will be observing them. "Standard conditions" for observing mu mesons will include the presence of the cloud chamber, just as standard conditions for observing the colors of things includes the presence of adequate light of the right kind. And the community for whom 'mu meson' is an observation predicate will be much smaller and more highly specialized than the community for whom 'red' is one. But these are differences of degree, rather than kind. Again, it may be that if challenged about a noninferential report of a mu meson, our physicist would *retreat* to an inferential justification, invoking the shape of the vapor trail that prompted her report. But we need not understand

that retreat as signifying that the original report was, after all, the product of an *inference.* Rather, the claim of the presence of a mu meson, which was noninferentially elicited as a direct response to a causal chain that included (in the favored cases) both mu mesons and vapor trails (but which was a report of mu mesons and not vapor trails-or retinal irradiations-because of the inferential role of the *concept* that was applied in it) can be justified inferentially after the fact by appealing to a *safer* noninferential report, regarding the shape of the visible vapor trail. This report is safer in the dual sense that first, the physicist is more reliable reporting the shapes of vapor trails than she is the presence of mu mesons (since the latter are more distal in the causal chain of reliably covarying events that culminate in the report, so there is more room for things to go wrong) and second, the capacity reliably to report the presence of vapor trails of various shapes is much more widely shared among various reporters than is the capacity reliably to report the presence of mu mesons (even in the presence of a cloud chamber). The practice of justifying a challenged report by retreating to a safer one, from which the original claim can then be derived inferentially, should not (certainly *need* not) be taken to indicate that the original report was itself covertly the product of a process of inference.

If we press this picture of observation as consisting just in the exercise of reliable differential responsive dispositions to apply concepts[6], more outré examples present themselves. Suppose that at least some people can be conditioned to discriminate male from female newly hatched chicks, just by being corrected until they become reliable. They have no idea what features of the chicks they are presented with they are responding differentially to, but they not only become reliable, they also come to *know* that they are reliable. When one of them noninferentially responds to a chick by classifying it as male, if he is correct, I think he has observational knowledge of that fact. (And I think McDowell is prepared to agree.) This can be so even if it is

[6] I develop and defend such an account in Chapter Four of *Making It Explicit.*

later discovered (I'm told that this is true) that the chicken sexers are wrong in thinking that they are disciriminating the chicks *visually*-that in fact, although they are not aware of it, the discrimination is being done on an *olfactory* basis. According to this way of thinking about observation, what sense is in play can *only* be discriminated by discovering what sorts of alterations of conditions degrade or improve the performance of the reliable reporters. If altering light levels does not change their reliability, but blocking their noses does, then they are working on the basis of scent, not of sight.

McDowell thinks that although there can be cases of *observational* knowledge like this, they must be sharply distinguished from cases of genuine *perceptual* knowledge, for instance being able to see shapes or colors. That is, he rejects the suggestion that the latter be assimilated to the former. When we see colors and shapes, we have perceptual *experiences* corresponding to the judgments we go on to make or the beliefs we go on to form. The chicken sexers in my example do not have perceptual experiences of chicks as male or female. They just respond *blindly,* though they have learned to trust those blind responses. There is for them no *appearance* of the chicks *as* male or female.

Now in “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind”, Sellars offers a recipe for introducing 'looks' or 'appears' talk, wherever there is a noninferential reporting practice. Whenever a reporter suspects her own reliability under certain conditions of observation, she can *express* her usually reliable disposition to report something as being ϕ, but *withhold* her *endorsement* of that claim, by saying only that it *looks* (or *appears*) ϕ. The chicken sexers are certainly able to introduce 'looks' and 'appears' talk in this way. But McDowell's claim is then that there is an important difference between such uses of these locutions and their use to report perceptual experiences. He thinks that the capacity to have perceptual experiences is different from, and more fundamental than, the capacity to make noninferential observations of mu mesons in cloud chambers and of the sexes of chickens. Unless we could have perceptual experiences, we could not make any observations at all-even though not all observations of a state of

affairs involve perceptual experiences of those states of affairs. That is, the capacity to become noninferentially informed about the world by learning *blindly* to respond differentially to it depends upon a more basic capacity for states of affairs to become immediately apparent in perception. Thus it is important to McDowell to distinguish a notion of conceptually structured perception that is *narrower* than the merely responsive notion of conceptually structured observation I have sketched.

III

Putting things this way raises a danger of getting McDowell wrong in the other direction, however. For a natural response to the sort of distinction of cases on which I am claiming McDowell insists-at least for philosophers familiar with the empiricist tradition McDowell is extending-is to think that what sets off mu meson and chicken sexing observation from genuine perception is that the physicist and the chicken sexer are not reporting their awareness of any *secondary qualities.* Being a mu meson or a male chick are primary qualities, and so not directly or immediately experienceable in the sense in which secondary qualities such as *red* are. For traditional empiricism took it that our awareness of the perceptible world is, as it were, *painted* in secondary qualities: qualities that nothing outside the mind can literally have, purely experiential properties more or less reliably induced in minds as the effects of external bodies.[7] These secondary qualities correlate with, and so *re*present features of perceptible objects. But since they are merely the effects those features have on suitably prepared and situated minds, they do not present properties literally exhibited by the objects themselves. Phenomena of this sort, the secondary qualities of things, are all that is directly or immediate-

[7] Berkeley is the paradigmatic defender of such a view, but as an implicit theme, this way of thinking about secondary qualities was pervasive in pre-Kantian empiricism.

ly perceivable. Coming to know about anything else is the result of making *inferences* from the occurrence of the experiences of secondary qualities they occasion in us.

Following Gareth Evans, McDowell has endorsed a pragmatic account of the distinction between secondary and primary qualities. (By calling it 'pragmatic' I mean to indicate that it defines the distinction in terms of differences in the *use* of expressions for-predicates used to attribute the occurrence of-secondary and primary qualities.) According to this way of understanding things, to take ϕ to express a secondary quality concept is to take it that one cannot count as having mastered the use of 'ϕ' talk[8] unless one has also mastered the use of 'looks-ϕ' talk. This criterion distinguishes predicates such as 'red', which express secondary qualities, from those such as 'square', which express primary qualities. For one does not count as fully understanding the concept *red* unless one knows what it is for things to *look* red. While a blind geometer *can* count as fully understanding the concept *square* even if she cannot discriminate one by looking at it. According to the minimally committive account of observation sketched above, one can learn 'looks-ϕ' talk just in case one has mastered the noninferential circumstances of appropriate application of the concept ϕ-that is, just in case one has both mastered the inferential role of the concept, and has been trained into the reliable differential responsive dispositions that key its *non*inferential application to the apparent presence of the reported state of affairs.[9]

Since McDowell's 'minimal empiricism'[10] seeks to rehabilitate what was right in the appeals to experience that motivated classical empiricism, it is tempting to understand his distinction between genuine per-

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[8] Sellars glosses grasping a concept as mastering the use of a word.

[9] McDowell will insist that a richer notion of mastering 'looks' (or, more generally, 'appears') talk-one that involves the reporting of perceptual experiences, not just the conceptually structured exercise of reliable differential responsive dispositions-should be brought to bear in defining secondary qualities. But this qualification does not make a difference for the use I am making here of the Evans-McDowell characterization of secondary qualities.

[10] His characterization, in the new Introduction to the paperback edition of *Mind and World.*

ceptual experience and mere noninferential observation of environing circumstances in terms of the role of secondary qualities in the former. Perceptual experience, the thought would run, is always experience immediately *of* secondary qualities. That is what is missing in the mu meson and chicken sexing case. (Not that there are not secondary qualities involved in those cases, but rather that what is reported in those cases is not the occurrence of secondary qualities.) But this would be to misunderstand McDowell's position. For he thinks we can have perceptual experience of some *primary* qualities, not just *secondary* ones. Thus shapes, for instance, can be visible and tangible-genuinely the subjects of perceptual experience. Where there are perceptual experiences, there are appearances, which can be reported by the use of 'looks' talk. And since McDowell admits that a certain attenuated form of 'looks' talk applies even to *mere* observation, without corresponding perceptual experiences, it should be marked that in these cases it will be 'looks' talk in the stronger sense. But the existence of perceptual experiences that are being reported by such 'looks' talk does not require that the mastery of such talk is an essential feature of mastery of the concepts being applied. Talk of perceptual experiences is not a way of talking about secondary qualities. All immediate awareness of secondary qualities involves perceptual experiences, but not necessarily *vice versa.*

I have situated McDowell's notion of perceptual experience between a broader notion and a narrower one-between the concept of knowledge noninferentially acquired by applying concepts as the result of reliable differential responsive dispositions, and the concept of immediate awareness of secondary qualities. As I pointed out above, McDowell denies that the broader concept of merely noninferential knowledge is independent of that of perceptual experience: if we could not have perceptual experiences, then we could not know things noninferentially at all. (Indeed, he thinks we could not know *anything* at all.) I would like to end this discussion with a question, his answer to which I have not been able to determine from McDowell's writings: Could there be perceptual experience, for McDowell, if there were no secondary qualities? That is, could anyone have per-

ceptual experiences of primary qualities if she could not also have perceptual experiences of secondary qualities? If not, why not? If so, what would it be like?

In closing, I would like to add a second query to this one. If we look at the end of *Mind and World,* we see that we can have non-inferential knowledge of *normative* facts: of meanings, for instance, and of how it is appropriate to act. Coming to be able to make such non-inferential judgments is part of being brought up properly, part of acquiring our second nature. Along something like the same lines, in his earlier writings, McDowell has urged (in opposition to Davidson's interpretational view) that fully competent speakers of a language do not *infer* the meanings of others' utterances from the noises they make, rather they directly or immediately *hear* those meanings. Coming to speak the language is coming to be able to perceive the meanings of the remarks of other speakers of it. The connection I have in mind between these claims is that claims about what someone means are normative claims. They have consequences concerning what she has *committed* herself to, what she is *responsible* for, what it would take for her claim to be *correct,* and so on. So McDowell's view is that *normative* facts are noninferentially knowable.

It has always seemed to me to be one of the great advantages of the account of observational knowledge in terms of reliable differential responsive dispositions to apply concepts noninferentially that it makes perfect sense of these claims. If I have mastered the use of some normative vocabulary (whether pertaining to meanings, or to how it is proper to behave nonlinguistically), and if I can be trained reliably to apply it noninferentially, as a differential response to the occurrence of normatively specified states of affairs, then I can have observational knowledge of those normative states of affairs: I can *see* (or at least *perceive*[11]) what it is appropriate to do or say. So here is my final question for McDowell: is this *mere* non-inferential knowl-

[11] Perhaps not 'see' or 'hear', since these terms are committive as regards sense modality-commitments to be cashed out, as I indicated above, in terms of the nature of the conditions that degrade or improve reliability.

edge? Or are the normative statuses also perceptually experienceable, for McDowell? I don't think he commits himself on this, any more than he does on the question of whether secondary qualities are necessary for experience. Indeed, one could ask further: are there (can there be) secondary qualities corresponding to essentially normative states of affairs that are noninferentially knowable.

McDowell's bold and ingenious rehabilitation of the empiricists' concept of experience requires us to make conceptual distinctions far subtler than any the tradition worried about. He also gives us the conceptual raw materials to make those distinctions clear. This is all pure advance. I have sought here to rehearse some of these distinctions, and to use them to invite McDowell to commit himself in the terms he has provided on issues that, as far as I can see, he has not yet formally addressed.

Reply of John McDowell

Brandom places my conception of perceptual experience between two alternatives.[12] The broader view, which is the one he has himself defended, is a view that dispenses with perceptual experience altogether. According to this view, a sufficient condition for observational knowledge is that true claims result from a reliable capacity; there is no need to insist that the subject's reliability must be mediated by anything recognizable as experiencing things to be thus and so. The narrower view is that perceptual experience is exclusively of secondary qualities.

About the narrower view, Brandom is of course right that I do not think perceptual experience is exclusively of secondary qualities. But he is wrong about the conception of secondary qualities I would endorse, following Gareth Evans.

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[12] My response here covers some of the same ground as my response to another version of Brandom's paper, in Nicholas Smith, ed., *Reading McDowell: Mind and World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

Purporting to capture that conception, Brandom says: “to take ? to express a secondary quality concept is to take it that one cannot count as having mastered the use of '?' talk unless one has also mastered the use of 'looks-?' talk.” But that formulation fits a sophisticated command of any visually applicable concept. (The restriction to visually applicable concepts is because Brandom's formulation is in terms of “looks”. “Appears” would make the formulation cover other sensory modalities.) As Brandom notes, I think visually applicable concepts include primary quality concepts. Consider the concept of being visibly square. One would not have fully mastered that concept unless one knew that a visual appearance that something satisfies it can be misleading – that is, unless one had the concept of something's merely looking square. On Brandom's account this would imply that the concept is a concept of a secondary quality. But surely “visibly square” should inherit a primary-quality character from the embedded “square”.

Evans's account of the contrast is rather that we need to invoke how secondary qualities figure in appearance when we spell out the very content of secondary-quality concepts. This cannot be captured by Brandom's apparatus of one mastery's being a necessary condition for another. The point is, rather, that what it is for something to be, say, red cannot be specified without appealing to the idea of how red things look (in certain circumstances), whereas what it is for something to be, say, spherical can be specified in terms of the geometry of that mode of taking up space, without any need to mention how spherical things look or feel.[13]

Turning to the broader conception: Brandom illustrates this with the chicken-sexers of philosophical folklore, who can tell whether chicks are male or female but honestly deny that male and female chicks look (or smell) different to them. He says, parenthetically, that

[13] What it is for something to be visibly spherical is for it to be spherical, and for that fact to be knowable on the basis of how the thing looks. This is quite unlike the involvement of the idea of how things look in spelling out what it is for something to be red.

he thinks I would agree that their experience-free ability to sort chicks into male and female equips them with observational knowledge that chicks are male or female. I have no idea why he says this. (Wishful thinking, perhaps.) When he first suggested that I should consider the chicken-sexers, I said that though their sayings of "It's male" or "It's female" clearly express knowledge, "it seems plain to me that … these sayings are not intelligible as reports of observation".[14] I do not, as Brandom supposes, accept his picture of what suffices for observational knowledge, and distinguish perceptual knowledge as a species of that genus, requiring a further condition.

Perhaps it is a merely verbal question whether the chicken-sexers acquire their distinctive knowledge by observation. Brandom's proposal is that such absence of mediation by experience could be ubiquitous in an ability to achieve knowledge of the environment. That would threaten my claim that experience is epistemologically indispensable, the epistemological facet of the multi-faceted empiricism that Brandom rightly ascribes to me. And the threat would be there whether or not we count the chicken-sexers' knowledge as observational.

But I suspect that when Brandom assumes the concept of observation fits the chicken-sexers, that helps to confer apparent plausibility on his proposal that mediation by experience is nowhere necessary. If what the chicken-sexers acquire is observational knowledge, why not suppose all awareness of environmental circumstances could be like that? To resist this, I am inclined to stand by my denial that the chicken-sexers' distinctive knowledge is observational in any good sense. I think we take the story of the chicken-sexers in our stride only because we assume that their experience-free acquisition of knowledge that chicks are male or female takes place against the background of acquisition of environmental knowledge that is observational in the ordinary sense, and so not experience-free. If we try to

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[14] Reply to Gibson, Byrne, and Brandom", Enrique Villanueva, ed., *Perception* (Philosophical Issues, 7: Atascadero, Ridgeview, 1996). The emphasis is mine in that paper.

omit experience entirely from a picture of how subjects are in touch with their environment, the supposed topic of the picture becomes unrecognizable in it.

I have urged this elsewhere,[15] and I shall not go into it further here, except to remark that this issue strikes me as much more interesting than the fact that I have not committed myself on the topics Brandom focuses on. This issue opens into a major part of the answer to a question Brandom raises, and undertakes to answer, though I cannot see that he does: why I insist on keeping experience in the picture, given that we can – he claims – avoid the Myth of the Given without it. It is not much of an achievement if we avoid the Myth of the Given at the cost of failing to give an intelligible picture of a complete capacity to acquire knowledge of the environment.

[15] For instance, in the paper cited in the previous note.

Katalin Farkas

Is the whole World thinkable?

The phrase in the title is taken from a sentence in the second lecture of *Mind and World:* "The object of an experience ... is understood as part of the whole thinkable world" (36). The sentence occurs in the discussion of the question whether McDowell's views commit him to any form of idealism; by asking my question, I hope to clarify this issue.

I

McDowell offers several considerations to fight off the accusation of idealism. I must admit that first I found this seriously puzzling. To put it very simply, the basic question of the book is about how the mind relates to the world; and the question is put against the background of a special kind of anxiety that is produced by the picture of nature suggested by the modern natural sciences. The anxiety is created by a tension between two kinds of intelligibility: that on the one hand, we see nature as the realm of law and devoid of meaning and freedom, and on the other hand we see the world of human thinking as the world of freedom, reason and meaning. So the question is how to place the freedom- and meaning-possessing mind into the world which lacks freedom and meaning. And the answer is, to put it again very simply, that we basically need to accept the Kantian conception but without the transcendental framework. Moreover, we learn that the resulting theory is not idealist.

The way I learnt Kant in school (which I suppose is the standard picture about Kant) was this: in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant set himself the task of proving the possibility of a priori synthetic judge-

ments. The task is achieved by the Copernican Revolution and the resulting theory of transcendental idealism: to refer to a well-known and poignant phrase from the preface to the Second edition of the CPR, instead of supposing that intuitions conform to the nature of objects, we must suppose that objects of experience conform to the constitution of our minds. There can be but little doubt that this is an idealist theory. Now if we remove the transcendental framework from Kant's theory – much in the way that Hegel did, we learn from the book – then we get something that is even more of an idealist theory. Whether transcendental idealism is idealist enough is a subject of discussion; but transcendental idealism minus transcendental is simply idealism. And yet we find a staunch denial of idealism in the book.

Things become a lot clearer if instead of the standard understanding one turns to Strawson's reading of Kant which strongly influenced McDowell. Strawson thought that what was really interesting and valuable in Kant was the development of a "truly empiricist philosophy" (19). Strawson takes the problem of classical empiricism to be the following: given that "experience really offers us nothing but separate and fleeting sense-impression, images and feeling" (18), we are faced with the task of deriving the possibility of the unity of consciousness and the possibility of an objective world of experience. Hume, who took the program most seriously, thought he had no choice but to despair of both tasks. Kant's remarkable insight was that empiricism doesn't commit us to the claim that any concept of the unity of consciousness or the objective empirical world has to be *derivable* from the primary basis of the private data of consciousness. He rather thought that "the minimal empiricist conception of experience was incoherent in isolation, that it made sense only within a larger framework which necessarily included the use and application in experience of concepts of an objective world" (19) and, we may add, from the point of view of a unified consciousness. Thus we need not see the concept of the objective world as having a secondary logical status compared to the immediate data of sense-impressions or feelings; and just as well, for constructing the first from the second would be a hopeless task.

Someone who sees Kant as a "truly empiricist philosopher" would obviously regard both the theory of transcendental idealism and the quest for demonstrating the possibility of a priori synthetic judgements with deep suspicion. Neither the idea of a supersensible reality, nor the idea of a synthetic judgement that is not derived from experience is acceptable for an empiricist. But Strawson thought that fortunately the real insight in Kant could be saved from the shadow that these suspicious doctrines cast on the Kantian theory. The purified Kantianism would not only omit references to the transcendental framework but would also give up the idea of 'mind-made nature'. Thus both the transcendental and the idealist element of transcendental idealism is to be purged from the Kantian theory. Obviously, this reading is hardly compatible with Kant's original intentions, but this is not something that we should definitely hold against Strawson. (Although it certainly creates considerable trouble for those who, armed with the traditional understanding of Kant, try to read those who learnt their Kant from Strawson). But what Strawson is doing is trying to find good answers to some questions, and if some aspects of Kant's philosophy do not fit into a good answer, then so much worse for Kant, I suppose. I am actually more interested in another question: just how much is it possible to eliminate idealism even from an empiricist version of Kant? This brings me to the discussion of the accusation of idealism in McDowell's book.

II

The discussion of idealism centers around two claims: one is the claim that the sort of thing one can think is the sort of thing that can be the case; and the other claim is that experience is passive. The first claim, McDowell argues, is simply a truism and does not commit him to idealism (27). This is probably right – however, the claim does not commit him *against* idealism either, as McDowell himself implicitly suggests. Idealists and realists may well agree that what can be thought is also what can be the case; the issue between them would

concern the question of priority. Is our thinking somehow a reflection of the mind-independent world – as the realist maintains; or does the world somehow conform to the ways we think – as the idealist insists? But we don't find any clue about the idealistic or realistic nature of McDowell's views here, for he refuses to raise the question of priority (see p. 28). So to find out whether his theory is in fact idealist or not, we must look for proof elsewhere.

The second important claim, as I said, is the claim that experience is passive. Here we have to note an important distinction which is also registered by McDowell. McDowell sees idealist theories as denying that reality is independent of thinking. "Independent of thinking" can be understood at least in two senses: independent of an *act* of thinking or independent of the *content* of a piece of thinking. Saying that reality is independent of thinking in the first sense – that is, an act of thinking – is the same as saying that experience is passive. This is the familiar and hardly deniable fact that is some sense, we can't help experiencing what we experience: if I look at a certain direction and things are normal, then I will be provided with some visual experience. Experience is given in this innocent sense. And McDowell argues that his position does not commit him to denying this undeniable fact. This may well be so; but in this respect, McDowell will find himself in complete agreement with defenders of some of the most well-known idealist theories, like Berkeley and Kant. In fact, both Berkeley and Kant considered it quite important that the passive character of experience is the special human predicament. Things are different for God; for God, reality is dependent on the act of thinking. (This thought figures in the two systems in a different way: it has an important explanatory role for Berkeley, while Kant sees intellectual – that is, creative – intuition rather as a possibility.) So Berkeley and Kant are idealists not because they hold that reality is dependent on the act of thinking, but because they hold that reality is dependent on thinking in the second sense.

To show that a philosophical system does not commit one to the denial of the passivity of experience is an important philosophical task indeed. If any philosophical theory about the nature of reality entailed

that the computer I'm using now exists because I'm looking at it, this would be a straightforward reductio against the theory. So the dialectical position of such an argument is to save a theory from patently absurd consequences; and not to argue against some other theories. As a matter of fact, I cannot think of any philosopher who denied that, for a considerable part of experience, experience is passive in the sense described above. Now some have thought that it is impossible to account for this phenomenon; we just have to accept it as a brute fact. Some others had to spend a considerable time explaining how the thesis that reality is dependent on the content of thinking (our second sense above) does not entail the denial of the passivity of experience. But no-one has questioned the phenomenon itself.

Idealism is then the thesis that the world depends on what is thinkable. This claim involves taking sides in the question that was raised in the first paragraph of this section: the question of priority between what can be thought and what can be the case; according to idealists, priority is to be given to the former.

Thus the situation with the second central claim in McDowell's discussion of idealism is similar to the situation with the first: although it doesn't commit him to idealism (for realists, just like everyone else, would presumably agree that experience is passive), it doesn't commit him against idealism either. Most of the places where McDowell characterizes his position and speaks about particular experiences being part of the whole thinkable world – like in the sentence I quoted at the beginning – are perfectly compatible with Berkeley or with Kant if we take "world" to mean the phenomenal world.

I'm not sure how to read McDowell. A possible interpretation is that he is only interested in refuting idealism in the first, implausible sense, and he refuses to take issue with the second version. As far as the second version is concerned, we should simply rest content with the truism that the content of thought is the same sort of thing that can be the case, and leave the question of priority unanswered. If this is the right interpretation, then McDowell's terminology seems somewhat misleading: for idealism in the first sense is not something which

is endorsed by most familiar theories of idealism – like Berkeley, Kant or the German idealists; these theories are rather interested in the second, priority-invoking sense of idealism.

III

Perhaps we should indeed refuse to raise the issue of priority – one could invoke the Wittgensteinian therapeutic spirit of being able to stop philosophy whenever we want to. However, there is a further aspect of McDowell's philosophy, something I haven't discussed so far, which makes it doubtful that McDowell is entitled to leave the question of priority unanswered.

The opponent of the idealist is the realist. Idealists say that the world is dependent on thinking , realists say that the world is independent of thinking. As I said, certain realists and certain idealists could agree that what can be thought can be the same as what is the case, that some aspects of the world are thinkable. But to claim that some aspects of the world are thinkable still leaves open the question that is put in the title of this paper: namely, is the whole world thinkable? It seems that a negative answer – or the possibility of a negative answer – to this question would be a sure sign of realism. If someone thought that although some aspects of the world are thinkable, others are not; or at least that we cannot exclude the possibility of there being such aspects of the world, then this person would surely be a realist. For those aspects that are not accessible to human thought but still exist are not dependent on thinking. On the other hand, a positive answer to the question would carry with it a strong suggestion of idealism; for how could one guarantee that the whole world is thinkable if the world weren't dependent on thinking in some sense? Thus whereas a negative answer to the question would eliminate any suspicion of idealism, a positive answer would strongly suggest idealism. And as far as I could make out, McDowell's words imply the positive rather then a negative answer; so there is indeed a strong suggestion of idealism about McDowell's theory.

Experience is characterized by McDowell as "openness to the lay-out of reality" (26), but we are not likely to find any point when thought actually embraces the whole world. "There is no guarantee that the world is completely within the reach of a system of concepts and conceptions as it stands at some particular moment in its historical development" (40). But "the world is embraceable in thought" (33). Therefore we find a perpetual need to adjust our world-view to the deliverance of experience (40). In other words, the world is the world of possible experience but never exhausted by any sum of actual experience.

These days the opponents of realism are not called "idealists" but rather "anti-realists", and being an anti-realist certainly sounds less embarrassing then being an idealist. I don't know what McDowell would say if someone labeled his theory as "anti-realist"; perhaps he would see no need to raise the question or he would consider some form of anti-realism so obvious that it goes without saying. McDowell sees a strong appeal in empiricism, and empiricism has always been prone to anti-realism: for what empiricism takes to be the starting point is the way the world manifests itself to us, and that seems to be intrinsically connected with human thinking. Now one could ask: why does the world make itself manifest to us the way it does? Is it because the mind-independent world imposes itself on us? Or is it because the world is somehow constructed from our experience? Empiricists greatly vary on the point of what answer should we give to this question, and some of them deny the need to raise the question at all. Perhaps McDowell is one of them. Such a position wouldn't be a realist position; but we would be reluctant to call it idealism either. However, it seems to me that such a position should remain silent on the question whether the whole world is thinkable or not. It is all right to consider only those aspects of the world that are manifested to us; but unless we are prepared to go further in explaining it, we are not entitled to declare that this manifestation exhausts everything there is.

Reply of John McDowell

I think Farkas's discussion of the first of the two claims she considers, the claim that the sort of thing that can be the case is the sort of thing one can think, works with an insufficient appreciation of the different possible readings of questions about priority.

My view is that there is no priority between the concept of the sort of thing that can be the case and the concept of the sort of thing one can think. That is, it would not be possible to have one of those concepts without the other, and on that basis to work one's way into possession of the other. At Mind and World 28 I say, in this connection, that "there is no reason to look for a priority in either direction". Farkas apparently reads this as a refusal to "raise the question of priority", but I meant it to answer a priority question by saying that neither concept is prior.

This no-priority thesis about the concepts in no way threatens the fact – which should be obvious to anyone without a philosophical axe to grind – that it is because it is anyway the case that the earth orbits the sun (say) that it is correct to think that the earth orbits the sun. That could be put, if you like, by saying that the fact is prior to the thought; but now it is a different question about priority that is at issue. About the question "why does the world make itself manifest to us the way it does?" Farkas distinguishes the answers "because the mind-independent world imposes itself on us" and "because the world is somehow constructed from our experience". And she speculates, presumably on the basis of my supposed refusal to raise "the question of priority", that I would reject the question rather than choosing one of those answers. But I think the first answer is obviously correct, and the second answer is obviously counter-intuitive. Much of the point of my response to the accusation of idealism could be put as follows: nothing in my thinking about experience stands in the way of a common-sense insistence that our experience takes the shape it does because the mind-independent world imposes itself on us.

The second claim of mine Farkas considers is that experience is passive. She points out, surely rightly, that even Berkeley has to acknowledge the passivity of experience, in the sense that the course it

takes is outside our control. On that basis she suggests that the second claim cannot pull any weight in a rejection of the charge of idealism. But my claim about experience is not just that we cannot determine its course, but that it is sensory receptivity in operation – not just that experience is passive, but that it is receptive. In experience we take in how things anyway are. That is not an idea that Berkeley can take in stride. Kant is different; Farkas puts Kant and Berkeley together in this context, but of course the concept of receptivity is Kant's own. That reflects the fact that it is only transcendentally speaking that Kant's thinking is idealistic; empirically, Kant's stance is realistic. More detail here would require me to discuss the issues about Kant interpretation that Farkas briefly considers in her first section, but that would take us too far from her main concerns.

In connection with her title question, Farkas suggests that one would definitely reveal oneself as a realist if one held that we cannot exclude the possibility of aspects of the world that are not thinkable. And she suggests that in implying, as against that, that the whole world is thinkable, I betray a sympathy with idealism: "how could one guarantee that the whole world is thinkable if the world weren't dependent on thinking in some sense?". I want to stress that the conception of the world that I work with is one according to which the world is everything that is the case. I see no possibility of explaining the idea of things that are the case except as part of a package that includes the idea of things that can be truly thought to be the case. That is a version of the conceptual no-priority thesis. And perhaps it constitutes a kind of idealism. But it is not the kind that represents the world as "dependent on thinking". From the no-priority thesis, it would follow that we cannot coherently envisage an element in the world, in the sense of everything that is the case, that cannot in principle be thought, in a thought that would be true. As Farkas acknowledges, I am not committed to holding that any such thought is actually within the reach of any particular thinker, or community of thinkers. And as I have urged, the conceptual no-priority thesis does not threaten the priority, in a different sense, of facts over thoughts. I do not see why the conception that results should seem to fall short of the realism of common sense.

Jaroslav Peregrin*

The 'Causal Story' and the 'Justificatory Story'

Suppose for a moment that J.R.R. Tolkien, the famous author of the cult fantasy saga *Lord of the Rings,* did not publish anything of his writings during his lifetime; suppose that after his death the manuscripts of all his writings are lying on his table. Where, then, is the *Middlearth,* the glorious land of hobbits, dwarfs, elfs and human heroes, situated? We might be tempted to say that it is within our world, namely inside the pile of papers on the writer's table – for it exists solely through the letters written on these papers. However, to say this would be wrong (or at least strongly misleading) – surely we do not expect that should the heroes of the book walk in a straight line long enough, they would cross the boundaries of the book and appear in Mr. Tolkien's room. Middlearth is, of course, *not* within our world – despite existing solely due to certain things which *are* within it.

Now the situation is not substantially different when Middlearth does not exist solely through a single pile of papers, but rather through millions of printed copies of Tolkien's books and through the minds of millions of their readers. Again, the land exists exclusively through the existence of entities which are parts of our world (albeit that they are now scattered throughout the whole Earth), but this does not mean that the land itself is a part of our world.

The point of this anecdotal excursion is that this relationship between our world and Middlearth is, in a sense, similar to the relationship between the physical space of things and "the space of rea-

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sons"[1]; or between "the causal story" and "the justificatory story"[2]. Like Middlearth, the space of reasons exists exclusively due to us, humans, and our minds (and perhaps also of some of our artifacts), and in this sense we might be tempted to situate it in our world, to see it as a certain, perhaps scattered, compartment of the world of things within which we live; but just as in the case of Middlearth, this might be dangerously misguiding.

The rationale of talking about something as the space of reasons comes from Sellars' argument, recognized as sound by his followers, that we have to distinguish carefully between thing-like entities, *particulars*, which enter into causal (in a broad sense) relationships, and proposition-like entities, *facts* (and potential facts, which we may call simply *propositions*), which enter into justificatory relationships. These are two essentially different kinds of entities, living essentially different kinds of 'lives' within their different realms. Particulars typically inhabit our spatiotemporal world and are denoted by names; whereas propositions inhabit the space of reasons and are expressed by sentences. And as Brandom (1984, 6) stresses, it is the grasp of *propositional* contents that in an important sense distinguishes rational or sapient beings.

The necessity of separating these two kinds of entities was what underlay Sellars' rejection of traditional empiricism with its 'sense data' – for 'sense data' are nothing else than entities that are supposed to belong to both these categories of entities at once. The sense-data-theorist assumes that the sense datum is a point in which the causal chain going from the outside world to the subject's mind changes into a justificatory chain, he "insists *both* that sensing is a knowing *and*

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[1] Sellars, W., 'The Myth of the Given: Three Lectures on Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', *The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis* (Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science 1; eds. H. Feigl & M. Scriven), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1956.; reprinted as and quoted from Sellars: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press,1997.§ 36.

[2] Rorty, R., 'Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth', Objectivity, Relativism and Truth (*Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991., 148.

that it is particulars which are sensed."[3] Thus what is sensed is assumed to be knowledge, a true belief, but knowledge which is immediately 'given' to the mind, for it is directly delivered into it by the world itself (and is thus infallible). This is what Sellars famously called the *Myth of the Given.*

However, if a particular cannot be a reason for a belief, we inevitably have to conclude, as Davidson did[4], that "nothing can serve as reason for a belief save another belief". But if this is true – if the world has no way of penetrating the space of beliefs – beliefs appear to be turned loose from the world, to be condemned to blindly and aimlessly revolve within the mind. John McDowell writes: "The idea of the Given is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought."[5] However, he continues (p. 8), "it can seem that if we reject the Given, we merely reopen ourselves to the threat to which the idea of the Given is a response, the threat that our picture does not accommodate any external constraint on our activity in empirical thought and judgment." This is what McDowell does not like, and why he seeks a third path, a path that would lead us safely between the Scylla of the Myth of the Given, and the Charybdis of Davidsonian coherentism.

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[3] Sellars, W., op. cit., § 3.

[4] Davidson, D., 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson,* ed. LePore, E., Oxford, Blackwell, 1986., 310 .

[5] McDowell, J., *Mind and World,* Cambridge-Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994. 7.

What I would like to indicate here is that both the Myth of the Given and the threat of leaving our thought externally unconstrained, broken loose from the outside world, presuppose the picture on which the space of reasons is somehow inside the space of things, so that causal chains from the outside world can penetrate into the inner one (thereby changing their nature to justificatory chains). I am going to argue that although this picture might appear to be extremely natural or even unavoidable, it is one more picture which "holds us captive" – and that what is really needed is to abandon it.

Before we turn to the discussion of the relationship of the space of reasons to the realm of things of our everyday life, and thereby of the 'justificatory story' to the 'causal story', let me point out that the distinctions between the two realms and the two stories are related to another interesting distinction, the distinction between two ways we can approach a mind (and, I think, also a language).[6]

We can look at a mind 'from without': to look at it as one of the objects which feature within our the causal story (and, indeed, also *within* our justificatory story). We could hardly have failed to notice that among the objects which surround us there are some quite specific ones, which we have come to classify as *mind-havers,* thereby positing minds, specific objects the having of which distinguishes mind-havers. (It is, of course, not *necessary* to treat minds as genuine objects, rather than only as 'properties' or 'aspects' of mind-havers, but this is not a question we will consider now.)

But we can also try to look at a mind 'from within': we may notice that the justificatory story urgently points to somebody who has invented it and who 'harbors' it – who is in the business of justification. (This contrasts this story with the causal story, which, in a sense can be imagined to be 'told' – i.e. performed – by the inanimate world itself.) Thus, the justificatory story points to a mind (or, indeed a

[6] Cf. Peregrin, J., *Doing Worlds with Words,* Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1995., esp. § 11.6.

'community of minds'), which is 'behind' it, to a 'transcendental ego'. So telling this story we are in a sense assuming the standpoint of a mind, we approach it 'from inside'.

Now I think that the advice of keeping apart the causal and the justificatory story should be understood as also entailing the advice not to try to be simultaneously inside and outside a mind. And if we do follow this advice, the relationship between the mind and the world is no mystery: If we look at the mind from without, then there is nothing mysterious about its relationship to the rest of the world: mind-havers, and thereby minds, enter in all kinds of causal interactions with their surroundings. And if we approach the mind from within, then asking about its relationship to the outside world makes no sense at all: then the mind, the thinking subject, is not part of the world (but rather its boundary, as Wittgenstein[7] duly points out[8]) and hence there simply is no outside for it to have.

This vantage point may also help us distinguish the question we are considering, the question of how to cope with the "threat that our picture [of the relationship of the mind and the world] does not accommodate any external constraint on our activity in empirical thought and judgment", from some other, related questions, with which it sometimes appears to be intermingled in McDowell's book.

First, there is a question which arises from looking at the mind from outside, the question about the nature of mind and about the specificity of its role within the causal story. We have seen that from this perspective minds cannot be anything else than kinds of objects (or properties of objects) causally interacting with other objects. However, one can legitimately wonder whether the causal story real-

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[7] Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* London, Routledge, 1922.; English translation Routledge, London, 1961.§ 5.632.

[8] Cf. Kripke, S., *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,* Cambridge-Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982., 123ff., discussion of Wittgenstein's passage.

ly gives us resources to account for the peculiarity of minds in the first place. Do we need a specific kind of vocabulary to account for them, say a normative vocabulary?[9]

Second, there is a question that arises from looking at the world from within a mind, the question of whether we do see the world through the prism of the mind adequately. We may wonder whether our conceptualizations which underlie our justificatory story do not corrupt the world, whether the story we thus tell presents the world 'as it really is'. This is the question about the nature of the unconceptualized world, about the outlook of bare facts stripped of our values[10].

Both these questions, which we are not going to address here, are to be distinguished from our question about the relationship of the thoughts inside the mind to the things outside it. How do elements of the causal world of things manage to restrain the elements of our inner space of reasons, to make our minds work somehow dependently on what is going on outside them? Note that this question arises only if we attempt to account for minds within the world by making the causal story continuous with the justificatory story in such a way that the justificatory story would account for minds and the causal story for the rest of the world. This leads to the picture of minds as spaces of their own within the physical space, as certain islands governed by

[9] This seems to be a question which divides Quine and Rorty (whose answer to the question seems to be *no*) from Davidson and Brandom (who seem to accept that need for some kind of a specific vocabulary). However, we could also see the question as directly challenging the very constitution of the causal story: Since the dawn of modern science, from Descartes, Leibniz and Newton, we have come to see the causal world as made exclusively of passive *materia;* but in view of the existence of minds, is this really right? Do we not need also an active *'pateria'* (to use the terminology of the Czech mathematician and philosopher Petr Vopinka) to describe the world containing minds? Do we not need to assume that there may exist entities which are not only subject to causal law, but are also able to insert new causes into the causal chains?

[10] This is a question many philosophers have warned us is illusory: the idea that there is a story which would be told by the world itself – as contrasted with the stories told by the mind-havers –, they say, is an idea not worth being taken seriously.

the justificatory relations within the vast sea governed by the causal ones. To understand the real nature of this question, we now turn our attention back to the concept of the space of reasons.

What is the space of reasons and where is it situated? What is the nature of the propositions which constitute it? On my construal, the concept of the space of reasons and the concept of a proposition are two sides of the same coin. Intuitively, it is very hard to say what a proposition is, to get any kind of a firm grip on them. However, there are facts about propositions which seem to be obvious: we would, for example hardly call something a proposition unless it has a negation. Similarly, it seems to be constitutive of the concept of a proposition that propositions can be conjoined, that a proposition can imply something etc. In short, propositions necessarily exist within a network, or a space, of logical relationships. And it is these logical relationships which constitute the most general shape of the space of reasons.

Now as a matter of fact, some propositions happen to be *true,* or, in other words, are *facts.* It was Wittgenstein[11], who famously insisted that it is facts, and not things, of which our world consists. Why does Wittgenstein find it so important to deny that the building blocks of the world are things, despite the fact that probably any normal, philosophically uncontaminated person would say that world *does* consist of things (perhaps things which stand in certain relationships)? Well, one answer might be that as he wants to put forward his correspondence theory of language, he needs the world cut into pieces corresponding to the pieces of language, and thus he invokes facts, the "sentence-shaped items" (Strawson), or "ghostly doubles of the grammarian's sentence" (Collingwood[12]). A slightly more sympathetic answer would be that this "linguistic" structuring of the world is not only something Wittgenstein needs to accomplish his project, but in fact something that is in a sense how the world some-

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[11] Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* London, Routledge, 1922.; English translation Routledge, London, 1961.

[12] Quoted by Putnam, (Putnam, H., *Words and Life,* Cambridge-Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994., 301.)

times really looks to us, language-users. Although we perceive our world as the world of things, having language we sometimes reflect it, and reflecting it we see the world as the world not of things, but of facts. Thus, our "language instinct" (as Pinker, 1994, dubbed our ability to use language) makes us see our world in terms of facts and propositions. "Language is", as Davidson put it recently, "the means of propositional perception".[13]

Thus, the causal story (featuring things in their causal interaction) and the justificatory story (featuring propositions in their inferential dependencies) are, in an important sense, two different stories with the same subject, namely our world (which is what makes this case different from the Middlearth one). We may say that the sun sends its rays thus causing the air to become warm; and we may also say that the fact that the sun shines implies (via the "observational categorical" saying that if the sun shines, the air becomes warm) that it is warm. Seen from this perspective, the space of reasons is not embedded within the realm of things, it is merely the very same realm differently conceived.

However, propositions do not merely reside within the abstract space of reasons; some of them come to be entertained or endorsed by rational individuals, thereby becoming the individuals' *thoughts* or *beliefs*[14]. It is, for example, me, who believes that the sun is shining and that (therefore) it is warm outside. Are then not *my* beliefs, the propositions that *I* endorse, situated inside the physical world, namely inside my head? And is it not necessary to secure that they do properly reflect the world outside the mind?

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[13] Davidson, D., 'Seeing Through Language', *Thought and Language,* ed. Preston, J., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997., 22.

[14] Of course the very existence of propositions and of the space of reasons is parasitic upon the rational (predominantly linguistic) practices of us humans, the space being in fact nothing more than a hypostasis vividly envisaging the structure of our linguistic practices. However, once we accept this hypostasis, it is clear that propositions may exist without being anybody's beliefs.

It is this picture which makes the Myth of the Given so attractive – it seems that if we do not want believers' minds to be completely independent of the world, there must be a path from the outside space of things into the inside realm of beliefs. There must be a boundary of the space of beliefs at which the causal chain gets transformed into the evidential and justificatory chain, there must be a spot on the boundary between mind and world at which a particular becomes a proposition which thus constitutes direct, *given* knowledge. The answer to this temptation is, again, the rejection of the conflation of the causal story with the justificatory story and to situate the space of beliefs inside the physical space. Beliefs are better not imagined as being within one's head.

We have the causal story: the world, e.g. the sun sending its rays, impinges on my (or whoever's) sensory receptors, the receptors send signals to the brain, there some kind of causal interaction between the neurons takes place, and then the brain perhaps sends a signal to some motoric nerves which do something, e.g. make the hands take off the coat and hang it in the wardrobe. What is important is that this story is causal *through and through,* the causal chain *nowhere* changes into anything non-causal.

Now we could perhaps improve on this causal story by assuming what Dennett (1987) calls the *intentional stance:* instead of addressing the proceedings of one's neural machinery (which we can hardly really know), we can adopt a much more rough and a much more useful way of speaking, and characterize the person as, e.g., *believing that it is warm.* There is still nothing non-causal about this: *believes that it is warm* is our rough way to specify the physical state of the person in question. And *believes* here should not be construed as *is in the possession of a thing called belief* let alone *has a belief floating somewhere inside his head.*

And it is important to realize that the situation does not change even when we grant Davidson and Brandom that assuming the intentional stance means a more substantial change than simply starting to discern more global patterns, namely that it is the place where some kind of normativity creeps in. Ascribing beliefs and even thoughts to

somebody is still, as Davidson stresses, not situating propositions in an inner space of that person, it is using propositions as a classificatory scale in the same way in which we use the number scale for the purpose of classifying weights of things: "In thinking and talking of the weights of physical objects we do not need to suppose there are such things as weights for objects to have. Similarly in thinking and talking about the beliefs of people we needn't suppose there are such entities as beliefs. ... The entities we mention to help specify a state of mind do not have to play any *psychological* or epistemological role at all, just as numbers play no physical role."[15]

Now it is important to keep in mind that from this vantage point, we have to distinguish between the properties which a proposition has simply in itself, and those which it may have in virtue of being endorsed by a believer. The proposition that it is warm may be, for example, true (i.e. be a fact), which is, of course, independent of whether anybody believes it. On the other hand, the same proposition, happening to be my belief, might be, e.g., caused by the sun rays coming into my eye – which is obviously only the property of my belief, not of the proposition as such. Now to ask what is the reason for something is to ask about a property of the first kind, whereas to ask why somebody came to believe something is to ask about a property of the second kind. To say that the reason it is warm is that the sun shines (and, possibly, that whenever the sun shines, it is warm) is to say something that does not depend on anybody's in fact believing that it is warm. It is something essentially different from saying why X believes that it is warm.

Now if I say "The reason why it is warm is that the sun shines", I give a reason, I tell a justificatory story; whereas when I say "I believe that it is warm, because I believe that the sun shines", I do not give

[15] Davidson, D., 'What is Present to the Mind?', *The Mind of Donald Davidson,* eds. J. Brandl, W.L. Gombocz, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1989., 11.

reasons, I tell a causal story (or its enhancement tailored to account for *agents*) about myself. This means that the term *belief* is systematically ambiguous: it may mean a *potential* belief, a proposition from the space of reasons that may (or may not) become somebody's belief, and it may also mean an actual belief of a concrete person. There is a belief as such, i.e. a proposition, and there is a belief of somebody – similarly as there is a pint as such (the unit of measure) and there is a pint of something. If we ask whether beliefs are broken loose from the (rest of the) world, we must first clarify which sense of belief we mean: if it is the first one, then the question does not make much sense, for there is nothing for abstract propositions to be broken loose from (similarly as pints and meters are not broken loose from anything); and if we mean the second sense, then beliefs are trivially *not* broken loose from the world: they are part of the causal world and as such they causally interact with their environment in various ways (similarly as pints of beer do, e.g. by being drunk by people).

What about, then, McDowell's worry that the rejection of the Myth of the Given "threatens to make what was meant to be empirical thinking degenerate, in our picture, into a frictionless spinning in a void"? Well the upshot of our considerations so far is that we should see thinking either as a causal matter, in which case it "spins" unproblematically within its causal surroundings, or as a matter of the justificatory relationships, in which case it does not "spin" in anything. I am convinced that this should be the right response to the "in the void" threat.

However, there is also the "frictionless" threat. The causal story and the justificatory story differ in that although both must come to an end, there is no end to causes, whereas there has to be an end to reasons. Everything has, as we believe, its cause, and any causal chain can be traced back indefinitely; but there are reasons which do not require further justification, which are, so to say, justified in themselves. (This is not to say that such reasons could be distinguished

once and for all – which reasons do not require further justification depends on the context of the justification, but in each context there are such reasons.) And does this not mean that such reasons are "unwarranted", that in accepting them our mind draws on willful on arbitrary foundations? That thinking is "frictionless"?

Of course not: once we see that there is no outside from where such "unwarranted", "border" reasons could (fail to) be sustained, we should be bound to see that they are not representations of something outside there in the world, but rather parts of the world itself. Beliefs are propositions purported to be true, and if some of them are *obviously* true, their purport thus being veridical, then they are simply what true propositions are, *viz* facts. As Brandom puts it: "Thus a demolition of semantic categories of correspondence relative to those of expression does not involve 'loss of the world' in the sense that our discursive practice is then conceived as unconstrained by how things actually are. ... What is lost is only the bifurcation that makes knowledge seem to require the bridging of a *gap* that opens up between sayable and thinkable contents – thought of as existing self-contained on their side of the epistemic crevasse – and the wordly facts, existing on their side".[16]

If I look from the window and claim that the sun is shining, and somebody standing besides me asks "why?", my reaction is probably not going to be to give a reason, but rather to cease to see him as a serious partner within the 'practice of giving and asking for reasons' (maybe only for that moment – maybe what he says is only a kind of joke, or his way of doing poetry). The fact that a claim does not need

[16] Brandom, R., *Making It Explicit,* Harvard University Press, 1994. 333.

further justification does not mean that it is somehow broken loose from the world and thereby basically dubious – on the contrary, it means that it is the most indubitable[17].

This gets us to the Kantian story about *spontaneity:* it tells us that while the inanimate world is the realm of law, the mind constitutes the realm of freedom. The mind does not simply behave according to rules, but it rather acts according to *conceptions* of rules – as it is thus possible for it to *disobey* a rule.[18] Thus, the mind is *free* in a way other objects are not.

And this leads to a further problem: if mind is free, how is it that the world forces upon it, in perception? Does it mean that perception takes place somewhere still behind the bulwarks of the mind, or does it mean that mind is not as free it seems to be? This is an important theme for McDowell; and his answer is, in effect, that the space of one's beliefs does not coincide with the realm of his freedom. This squares with the fact which we urged above: namely that justification must come to an end, that every justificatory claim must end with a reason for which no justification appears to be required (in the corresponding context). If there were any freedom with respect to the acceptance of such a reason, there would necessarily be a further "why?".

Thus I think that if McDowell speaks about the "threat of empirical thinking degenerating into a frictionless spinning in a void" we should see this rather as two different kinds of challenges: we have to explain why our thinking is not "frictionless", and we have to show why it is not "in the void". To show that it is not "frictionless"

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[17] We must not be confused by the fact that we sometimes appear to voice further justifications by switching from the justificatory to the causal story. If somebody asks why X believes that it is warm, I can answer "because he believes that the sun shines and he infers that it is warm from it", or "because he feels it" or whatever: in short, I can investigate and describe the causes of his adopting the belief. Also if I claim "It is warm" and somebody asks "why do you think so?", I can sometimes construe the question as "What has caused you to have the belief?" and give similar kinds of explanations; otherwise the only thing I can do is to voice a reason for it being warm – if there is one.

[18] See Brandom, R., *Making It Explicit,* Harvard University Press, 1994. § 4.1.

we need to show that the realm of our beliefs does not coincide with the realm of our freedom – and making this obvious is one of the achievements of McDowell's book. On the other hand, I am convinced, to show that it is not "in the void" requires it to be shown that the whole picture in which our thinking is "*in* something" is basically misleading – which appears to be something McDowell is not willing to settle for.

"Thus the fate of all 'philosophical problems' is this: Some of them will disappear by being shown to be mistakes and misunderstandings of our language and the others will be found to be ordinary scientific problems in disguise", wrote Moritz Schlick in 1932 thus expressing the opinion of a great majority of analytic philosophers of his age that philosophical problems could be dispensed with by means of a careful analysis, or indeed an adjustment, of the semantics of language. This was, no doubt, an exaggeration; but the conviction surely did have a certain rational core. Some of the problems we try to solve in philosophy *can* be dissolved by means of changing the way we see certain things and the way we speak about them. I think that the relationship between mind and the world is one of them: it is the post-Cartesian picture of mind as an 'inner space' which has given rise to most of the questions we ask now. And it is, I think, the consequential abandonment of this picture which may help us deal with them.

People like Rorty, Davidson and Brandom have done very much to bring out the misleadingness of the "representational model" of thought. McDowell seems to think that in some respects they might have been too hasty: that in the course of cleaning away pseudoproblems they swept under the table also some genuine problems, such as the problem of "empiricism". Although his book is surely a deep discussion of many issues concerning the human mind, I cannot help feeling that the author, by resurrecting the problem of empiricism, restores also a picture which we should be glad to have gotten rid of.

Reply of John McDowell

Peregrin offers an ontological rendition of the point of invoking the space of reasons in the manner of Sellars. He says it is particulars that enter into causal relations and propositions (including facts) that enter into justificatory relationships. I think that is much too simple, for reasons that come close to the surface later in Peregrin's paper. Some particulars, for instance episodes of thinking, are individuated in terms of propositions. Their content is essential to them. Surely such particulars can stand to one another in relations of justificatorily relevant sorts, reflecting the rational relations between the propositions that enter into identifying them as the particulars they are. Even so, as particulars, and specifically as events, they can stand to one another in causal relations. Nothing in Sellars's idea of a distinctive logical space of reasons shows that we must keep talk that is suitable for addressing justificatory questions separate from something that could be called "the causal story". Certainly some causal relations – relations that are, as we might say, merely causal, as opposed to the causal relations that hold, for instance, between successive episodes of thinking in a rational train of thought – are irrelevant to justification. But the sheer fact that we are telling a causal story does not show that we cannot be addressing issues of justification. And the sheer fact that we are interested in justification does not show that a story in which items are causally connected cannot serve our needs.

Once we see the wrongness of the idea that causal and justificatory concerns do not mix, which Peregrin tries to put in place by means of that distinction between particulars and propositions, we can drop the fiction that it is only particulars that are linked in causal "stories". Ordinary talk about causation embraces, no less smoothly, talk of facts as causally relevant to other facts. For instance, the fact that the sun is shining can be causally relevant to the fact that I believe that the sun is shining – to pick up an example of Peregrin's. Here too, it would be wrong to conclude, on the supposed ground that "the causal story" needs to be kept separate from any "justificatory story", that the causal connection cannot have anything to do with a justificatory con-

nection. If the causal connection works by way of my taking in, in experience, the fact that the sun is shining, it is a justificatory connection. Someone who sees that the sun is shining is thereby justified in believing it is, and the justification traces back, through the seeing, and hence in a way that depends on the causal connection, to the fact that the sun is shining.

Peregrin thinks we can quickly disarm the motivation for the Myth of the Given by exploiting the supposed requirement to separate the two "stories". He says: "if we approach the mind from within [that is, with justificatory concerns in view], then asking about its relationship to the outside world makes no sense at all." But so far from calming the anxieties that make the Given tempting, this sort of pronouncement seems bound to exacerbate them. (The point here is close to one I make against Rorty in my book; see 146–53.) If, in a situation like the one Peregrin describes, I start to doubt my entitlement to my belief that the sun is shining, perhaps because some philosopher has persuaded me to wonder if I am a brain in a vat, it is not at all reassuring to be told that in the context of this inquiry, an inquiry into my entitlement, it makes no sense to ask about how my mind is related, causally in particular, to the sun. If that relationship is irrelevant to my entitlement, my entitlement is not recognizable as the entitlement I thought it was. And it would be a short step from there to the unnerving thought that my worry ought really to be about the intelligibility of the idea that I have beliefs with objective purport, such as that the sun is shining, at all.

Peregrin implies that refusing his quick way with the motivation for the Myth of the Given, namely the advice to keep "the causal story" separate from "the justificatory story", is encouraged by a perhaps residual attachment to a "Cartesian picture of the mind as an 'inner space'". In this connection, he attributes to me the belief that philosophers have been too hasty in clearing away "the 'representational model' of thought". I do indeed believe that the idea of a "representational model" of thought, as a bit of philosophy to be discarded, tends to be applied with insufficient discrimination, covering thoughts that are innocuous as well as thoughts we are better off with-

out. Some viable babies often get thrown out with the bathwater. (See my response to Barry Allen.) But I think it is wrong to link this with anything distinctively Cartesian. Simply disavowing a Cartesian picture of the mind cannot suffice to immunize us against the philosophical temptations that I aim to neutralize by describing an empiricism untouched by Sellarsian objections to traditional empiricism. There is nothing Cartesian about the idea that entitlement for a perceptual belief – something that belongs to a "justificatory story" – ought to turn on the specifics of a "causal story" about how the believer is related to the world. Philosophical difficulties come from understandably not seeing how that can be so, and they are not met by claiming that the felt requirement cannot really be a requirement, on the ground that it mixes two uncombinable "stories".

Krisztián Pete

McDowell's Project: Is its Ground Really Kantian?

In this title I refer to the statement in McDowell's *Mind and World*[1] that he solves the problem of the relation between the knowing subject and the world in Kantian terms. But this claim seems to be doubtful if we analyze precisely his own epistemology and his use of Kantian concepts.

I would like to discuss "Kant's insight" which McDowell believes is both accurate and acceptable. For me it does not refer to the whole of Kantian thought and a part of this complete system cannot be applied to an enterprise, which sets itself to solve the problem of the epistemic connection between mind and world. I am going to deal with two main issues which McDowell, in my opinion, is not right about. One treats the transcendental framework of Kant's philosophy; the other treats the separability of intuitions.

McDowell himself mentioned many times that his interpretation of Kant is near to Strawson's view, which is expressed in the well known essay: *The Bounds of Sense*[2]. I will make a short comment on this essay, because I think that its analytical point of view can be misleading. Of course my interpretation also may be false, but the responsibility for this is not entirely mine. In part Kant's draft is responsible for the conflicting interpretations.

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[1] McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994.
[2] Strawson, P. F., *The Bounds of Sense,* London, Methuen & Co, 1973.

I.

Let us look at the "transcendental story". Both Strawson and McDowell are averse to the transcendental subject and more so the supersensible (the thing in itself, the supersensible, the *Ding an sich*), which they regard as a side effect that spoils the original Kantian insight.

McDowell thinks that the Kantian epistemology is separable into two main parts, – a transcendental part and an empirical part. He tries to defend the conceptuality of experience with this separation. For McDowell, if we leave the "transcendental story" and restrict ourselves to the standpoint of experience, we will find an inseparable contribution of receptivity to spontaneity. This statement is misleading in two aspects. The contribution of receptivity to spontaneity is not inseparable – at least notionally not –, and on the other hand the "transcendental story" forms a necessary part of the Kantian theory. Kant's claim to renew the epistemology derives from the claim to build or reform scientific metaphysics. He finds the key to doing this, and the key is transcendental subjectivity, the faculty of understanding which orders experience. Strawson formulates this Copernican Revolution in terms of idealism and draws an analogy between Kant and Berkeley. Kant denies this analogy, which was already formulated by his contemporaries, but does not deny that his system is idealistic, transcendentally idealistic. This is was his reason to add the part called *The Refutation of Idealism* to the *Critique* in the second edition.

"The dogmatical theory of idealism is unavoidable, if we regard space as a property of things in themselves; for in that case it is, with all to which it serves as condition, a nonentity. But the foundation for this kind of idealism we have already destroyed in the transcendental aesthetic. Problematical idealism, which makes no such assertion, but only alleges our incapacity to prove the existence of anything besides

ourselves by means of immediate experience, is a theory rational and evidencing a thorough and philosophical mode of thinking, for it observes the rule not to form a decisive judgement before sufficient proof be shown."[3]

He writes that space and time mustn't belong to things in themselves because of their a priori "existence" – but it does not mean that things in themselves exist only in the mind, rather that nothing can be said about the supersensible, which claims to be a knowledge of it. If we count the a priori forms of intuition – space and time – among the properties of things in themselves everything becomes appearance and we lose objective reality.[4]

I do not understand McDowell's statement that "[I]t has to be admitted that the effect of the transcendental framework is to make Kant's philosophy idealistic …This is quite contrary to Kant's intentions, but in spite of his staunch denials, the effect of his philosophy is to slight the independence of the reality to which our senses give us access."[5]. It is true, we can access only appearances which depend on our conceptual capacities. But the transcendental framework gives bases for appearances, namely the things in themselves and, at the same time, ensures the possibility of objectivity of concepts (thoughts) by creating an a priori relation to objects. The former, providing bases for appearances, is the task of the supersensible and the latter, ensuring the possibility of objectivity, is the task of the transcendental subject. In this way they embrace and form the boundary of the whole epistemology. Kant's philosophy is idealistic, but not in the way that Strawson puts it with phrases like "mind producing

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[3] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. by Meiklejohn, J.M.D.

[4] "It would be my own fault, if out of that which I should reckon as phenomenon, I made mere illusory appearance. But this will not happen, because of our principle of the ideality of all sensuous intuitions. On the contrary, if we ascribe objective reality to these forms of representation, it becomes impossible to avoid changing everything into mere appearance." Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. by Meiklejohn, J.M.D.

[5] McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994. 44.

Nature", "mind making Nature" or " the doctrines of transcendental idealism…are undoubtedly the chief obstacles to a symphatetic understanding of the *Critique*".[6]

I would like to comment on the "transcendental story" from another point of view. Strawson writes in his book that "the proof of our necessary ignorance of the supersensible safeguards the interests of morality and religion by securing the supersensible realm from our scepticism as well as from our knowledge"[7]. According to this remark, McDowell is convinced that "Kant thinks acknowledging the supersensible is a way to protect the interests of religion and morality"[8] and this is why he attributes a merely subordinate role to the supersensible. But the interests of morality and religion are protected by the regulative use of reason, not by acknowledging the supersensible (the thing in itself). It seems to me that acknowledging the supersensible (the thing in itself) is an epistemological necessity, it safeguards the interest of an independent – thus unknowable – objective reality. If I have only a transcendental subject, which though ensures the a priori grounding but does not defend against the threat of idealism, I will fall into the pit of a Berkeleian dogmatic idealism, which Kant, as we have seen, wanted to avoid. There is no way out besides entering the supersensible, postulating the Ding an sich. This entering, however, does not entail an ontological status; it is only an epistemological necessity, without which the system would be idealistic.

Although I disagree with McDowell about the question of the transcendental framework I have to acknowledge that the notion of transcendentalism is a bit controversial. Kant works out his transcendental subjectivism in the interests of a priority, which ensures the objectivity, but it does not say anything about the noumenon, the "objective" reality.

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[6] Strawson, P. F., *The Bounds of Sense,* London, Methuen & Co, 1973. 22.
[7] Strawson, P. F., op. cit. 22.
[8] McDowell, John, op. cit. 96.

II.

McDowell writes "receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the cooperation"[9] and "for Kant, the ordinary empirical world, which includes nature as the realm of law, is not external to the conceptual"[10]. I don't think that Kant equipped in advance receptivity with the conceptual.

I agree with Ferenc Altrichter, who wrote in his paper, *Concept and Intuition*[11], that Kant postulates three theses in the *Critique.* One of them is the *thesis of logical independence,* and the two others are the *anthropological* thesis and the *semantical thesis.* The *anthropological* thesis expresses a necessary requirement of empirical knowledge of human beings, viz. both the intuitions and the concepts are needed for empirical knowledge. The *semantical thesis* is in fact the well-known Kantian statement: "Thoughts without content are void; intuitions without conceptions, blind"[12]. It can be interpreted as a verificational principle by quoting these sentences: "All conceptions, therefore, and with them all principles, however high the degree of their a priori possibility, relate to empirical intuitions, that is, to data towards a possible experience. Without this they possess no objective validity, but are mere play of imagination or of understanding with images or notions."[13] Sometimes he wrote that a concept without intuition is not only empty, but also unintelligible. Of course, it does not mean that without intuition there is no concept at all. For Kant, we think of concepts for the purpose of experience, but in an a priori way. In the same place he writes: "the term, conception of reason, or rational conception, itself indicates that it does not confine itself within the limits of experience"[14]. This is why Kant distinguishes the transcen-

[9] McDowell, John, op. cit. 9.
[10] McDowell, John, op. cit. 97.
[11] Only in Hungarian: Altrichter, Ferenc, "Fogalom és szemlélet", Lehetséges-e egyáltalán, Budapest, Atlantisz, 1993.
[12] Kant, Immanuel, op. cit. A51/B75
[13] Kant, Immanuel, op. cit. B195
[14] Kant, Immanuel, op. cit. B367

dental and the empirical use of a concept. The former belongs to the domain of Dialectic and the latter to the domain of Analytic.

I don't think that Kant attributes priority to the intuition, but I think he just wants to stress the necessary co-operation of intuitions and concepts in empirical recognition. This thought already fits the notion of logical separability. Thus in accordance with the *thesis of logical independence* the connection between intuitions and concepts is not a logical, but a *de facto* connection. It means that if one takes concepts to refer to their own objects, one must connect concepts with intuitions. But Kant writes that concepts must relate a priori to their objects, because the objective validity of concepts cannot be demonstrated a posteriori.

McDowell intends a central role in his discussion for the Kantian thought: "Thoughts without content are void; intuitions without conceptions, blind", but he doesn't consider the thesis of logical independence and regards it as a verification principle. It is probably suggested to McDowell by Strawson's objection about the "principle of significance". Strawson thinks that Kant has a principle, which points out that concepts don't possess objective validity without the experiential situation in which they are used.[15] For me, this interpretation is not a correct one. I think of the thesis of logical independence as an original Kantian thesis and I can also support my opinion textually:

[15] Strawson uses the name "principle of significance" for the principle that was revealed by him. But the use of the Strawsonian principle can mislead the uninformed and naive reader. Its main statement is that concepts don't possess objective validity in the process of empirical cognition. But we construct concepts a priori before the experience, so they have a certain independence, otherwise their transcendental use would be impossible. Strawson, P. F., op. cit.16–18

"Understanding and sensibility, with us, can determine objects only in conjunction. If we separate them, we have intuitions without conceptions, or conceptions without intuitions."[16]

There is another reason why I disagree with McDowell about the question of the separability of concepts and intuitions: the heterogeneity of their epistemic relation to the "world". If we consider receptivity as inextricably entangled with the conceptual we have one or at most two possibilities. In the first case we have to homogenize the epistemic relation, which is not a Kantian thought.[17] In the second case we can do what McDowell does, which is not a homogenization

[16] Kant, Immanuel, op. cit., A 258/B 314. Further places: "If I take away from an empirical intuition all thought (by means of the categories), there remains no cognition of any object; for by means of mere intuition nothing is cogitated, and, from the existence of such or such an affection of sensibility in me, it does not follow that this affection or representation has any relation to an object without me. But if I take away all intuition, there still remains the form of thought, that is, the mode of determining an object for the manifold of a possible intuition. Thus the categories do in some measure really extend further than sensuous intuition, inasmuch as they think objects in general, without regard to the mode (of sensibility) in which these objects are given. But they do not for this reason apply to and determine a wider sphere of objects, because we cannot assume that such can be given, without presupposing the possibility of another than the sensuous mode of intuition, a supposition we are not justified in making." Kant, Immanuel, op. cit., A 240/B 298, and "They are merely rules for an understanding, whose whole power consists in thought, that is, in the act of submitting the synthesis of the manifold which is presented to it in intuition from a very different quarter, to the unity of apperception; a faculty, therefore, which cognizes nothing per se, but only connects and arranges the material of cognition, the intuition, namely, which must be presented to it by means of the object." Kant, Immanuel, op. cit., A90–91/B122–123.

[17] Kant writes about Locke and Leibniz: "Instead of seeking in the understanding and sensibility two different sources of representations, which, however, can present us with objective judgements of things only in conjunction, each of these great men recognized but one of these faculties, which, in their opinion, applied immediately to things in themselves, the other having no duty but that of confusing or arranging the representations of the former." Kant, Immanuel, op. cit., A 271/B 327.

of the epistemic relation but a confusion of the two roots of knowledge. He blends intuitions and concepts inextricably together. In this case, the application of two distinct capacities – the spontaneity and the receptivity – is unjustified and unintelligible.

There are elements within Kant's system that cannot be separable from intuitions though they are not parts of intuitions. And it can be misleading. In the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant writes that space and time are the formal conditions of any possible intuition. Space and time therefore cannot be separable from intuition; they are really inextricably entangled with intuition. But do not forget that space and time are not concepts at all.

I would say the application of the Kantian terms, like spontaneity and receptivity, to McDowell's own task is not suitable for a demonstration of the reaching down of the conceptual into the world. Spontaneity and receptivity are distinct "things", thus the relation between mind and world cannot be described with them in such a way that we efface their difference.

Reply of John McDowell

Pete is clearly right that what I claim to take over from Kant "does not refer to the whole of Kantian thought". He suggests that "a part of this complete system cannot be applied to an enterprise which sets itself to solve the problem of the epistemic connection between mind and world". I do not accept the implication that my enterprise is exclusively epistemological. In my book, I shift quickly from an epistemological motivation for a version of empiricism to a motivation that, since Mind and World, I have taken to describing as "transcendental", a concern with undermining supposed difficulties about the very idea of objective purport. But that does not address a substantial question Pete is raising here, namely whether one can exploit only excerpts from the complete Kantian system and still claim to be thinking in a Kantian spirit. I am suspicious of Pete's implication that we can be Kantian only if we accept the whole package. But obviously this issue is too large to deal with here.

I would not now say exactly the same about Kant's "transcendental story" as I do in my book. I think I was wrong to follow Strawson in simply equating the thing in itself of the first Critique with the supersensible. (However, Pete does not object to the equation.) The core idea of the thing in itself is a conception we can arrive at by starting with objects as they figure in our world view, and, in a move of abstraction, leaving out the specifics of how they figure in our world view, most immediately their spatio-temporal character. (See Bxxvii, where Kant speaks of "things as objects of experience and those same things as things in themselves". According to this remark, things in themselves are the very same things that our senses give us access to, not a different, supersensible, reality.) So far as it goes, this idea does not make it look as if the objectivity of our world view is second rate, as I suggested about Kant's transcendental framework. But that is because the idea, arrived at in that way, does not yet saddle us with a conception of a reality about which we can know nothing, let alone with a conception of a reality about which we can know, on transcendental grounds, that it is not spatio-temporally organized. Properly understood, the conception is a conception of the reality that we do know, but with an abstraction that leaves out the specifics of what we know about it. However, Kant turns the core idea into an idea of a reality about which we cannot know anything, or about which we can know that it is not spatio-temporal. And that is the basis for my claim, which puzzles Pete, that "the effect of his philosophy is to slight the independence of the reality to which our senses give us access". The effect is that the familiar spatio-temporal reality that figures in our world view is only reality as it appears to us, not reality as it is.

Pete is surely right that Kant posits the thing in itself on grounds that are epistemological. (In the spirit of the remark I began with, I would want to interpret this to cover grounds that are "transcendental" in the sense I have gestured at.) I do not see why he thinks this stands in competition with the suggestion, which I took from Strawson, that Kant sees his thinking in this area as safeguarding the interests of morality and religion. Indeed, Strawson's suggestion helps to make sense of the distortion as a result of which an idea

arrived at by abstracting from the specifics of what we know about things becomes an idea of things that elude our knowledge. It is surely mysterious how the "epistemological" need to acknowledge an independent objective reality should seem to be – in a connection that Pete, in a way I find quite strange, takes in stride – a requirement to acknowledge a reality that is unknowable. But this begins to be intelligible when we consider the project of accommodating morality and religion.

I am sorry I said receptivity's contribution to its co-operation with spontaneity is not even notionally separable. Since I did say that, there is justice in Pete's complaint that I merely effect "a confusion of the two roots of knowledge". I also agree with him that Kant does not connect receptivity with the conceptual "in advance". But I do not think this warrants Pete's thesis that "the connection between intuitions and concepts is not a logical, but a de facto connection". It depends on which part of Kant's talk about intuitions we focus on. In the Transcendental Deduction in the first Critique, Kant elaborates a conception of intuitions according to which they enjoy a unity conferred by the same function that also gives unity to judgements (A79/B104–5). An involvement on the part of the understanding surely belongs to the very idea of intuitions so conceived.

Tamás Pólya

Can the content of experience be non-conceptual?

Introduction

The issue I would like to deal with here is the puzzle about the possible types of content of experience: is it *sui generis* conceptual or can it be non-conceptual as well?

John McDowell, in his *Mind and World* embraces the first option and claims that the content of experience can only be conceptual. However, there are some philosophers such as Gareth Evans or Christopher Peacocke who take up the other option and accept the existence of non-conceptual content.

First I would like to summarize and confront briefly the arguments of McDowell and Evans, then I try to show that as long as considers judgements in linguistic form as the only criterion of content attribution one will be doomed to face a serious difficulty in finding out whether non-conceptual content exists, since the arguments supporting the former or the latter view either determine the answer to this question by accepting the criterion of language use or are simply not relevant to whether or not there are inner states with non-conceptual contents.

Finally, I consider how the adoption of a less restrictive criterion could help one to lessen the dilemma.

I.

The view McDowell wants us to accept with respect to the conceptualisation of the content of experience has admittedly some Kantian flavour.

It is two notions inherited from Kant, *receptivity* and *spontaneity* that play the crucial role in McDowell's account of how the mind interacts with the world. Spontaneity is responsible for our freedom to generate thoughts and form judgements drawing on our conceptual repertoire, receptivity guarantees the openness of the mind. McDowell cites Kant: "[spontaneity of knowledge is] the mind's power of producing representations from itself [... and] should be called the understanding".[1] *Receptivity,* on the other hand, is "[the mind's] power of receiving representations [... and] is to be entitled sensibility".[2] We have receptivity, sensibility and intuitions on the one side and spontaneity, concepts and understanding on the other. Now the question is how do these interact?

McDowell settles the issue by claiming that "the relevant conceptual capacities", that is, spontaneity "is drawn on in receptivity".[3] What we experience is *conceptually* experienced or, as McDowell later relaxes his claim, is at least such as to be *convertible* into "conceptual shape".[4] We can form judgements – that is, avail ourselves of the possibilities offered to us by spontaneity – on the basis of what we experience; and the "application" of spontaneity is not secondary with respect to the formation of experience.

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[1] McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994. 4; Kant KrV A51/B57.
[2] Idem.
[3] McDowell, John, op. cit. 9.
[4] McDowell, John, op. cit. 123.

Referring to Quine's well-known paper against the "Two dogmas of Empiricism"[5] McDowell envisages a system of concepts more or less directly related to the observations one makes, and contends that in this system concepts are always refashionable and possibly subject to changes to be made in the light of reflections prompted by one's active empirical thinking.[6] McDowell, compared to Quine, highlights the relation between sentences (or contents) and experiences the other way round: it is not that there are no analytic sentences (or purely conceptual contents) since every sentence is related to observation sentences (or experiences) in some, maybe very intricate, way; but, there is no experience which could, in principle, *not* be related to our conceptual capacities.

Although receptivity is passive, McDowell argues, its passivity does not preclude the existence of a link between it and our active exercise in forming judgements. Quite the contrary, and this is McDowell's crucial point: receptivity is passive but it is deeply connected with the system of concepts in general. Reception of a *single* concept does not exist; there *always* having to be other concepts which constitute the background of an experience or judgement.[7]

And what lies outside this system of concepts, lies, as a consequence, outside experience. If one, as a last resort, cannot apply even a demonstrative expression in pointing to his experience, as for example in "It is *this* shade of colour I experienced yesterday", then we cannot talk about one's experience.[8]

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[5] Quine, W.V.O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *From a logical point of view,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1980, 20–46.

[6] McDowell, John, op. cit. 12.

[7] McDowell, John, op. cit. 12.

[8] "When we trace the ground for an empirical judgement, the last step takes us to experiences. Experiences already have conceptual content, so this last step does not take us outside the space of concepts. But it takes us to something in which sensibility – receptivity – is operative ..." (McDowell, John, op. cit. 10). And receptivity is supposed to be the last bastion of our inner world; out of that is the outer world.

II.

Let us consider now the view suggested by Evans in his "The Varieties of Reference".[9]

Although Evans is concerned with the setting up of a criterion for being a thought in general, his proposal, as is pointed out by Andy Clark [1993], grasps the difference between what might be identified with non-conceptual content and conceptual content. Evans's proposal is the *"generality constraint"*:

"We thus see the thought that a is F as lying at the intersection of two series of thoughts; on the one hand, the series of thoughts that a is F, that b is F, that c is F,..., and, on the other hand, the series of thoughts that a is F, that a is G, that a is H [...] if a subject can be credited with the thought that a is F, then he must have the conceptual resources for entertaining the thought that a is G, for every property of being G of which he has a conception. This is the condition that I call 'The Generality Constraint'."[10]

One may add: a given content which does not satisfy the generality constraint, cannot be conceptual.

Evans's appeal to the *system* of thoughts (or concepts) on one's part as a minimum requirement in order to be able to entertain a thought, and the necessary relatedness of one particular thought to the system as a whole remind us of the relation McDowell hypothesizes to exist between an instance of passive reception and the active exercise in judgement in general.

Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the two views. What is relevant for Evans is the *differentia specifica* of the thinkable (or conceptual), and the constraint itself does not proclaim the existence of non-conceptual or conceptual content.

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[9] Evans, Gareth, *The Varieties of Reference,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982.
[10] Evans, Gareth, op. cit. 104.

We know, however, that Evans accepted the claim that experience can have non-conceptual content: he argued that there are certain shades of colour which one cannot express by any predicate.[11]

As for this ineffable experiencing of shades of colours and smells (etc), the objection McDowell himself may and in fact did raise is what I mentioned earlier: one's ability to use demonstrative expressions to point to a specific experience ("It is *this* smell I experienced.") is required from one who is granted to possess conceptual capacities in order to be able to speak about experiences on his part.

III.

But, I would like to point out, it is not exclusively one's verbally couched judgements which appear to be decisive as to whether one has experiences with content or not.

Just consider the case of animals which do not possess a system of concepts and yet may be granted to have experiences of, say, colours, smells, and so on – since they appear to behave as if they realized that there is this or that colour or smell present in the world.[12] Similarly, there may be cases when one has an experience with non-conceptual content, and has no words to express it, but can behave (rather than act) in accordance with it (e.g. unconsciously).[13]

In fact, the *teleological* approach to content ascription advanced by Papineau and Millikan[14] suggests that the contents of inner (e.g.

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[11] Evans, Gareth, op. cit.

[12] For the source of this idea see Clark, Andy, *Associative engines,* Cambridge, MA, Bradford Book/MIT Press, 1993. 74 ff.

[13] Suffice it to mention the well-known ethological fact that the menstrual cycles of women living together get harmonized with time.

[14] See Papineau, D., "Representation and explanation", *Philosophy of Science,* 51, 1984, 550–72.; Papineau, D., *Philosophical naturalism,* Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1993.; and Millikan, Ruth-Gareth, *Language, thought, and other biological categories,* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1984.; Millikan, Ruth-Gareth, "Truth Rules, Hoverflies and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox", *The White Queen Psychology and other essays for Alice,* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1993, 211–239.

psychological) states can be attributed to agents (be they animals or humans) on the basis of the advantageousness of their behaviour or "output" prompted by the "input" coming from the environment. If a frog is able to catch flies by jumping in the air pointed towards any small-black-dot which enters its visual field with a certain speed, one can say that the frog can have contentful internal states: presently, a state whose content corresponds to a "small-black-dot-entering-the-visual-field".[15]

In this case, one would be reluctant to claim that the frog has the *concept* of "small-black-dot-entering-the-visual-field"; all it seems to have is only contentful states which could be *labelled* by a human *interpreter* with this "small-black-dot-entering-the-visual-field" wording. That is, the frog has inner states possessing non-conceptual content.[16] I wonder how this can be fitted into the McDowellian picture. Furthermore, I cannot see why the behaviour of the above mentioned frog (rather than its verbal capacities) cannot be regarded as evidence for the presence of contentful states in its brain.

And there loom two additional problems with the account McDowell propounds.

The first problem concerns the acquisition of concepts. For if one's conceptual capacities are always present in experience how can learning ever take place? How can one acquire new concepts in order to become an expert, for example, an expert on wines?

It is reasonable to say that what distinguishes an expert and a beginner on this field is *not* the perceptual content they are presented with: both of them should have the *same sensory experience* of the same wine whilst clearly possessing different capacities as far as the

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[15] I do not give all the details here mentioned in Millikan's [1993] analysis; she introduces the concepts of 'proximal' and 'distal' rules. Proximal rules influence the behavior directly related to the environment (such as which circumstances should occur for the frog to jump in the air); distal rules are more general, such as 'secure your food', and, at the most general level, 'proliferate'. Obviously, the point of proximal rules is to get the animal behave according to distal rules.

[16] At this point of the argumentation, however, it would be preferable to clarify what, in the first place, could be regarded as a 'concept'.

verbal assessment of the wine is concerned. It would seem very queer to say that when one learns to tell this-and-this species of wine or vintage from that-and-that one it is one's *sensory capacities which change!* I cannot see how one could acquire a sensibility to, say, new tastes or a new range of wavelengths of light or sound which some time before lay outside one's sensory capacities. Similarily, the acquiring of sensibility to new values in familiar ranges of physical data (e.g. the 'new' taste of a specific wine) seems to be equally improbable. One would think that the "receptors" one has at one's sensory "interface" are constantly given at a certain point in phylogenesis and cannot be improved by learning. What, to the contrary, one *does* improve by learning is the fine-grainedness of one's conceptual repertoire, the "density" and "depth" of one's conceptual capacities. Improving one's hearing or tasting capacities may very well be identical to the improving of the subtlety of the auditory, gustatory and/or olfactory repertoire of one's conceptual system. A wine expert learns to make judgements on the basis of minimal and quasi-imperceptible differences in his sensory experiences given from the first moment he ever tasted wine – all he needs to become an expert, often by doing exercises for several years, is to adjust the grades of his system of concepts to these subtle differences.

If one accepts this view, it will be difficult to see why the sensory experience already given for the layman cannot be regarded as having non-conceptual content – which may be conceptualized by way of learning.

The second, broader counter-argument one has to face when claiming the non-existence of non-conceptual content of experiences casts some doubts on the testability of the very existence of contents like that.

Let us accept that all the experiences we are aware of are known to be conceptual. But how can one know that there is no other, say, unconscious or 'cognitively invisible' experience taking place, which is definitely *not* conceptualized, but may or may not be conceptualized later? How can I know whether I have experiences with non-conceptual content which cannot, in principle, be conceptualized? Should I *know* about my non-conceptual experiences?

I find this challenge serious, for both parties have to confront it. First, how can a "McDowellian" rule out this latter possibility? And how can a supporter of Evans's views show the existence of experiences without conceptual content if one does not accept the possibility of checking the existence of content of experience by observing environmental 'inputs' and successive behaviour (as in the case of the frog)?

In trying to defend his view, there is no other route for a supporter of the McDowellian opinion to embrace but to construct a fallacious argument which runs like this:

P1 Experiences are inner (mental) states caused by the outside world.

P2 Humans have experiences.

P3 Humans report experiences (at worst by means of some demonstrative expressions).

P4 Verbalizable experiences have conceptual content.

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*C1 *All* human experiences have conceptual content.

This is the conclusion the McDowellian wants us to accept. But this conclusion is wrong. The right conclusion is this:

C2 *All* the experiences *humans can report verbally,* have conceptual content.

The fallacy in reaching the first conclusion is the *non sequitur.* It is only the second conclusion (C2) which follows from the above premises: those premises, in fact, do not preclude the existence of experiences with non-conceptual content.

As for the other horn of the dilemma, things do not look much better there. For acceptance of the generality constraint does not commit one to existential claims about the real world: the constraint is in *conditional* form. If we can find mental entities satisfying the conditions set up by the constraint then we can claim those entities to be thoughts – which we suppose have conceptual content. But by couching the constraint one says *nothing* about allegedly existent experiences with

non-conceptual content. The fact that Evans accepts the existence of non-conceptual content only shows that his view is more permissive than that of McDowell.[17]

Let us return now to the dilemma; the problem faced on this horn is that of the presence of an epistemological obstacle which one cannot easily bypass: for how could one show that one has experiences without conceptual content if the only accepted criterion for their existence would be that they can be communicated by means of language – that is, by a means which grasps, assumably, only experiences having conceptualized contents?

Seemingly, the only way to provide some support in favour of their existence is to pursue a teleological program and consider the link between environment and behaviour as a suitable criterion for content ascription, instead of only relying on language use. Otherwise, in the absence of any other solution, it looks as if one is floating in an epistemological vacuum.[18]

As one can now see, a fundamental problem consists in the fact that there appears to be no satisfactory way to make sure that experiences with non-conceptual content exist. Taking McDowell's part, we obtain a fallacy, while taking Evans's part, we cannot say anything substantial in favour of their existence. What I would like to stress is that as long as one regards the availability of linguistic reports as an indispensable arbiter of the case, the existence of such non-conceptual states remains a *matter of faith,* and one cannot but head for something that Wittgenstein would have called a "bedrock" of a problem: there is no place for one to dig deeper there and no sense in doing it, either.

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[17] There may be perspectives, e.g. that of the teleological semantics of Millikan and Papineau, based on the theory of evolution, from which Evans's view may be judged to be more cogent than that of McDowell. But I cannot treat this issue more in depth here.

[18] On the criterion of verbal reports, see Mezősi, Gyula, Pólya, Tamás, "A modellezés határai: a szisztematikusság jelensége elmefilozófiai perspektívában", [Limits of modelling: A philosophy of mind perspective on systematicity] *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle,* 1997/98, LIII. (37), 1–4. 243–260., who advances a critique concerning some aspects of modelling in cognitive science in Hungarian.

IV.

And these remarks lead to our conclusions. Our argumentation above points to two conclusions supporting the teleological approach as far as the investigation of the conceptualisation of contents of (mental) states, that is, content ascription is concerned. First, in order to maintain the very possibility of assessing the status of non-conceptual contentful (mental) states, it is more suitable to accept a proposal which offers a less restrictive type of content attribution. A content ascription like that is possible in the framework of the teleological reasoning which also offers the advantage of being, scientifically speaking, more easily included in an evolutionary biological picture. On the other hand, some arguments related to the learning of new concepts and becoming an expert yield additional support for a view on content ascription like that.

And taking the teleological stance with respect to content ascription yields a wider ontological perspective on these matters which, at least this time, seems to be preferable to other more narrow perspectives if one is supposed to continue the investigation.

Reply of John McDowell

If we use "experience" to mean something like "perceptual awareness", without any further restriction, it seems plainly absurd, as Pólya argues, to insist that the content of experience is always conceptual in any restricted sense. I have myself written about the content of the perceptual awareness of frogs (an example Pólya mentions), and I would not dream of saying frogs have concepts.[19] The case Pólya adduces to illustrate non-conceptual experience (in this sense) in adult human

[19] See my paper "The Content of Perceptual Experience", now reprinted in my collection *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998); cited in *Mind and World* at p. 55, n. 10.

beings – "the well-known ethological fact that the menstrual cycles of women living together get harmonized with time" – seems less telling, since it is quite unclear that the explanation of this phenomenon would need to be given in terms of a concept of experience. But even if that case does not illustrate the point, it is true that there is no evident ground for an insistence that just any perceptual awareness, even on the part of a subject who does have conceptual capacities, would need to draw on the conceptual capacities the subject has.

I do not think there is anything improper about such an unrestricted use of the term "experience". But in my book there is a further restriction. What I consider under the designation "experience" is states or episodes of perceptual awareness that are able to serve for subjects as reasons for perceptual judgements. There are philosophical arguments for the conclusion that there cannot be any such thing. But I urge that experiences can intelligibly possess the disputed epistemological status if they are shaped by conceptual capacities. "Experience" as I use the term in Mind and World is restricted to states or episodes that have the disputed epistemological status.

As I said, I do not claim that this is for all purposes the right way to use the word "experience". It is not that there is some agreed subject matter, which the word uncontentiously marks out, and a disagreement about what is true of that subject matter. There is a distinction that for some purposes it is useful to draw, and I appropriate the term "experience" to draw it. What underwrites my restriction to states and episodes that have conceptual content is the requirements on a conception of perceptual awareness that would allow perceptual awareness to be rationally significant without falling afoul of Sellars's points against the Myth of the Given. There is no need for the fallacious argument Pólya says is the only possibility "for a supporter of the McDowellian opinion", purporting to derive a conclusion about all perceptual awareness from perceptual awareness that can be reported by its subjects.

In setting out his supposed problem about the acquisition of concepts, Pólya says: "It would seem very queer to say that when one learns to tell this-and-this species of wine or vintage from that-and-

that one it is one's sensory capacities which change!" But it seems perfectly natural, not queer at all, to say one's discriminatory capacities change, and it is quite unclear why that should not be counted as a change in one's sensory capacities. Pólya apparently finds it obvious that at the level of what is neurologically describable in terms of "receptors" there cannot be new responsiveness to "new values in familiar ranges of physical data", and he concludes that the differences in sensory experience that a wine-fancier acquires concepts for must have been present all along in experiences of tasting wine. But the neurological assumption here seems quite unobvious. And even if we grant it, the most it would warrant is that a potential difference in experience was in place all along, not that an actual one was. Pólya says nothing to rule out a conception according to which actual differences in how things are experienced line up with a subject's actually being able to respond differentially to things. On this account, more would need to figure in the neurological underpinnings of how things are experienced than what happens at the level of "receptors"; differences at that level, even if they have the potential to enter into a capacity to discriminate, do not mark a difference in experience unless and until the potential capacity to discriminate is actualized.

A point of detail: Pólya says, in passing, that I later relax my claim about the involvement of conceptual capacities in experience to the claim that what we experience is "such as to be convertible into 'conceptual shape'". That would make my conception of experience indistinguishable from, say, Evans's conception, which I use in order to set my conception in relief. But Pólya's citation to justify his claim reveals that he has read as expressing my own view a passage in which I say what I object to about something Thomas Nagel thinks.

Michael Williams

Fatal Attraction: John McDowell's Defence of Empiricism[1]

John McDowell's starting point is Sellars' insight that the concept of knowledge belongs in a normative context. Thus “In characterizing an episode or state as that of *knowing,* we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.”[2] (Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,* quoted MW xiv.) However, this insight easily leads to conflicting lines of thought that, taken together, make it difficult to see how judgments or beliefs could be properly responsive to worldly circumstances. In Kantian terms, empirical knowledge must involve the cooperation of sensibility and understanding, or receptivity and spontaneity: experience and the exercise of conceptual capacities. The difficulty is to see how this cooperation can ever take place.

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[1] McDowell, John, *Mind and World,* paperback edition, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1996. The new introduction found is this edition sheds a lot of light on McDowell's philosophical motivations. References to this work in the text are given by "MW" and page number.

[2] Sellars, Wilfrid, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1997, 76; quoted by McDowell, MW 5. Sellars essay appeared originally in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, eds., *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science ,* Vol. 1, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1956.

McDowell's Dilemma

I have stated the problem in terms of empirical knowledge, as if the issue were simply scepticism. But in McDowell's view the problem in question cuts much deeper than standard sceptical concerns. It is a problem, not simply about knowledge, but about the very possibility of making judgments or holding beliefs, whether knowledgeably or not. It arises as follows:

1. "...if our freedom in empirical thinking is total, in particular if it is not constrained from outside the conceptual sphere, that can seem to threaten the very possibility that judgments of experience might be grounded in a way that relates them to a reality external to thought...What we wanted to conceive as exercises of concepts threaten to degenerate into moves in a self-contained game. And that deprives us of the very idea that they are exercises of concepts." (MW 5.)

2. The doctrine of the Given, central to all traditional empiricisms, responds to this anxiety. It is the idea that "when we have exhausted all the moves available within the space of concepts, there is still one more step we can take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience." (MW 6.)

3. But the appeal to the Given is useless. "The idea of the Given is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate nonconceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought. But we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities. (MW 7.)

Result: we oscillate between two impossible positions: "frictionless" coherentism, which cuts thought off from the world, depriving thought of empirical content (thus of content *simpliciter*); and the doctrine of the Given, which makes it unintelligible how experience could have a rational bearing on our judgments and beliefs. We need to find a way off the seesaw.

McDowell's Desiderata

Two fundamental considerations guide McDowell's approach to his problem.

The first is that Sellars' insight must be respected. We might imagine that the way out of our difficulties is to question Sellars' contrast between the normative and the empirical. McDowell rejects this option. The hopes of "bald naturalists" notwithstanding, there is no way of reducing logical to causal or nomological relations. I agree wholeheartedly: the "space of reasons" is not to be assimilated to the "realm of law." Our problem is to allow for thought's responsiveness to the world while acknowledging thought's irreducibly normative character.

The second is that the problem of the mind's relation to the world be dissolved or explained away. The problem calls for exorcism, not "constructive philosophy." We should not end up addressing the problem from the standpoint of views that are, quite evidently, theoretically contentious.

The problem of mind and world comes to a head with the need to understand sensibility," perceptual knowledge. It becomes apparent that McDowell places several further constraints on a satisfactory account of perceptual knowledge. Such an account must make intelligible:

(D1) how we are capable of direct, unmediated contact with the empirical world (the world as it is revealed to perception or "sensibility"). For example, we should not think of impressions as a kind of screen between us and the facts that perception makes manifest to us.

(D2) that the world revealed in perception is an objective world, a world that exists and is how it is independently of what we think about it. For example, we should not think of the world as a logical construction out of (subjective) experiences.

(D3) how the world can exert *rational control* – and not mere causal influence – over our judgments and beliefs.

It can seem especially difficult jointly to satisfy (D2) and (D3). We want thought to be subject to control that is at once external (D2) and rational (D3). In the light of the dilemma we are considering, this can easily come to seem an impossible demand.

McDowell's Solution

The first step towards a solution is to recognise that experience itself is conceptual through and through. Thus, "We should understand what Kant calls `intuition' – experiential intake – not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content." (MW 9.) Experience is passive: we do not control what we see, hear, etc.. But it draws on the same conceptual capacities that are exercised actively in judgment. Indeed, "the passive operation of conceptual capacities in sensibility is not intelligible independently of their active exercise in judgment, and in the thinking that issues in judgment." (MW 12.) Accordingly, the deliverances of experience are fully within the space of reasons: there can be no problem about how experience provides a rational constraint on thought. "In experience one takes in...that things are thus and so. That is the sort of thing one can also...judge." (MW 9.)

The second step is to give a correct account of the conceptual content that experience contains. Experience tells us that things are thus and so. However, if we are overly impressed with scepticism – with the possibility of error – we will be tempted to equate how things are perceptually with how things appear (to us). This temptation must be resisted. "[W]hen we acknowledge the possibility of being misled, we do not deprive ourselves of `taking in how things are' as a description of what happens when one is not misled." (MW 26.) Or again: "In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is that things are thus and so . That things are thus and so is the content of the experience...." (MW 26.)

This account of experience evidently satisfies (Dl). On McDowell's picture, "impressions" are "transparent." (MW 145.) They are not intermediaries, a screen between thought and the world. Rather, in experience we are open to manifest facts. ((D1) plays an important role in McDowell's thought since, he holds, it is with respect to this requirement that the views of Sellars and Davidson – views that compete with McDowell's own as solutions to his problem – can be seen to fail.)

McDowell's account of the conceptual content of experience as *that things are thus and so* ensures that this content is not *merely* the content of an experience. There is no gap between what one passively takes in in experience and what is to be found in the world: they are one and the same. McDowell says: "that things are thus and so is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are. Thus the idea of conceptually structured operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks." (MW 26.) So his account satisfies (D3).

Is this rational constraint is genuinely external? Or has McDowell secured a relation of rational constraint between mind and world at the cost of "internalizing" the world, thus lapsing into a form of idealism?

McDowell answers this question by distinguishing between "thought" as the *act* and as the *content* of thinking. "If we are to give due acknowledgment to the independence of reality, what we need is a constraint from outside *thinking* and *judging*." However, "The constraint does not need to be outside thinkable contents....The fact that experience is passive...[is] all the external constraint we can reasonably want. The constraint comes from outside *thinking,* but not from outside what is *thinkable....The* thinkable contents that are ultimate in the order of justification are contents of experiences, and in enjoying experience one is open to manifest facts, facts that obtain anyway and impress themselves one one's sensibility." (MW 28–9.) Accordingly, (D2) is satisfied also.

An Objection: Idealism

Has McDowell really found a way between the horns of his dilemma? Michael Friedman thinks not.[3] McDowell thinks that, to escape frictionless coherentism, without lapsing into the Myth of the Given, we need "a conception of experiences as states or occurrences that are passive but reflect conceptual capacities" (MW 23). However, as Friedman notes, mere passivity is not the hallmark of genuinely "outer" experience. Accordingly,

> the distinction between passive experience ...and active judgment is not at all the same as the distinction between that which expresses constraint by an independent objective world and that which does not. The crucial question, in this regard, is how we distinguish between "inner" and "outer" sense...McDowell's idea here...is that passively received impressions become experiences of an objective world...only by being *taken as such* by the active faculty of understanding... Relation to an independent objective world is thus... secured...by the spontaneous conceptual activities of the understanding as it rationally evolves an integrated picture of [the] world.[4]

Friedman concludes that he does not see why this view is not itself a version of coherentism.

Perhaps it is. But if so, I think McDowell would say, it is a version of coherentism that is not frictionless. There is a crucial ambiguity in Friedman's question about how we "distinguish" inner and outer sense. Is this question to be understood conceptually or epistemologically? Conceptually, the distinction is that between experience that involves taking in the layout of reality and experience that does not. Of course, in applying this distinction, we can be mistaken: McDowell does not deny that there are illusions, hallucinations and

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[3] Friedman, Michael, "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition: Comments on John McDowell's *Mind and World,*" The Philosophical Review, Vol. 105, No. 4, October 1996, 427–467.

[4] Ibid., 443–4, italics in original

other forms of misperception. And we discover that a putative glimpse of the world was not really such when inferences we draw from it get us into trouble: our methods of self-correction are broadly coherentist. But coherence enters McDowell's picture only epistemologically. Conceptually speaking, being taken as a glimpse of the world is in no way "constitutive" of an experience's belonging to outer sense.

That this is McDowell's view is clear from his rejection of what he calls "the highest common factor" view of experience. Because an experience may be subjectively indistinguishable from a genuine glimpse of the world, many philosophers have thought that our epistemological position, even when things go well, can never be better than it is when things do not go well: in other words, that experience never reveals more than how things appear to us to be. If this is right, then "however good a subject's cognitive position is, it *cannot* constitute her having a state of affairs directly manifest to her" (MW 113). Sceptical questions derive their urgency from this unnerving fact. Or alleged fact, for in truth there is no such fact at all. In McDowell's view, it is enough to deprive sceptical questions of their urgency that his alternative conception be intelligible. But this shows that the conceptual question of how "glimpses of the world" are to be "distinguished" from non-veridical experiences is wholly separate from the epistemological question of how we tell them apart. So Friedman's thrust misses the mark.

Nevertheless, it is hard to shake the feeling that there is an important element of idealism in McDowell's thought. And I think there is, although Friedman has mislocated it. The real problem is that not that McDowell is a closet coherentist but that he sees conceptual structure, not only in experience, but in the world itself.

McDowell takes it that the distinction between thought as act and thought as content is sufficient to dispel the illusion that he is embracing any form of idealism: "it is not idealistic...to say that perceptible facts are essentially capable of impressing themselves on perceivers..." (MW 28). Certainly, this distinction distances McDowell from *subjective* idealism. However, the idealism at issue is T.H.

Green's, not Berkeley's. The worry is that, like Green, McDowell populates the physical world with quasi-linguistic objects called "thinkable contents."

Naturally, McDowell does not see things this way. In his eyes, "to say there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world is just to dress up a truism in high-flown language." (MW 27.) True, "when we put the point in high-flown terms, by saying the world is made up of the sort of thing one can think, a phobia of idealism can make people suspect we are renouncing the independence of reality – as if we were representing the world as the shadow of our thinking, or even as made up of some sort of mental stuff." (MW 28.) But no such renunciation is implied, as the distinction between thought as act and as content makes clear.

This reply is insufficient. The worry is not that the world is a shadow of thinking but that McDowell appears to be saying that the non-mental world exhibits the logicalconceptual structure of *thought,* as it must if it is to exert rational control over our thinking.

According to McDowell, all the dressed-up truism comes to is that "one can think, for instance, *that spring has begun,* and that very same thing, *that spring has begun,* can be the case." And this cannot be "metaphysically contentious." (MW 27.) I am not so sure. Certainly, what McDowell says can be taken to express a truism. But we need to place what he sees in context. In particular, we must remember that at least some things that one can judge one can also experience; and that in experience one is, when not misled, open to manifest facts or "the layout of reality," things which are there *anyway.* So it looks as though McDowell is claiming that *the very same thing* can be both the content of an experience and part of the layout of (independently existing) reality. This does not strike me as obviously "uncontentious."

What sort of thing can be the case, i.e. be true ? Following Sellars and Davidson, I want to say: in the first instance, linguistic performances and/or objects – utterances, claimings and claims. Derivatively, inner episodes modelled on linguistic performances: thoughts, judgments, beliefs. But it would be odd to say that the world is *made up* of true utterances. To say such a thing is to do more than dress up a truism in high-flown language

McDowell's Reply: Nature as the Realm of Law

McDowell expects his solution to encounter resistance. He finds the source of this resistance in a mental block that prevents his way out of the dilemma between frictionless coherentism and the doctrine of the Given from even being seen as an option. This mental block has its origin in the rise of modern science. It consists in an almost irresistible temptation to identify "nature" with "the realm of law."

Modern science leads us to distinguish two distinct forms of intelligibility: the kind that results from exhibiting events in the world as instances of natural laws and the kind that results from placing something – an episode of knowing, say – in the logical space of reasons. This distinction seems to lead straight to the dilemma with which we began. For if the world, or nature, is a realm of law, nothing that belongs in the space of reasons can be part of nature. In particular, experiencings or perceivings that things are thus and so cannot be natural events of processes, though that is just what they appear to be. As McDowell puts it: "sensibility is part of our nature, what we share with mere animals. If that means its operations are what they are by virtue of their positions in the realm of law, it can seem incoherent to suppose that they might be shaped by concepts. That would imply that their being what they are is also a matter of positions in the contrasting logical space." (MW 72.)

A clear appreciation of the distinction between the two forms of intelligibility is a great advance, from which there is no going back. But the mental block that makes us puzzle over the relation between mind and world results from our taking a further step, which the distinction itself does not mandate. This is to *identify* nature with the realm of law: nothing outside the realm of law belongs to nature.

If we make this identification, "the fact that sensibility is natural works together with the fact that the concept of spontaneity functions in the space of reasons, so as to rule out the possibility that spontaneity might permeate the operations of sensibility as such – at least if we set our faces against a baldly naturalistic integration of the space of reasons within the realm of law." (MW 75.) Given the identification

of nature with the realm of law, there is no room for McDowell's conception of experience. Indeed, refusing to "naturalize" reason can appear to commit us to a "rampant platonism"; "we must be picturing the space of reasons as an autonomous structure – autonomous in that it is constituted independently of anything that is specifically human, since what is specifically human is surely natural...." (MW 77.)

According to McDowell, the way forward is clear: it consists in recognising that we are not obliged to treat the realm of law as coextensive with nature. Educability into conceptual practices is natural to animals like ourselves: there is nothing mysterious or supernatural about it. Seeing this "makes room for us to insist that spontaneity is *sui generis,* in comparison with the realm of law, without falling into the supernaturalism of rampant platonism." (MW 78.)

A Further Objection: the Ambiguity of "Nature"

I agree that there is no need to identify nature with the realm of law. But this does not speak to the problem in hand. This problem is not to see how experience can belong to nature but to see how the perceptual capacities we share with animals, capacities that belong to the realm of law, can be the vehicle of experiences, conceived as belonging in the space of reasons. Whether we identify nature with the realm of law is neither here nor there. The problem arises because experience appears to belong to the realm of law. Whether the realm of law exhausts nature, or is merely a sub-domain of nature, makes no difference.

McDowell explains his alternative conception of nature by way of an explication of Aristotle's views on virtue and the shaping of ethical character. For Aristotle, the sphere of the ethical is both autonomous and objective. A proper upbringing puts us in a position to perceive and judge actions as virtuous or vicious. The patterns of action thus judged cannot be traced in some non-ethical vocabulary, and so are invisible to a person that has not been initiated into the relevant judgmental practice: this is the autonomy of the ethical, corresponding to

the autonomy of the space of reasons, relative to the realm of law. But ethical judgment is entirely objective: the patterns of action that are its objects do not depend for their existence on anyone's happening to make judgments about them. This corresponds to the objectivity of worldly facts, conceived in terms of the distinction between thought as act and thought as object.

This example is meant to show how we can have autonomy and objectivity in ethical judgment without distancing the "rational demands of ethics...from anything specifically human." True, "We cannot credit appreciation of [these demands] to human nature as it figures in a naturalism of disenchanted nature, because disenchanted nature does not embrace the space of reasons. But human beings are intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing, which instills the appropriate shape into their lives. The resulting habits of thought and action are second nature." These reflections, McDowell thinks, "should defuse the fear of supernaturalism." "Second nature does not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism. This gives human reason enough of a foothold in the realm of law to satisfy any proper respect for modern natural science." (MW 84.)

I do not find this analogy helpful. I do not understand the reference to reason's having a foothold in the realm of law. Of course, human beings are *trained* into judgmental practices. But the internal structure of those practices is the structure of reasongiving, not nomological connection.

We must be careful here not to lose sight of our main problem, which is that McDowell seems committed to populating the physical world with quasi-linguistic truthmakers, thinkable contents. Only by containing such items is *the world* enabled to exert *rational* control over judgment. Given this problem, it is no help to invoke an example involving the cultural world. The lives shaped by an ethical upbringing are the *objects* of ethical judgment. In other words, in the ethical case both judgments and its objects belong to second nature. Ethical judgments may be objective in terms of the act-content distinction. But they are not about things that are there *anyway,* where

"anyway" means independently of human practices. They are quite unlike objects existing in the realm of law, even if the realm of law does not exhaust nature.

In sum, McDowell's explanation fails because it trades on an ambiguity in "nature." We contrast the natural with the supernatural. But we also contrast the natural with the cultural. If we fail to keep these two contrasts apart, we may slip into thinking that there is something supernatural about the cultural (in the manner of the Greeks, who tended to attribute the founding of cities to semi-divine lawgivers). I agree that we needn't do *that.*

McDowell resists supernaturalism on two fronts. Social practices, not a platonic otherworld, sustain the space of reasons; and such practices have nothing supernatural about them. Culture, we might say, comes naturally to human beings. But the idealist, elements in McDowell's position are rooted in the second contrast: between the realm of law and the space of reasons. This is because that is where his original problem is rooted. Perception, as a capacity we share with animals, is natural in the sense of "belonging to the realm of law." Animals do not have second natures, or not to the extent of becoming sensitized to the space of reasons.

Naturalizing the space of reasons, by appeal to second nature, does nothing to relieve this tension. All that happens is that what originally appeared as a problem about the relation between nature and something outside nature re-emerges as a problem about the relation between two dimensions or aspects of nature. As long as the space of reasons is *sui generis* with respect to the realm of law, we cannot give perception a foothold in both camps simply by reworking our definition of "nature" so that the word encompasses both domains.

Fatal Attraction

Proximately, McDowell's problems derive from his demand for rational control by the world. He wants what one judges, when thinking that things are thus and so, to be the very same things as

the manifest facts that one is open to in experience. The demand for rational control leads to truth-makers out there in the physical world.

But we can find a deeper source. It emerges in the introduction to the paperback edition of *Mind and World,* where McDowell insists that we recognise the plausibility of "minimal empiricism." For my part, I do not think that this empiricism is all that minimal.

One feature of empiricism is its commitment to what I call "epistemological realism," the view that there is a natural "order of reasons," determining the sorts of judgment that can function as evidence for other sorts of judgments. In the empiricist picture, experience plays the role of coming first in the order of reasons. It constitutes the ultimate tribunal to which all more "theoretical" types of judgment are answerable.

With this picture goes the idea that there is a proprietary range of information (concerning a fixed list of sensible qualities) conveyed to us by the senses. Without this idea, there would be nothing left of the idea of "sensibility" as a faculty. There would just be the mundane fact that we can be trained into making non-inferential reports on an indefinite range of goings-on in the world.

McDowell wants more than this. In fact, he wants empiricism. Consider: "when we trace the grounds for an empirical judgment, the last step takes us to experiences." (MW 10). Or again: "The thinkable contents that are ultimate in the order of justification are contents of experiences...." (MW 29.) Since I deny that there is any such order, I do not feel the need for an account of experiences that gives them first place. McDowell's desire to salvage something from the idea of experience as a tribunal involves more than the need to secure for experiences some role in justificational practices: it is subject to the requirement that there be an ultimate asymmetry between the way that they are answerable to other judgments and the way that other judgments are answerable to them.

That said, I am not sure that even the empiricist conception of justification is the deepest source of McDowell's problems. A second feature of empiricism is that it looks for a uniform account of semantic

content and epistemic warrant. Sensibility is the source of both knowledge and meaning. As we know, McDowell sees a close connection between experience's functioning as a tribunal and thought's possessing empirical content. He thinks that the problem of knowledge is really a problem about meaning: further empiricist sympathies.

I think that we should break with this aspect of empiricism too. One great advantage of Davidson's view of meaning is that it severs the empiricist connection between meaning and warrant. That certain terms – those occurring in occasion sentences – are causally keyed to circumstances is important to (though not sufficient for) the contentfulness of thought. But neither causation nor knowledge of causation plays any role in warranting the utterance of observational occasion sentences. They are non-inferential. They enjoy what Robert Brandom calls "default" positive justificational status. Justification is not required, unless there is reason to think that something is amiss. Sellars has articulated a similar view.[5] The crucial feature of this approach is that it allows causation a role in the constitution of meaning without requiring (confusedly) that it play a simultaneous role in justification.

McDowell and I disagree about fundamentals. I think that the lesson we should learn from Sellars and Davidson is that we can and should renounce empiricism. Renouncing empiricism, we can renounce worldly truth-makers. Renouncing truthmakers, we can relegate impressions to the realm of law. But this is not McDowell's view. Saying that we should renounce empiricism does not guarantee that we can. An adequate solution to the problem of empirical content must explain away the seductiveness of the empiricist. In fact, however, this talk of explaining away is misleading. McDowell has deep sympathy with certain elements of empiricism. And the fatal attraction exerted by empiricism's fading charms is what leads him into the sort of idealism that Sellars and Davidson show us how to avoid.

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[5] Although Sellars is inclined to think that, to be capable of observational knowledge, one must have knowledge of one's reliability as an observer. I am inclined to think that claims to observational knowledge commit one to claims about one's reliability but that explicit knowledge of one's reliability is not necessary.

Reply of John McDowell

Of course it would be absurd (not just odd) to say that the world is made up of true utterances. But Williams's policy of taking utterances to be the primary bearers of truth makes no difference to the fact that it is plainly intelligible to credit truth to what people say in suitable linguistic performances, not just to the performances themselves. That is in fact a perfectly natural interpretation for "claims" (one of Williams's candidates for primary truth-bearers), as opposed to "claimings" (another of them). Suppose I say "Williams suspects me of an unacceptable idealism". What I say – the claim I make – is that Williams suspects me of an unacceptable idealism. Williams's paper makes it obvious that I speak truly in saying that. Thus, that Williams suspects me of an unacceptable idealism, which is what I say if I make that claim, is also something that is the case. And it would have been the case even if I had never said it, or even become aware of it. I insist that there is nothing here but a string of truisms. And it is no more than a generalization of such truisms to say – in the words that so dismay Williams – that the world, in the sense of everything that is the case, "exhibits the logical-conceptual structure of thought", if what that means is that the world, in that sense, is made up of the sort of thing that can be truly thought (or claimed).

Perhaps there is something suspect about conceiving the world as everything that is the case? But if that is what Williams thinks, he would need to say more to explain what is wrong with the idea.

I have illustrated the idea with an example that does not pertain to the physical (non-mental) world. It is the application to the physical world that particularly raises Williams's hackles. But the point is just the same. If I say "The earth orbits the sun", what I say – that the earth orbits the sun – is both something that can be thought (my claim expresses the thought) and something that is the case, and so an element in the world. In saying this I do indeed, in one sense, "populate the physical world with quasi-linguistic objects called 'thinkable contents'". That is to say that such "objects" are what comprise the world, in the sense of everything that is the case; that merely exploits the tru-

ism that what is the case is what can be truly thought. Williams's "populate" language perhaps insinuates something different: that the world as I conceive it lacks, for instance, planets and stars but contains thinkable contents instead. That would certainly be an absurd conception of the world. But given only that there are planets and stars (given only that that is something that is the case), there is a completely unpuzzling sense in which the world conceived as everything that is the case has planets and stars – which are not themselves thinkable contents – in it.

So I think Williams's worries about idealism are misplaced.

His fixation on them seems to have led him to miss the point of my play with the idea of nature in the second half of my book. He proceeds as if that were part of a protracted attempt to deal with a worry about idealizing the physical world that supposedly besets my recommended conception of experience. He reads me as trying to respond by showing how a certain conception of nature can embrace the cultural world. But he complains that this is unhelpful, because the physical world – which is what the original problem was about – still cannot be represented as natural in that sense.

But this passes me by. In my book I dismiss a question about idealism quickly, by manipulating those truisms, before nature so much as comes on the scene. The problem nature poses for my conception of experience is not one about "populating the physical world with quasi-linguistic truth-makers", but one about how sensibility, which is intuitively natural, can in our case be such that its operations belong in the space of reasons, given that nature as the realm of law, on the one hand, and the space of reasons, on the other, are regions of discourse that are alien to one another. And what dissolves this difficulty is the claim that the sense in which sensibility belongs to nature, in our case, is the sense captured by the idea of second nature, according to which being natural does not stand in contrast to the kind of intelligibility constituted by placing things in the space of reasons.

Williams writes:

[T]he problem in hand … is … to see how the perceptual capacities we share with animals, capacities that belong to the realm of law, can be the vehicle of experiences, conceived as belonging in

the space of reasons. Whether we identify nature with the realm of law is neither here nor there. The problem arises because experience appears to belong to the realm of law. Whether the realm of law exhausts nature, or is merely a sub-domain of nature, makes no difference.

My problem was to see how sensibility, which we share with other animals, can be – in our case – the vehicle of experiences, conceived as belonging in the space of reasons. And that problem lapses if what we share with other animals is sensibility only in a generic sense, so that the naturalness of our sensibility can be the naturalness of second nature. The fact that we share sensibility with non-human animals does not imply, as Williams seems to assume, that our sensibility is a capacity that belongs to the realm of law. Our sensibility is, if you like, part of the cultural world. The only reason experience appears to belong to the realm of law, as Williams puts it, is that experience, through the involvement of sensibility in it, is at least to some extent a natural phenomenon. But if that occurrence of "natural" need not be glossed in terms of the realm of law, the appearance that experience belongs to the realm of law is undermined. This result is achieved exactly by the refusal to identify nature with the realm of law, which Williams quite wrongly says is neither here nor there. Williams suggests that my appeal to second nature leaves the placement of experience in the realm of law unchallenged, but that simply misses the point of the appeal.

Williams traces my supposed problems ultimately to the "fatal attraction" empiricism has for me. I have been urging that the supposed problems are illusory. So there is no need for Williams's diagnosis of what ails me. His ungallant treatment of what he sees as empiricism's "fading charms" would repay protracted discussion in its own right, but I shall here restrict myself to a few brief remarks about Sellars, who is one of Williams's heroes.

In Mind and World I grouped Sellars with Davidson, who explicitly announces the demise of empiricism. I now think I was acquiescing (under Brandom's influence) in a gross misreading of Sellars's classic

paper "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind".[6] In that work Sellars demolishes traditional empiricism. But he does so in the interest of rehabilitating a different sort of empiricism, which focuses on a conception of experiences according to which they "contain" propositional claims (to cite his first, intuitive formulation of the idea). What experiences so conceived yield is, for Sellars, ultimate in one "dimension" of rational support, and that is what makes his thinking a version of empiricism. But there is another "dimension" in which the very idea that experiences yield what we take them to yield is rationally dependent on what, in the first "dimension", experience supports. And because of that, there is no question of a natural "order of reasons", the idea Williams casts as the fundamental error of "realistic" epistemology. Williams is simply wrong to suppose empiricism as such is committed to such an idea. Similarly, Sellars's empiricism gives the lie to Williams's claim that empiricism as such needs the idea of "a proprietary range of information (concerning a fixed list of sensible qualities) conveyed to us by the senses". It is true that in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" Sellars reserves the label "impressions" for items other than experiences conceived in the way he defends, items that he indeed relegates to the realm of law. But the word "impressions" can perfectly well be made to fit experiences conceived in the way Sellars recommends – sensory episodes that "contain" claims and as such belong in the space of reasons. And in his later work Science and Metaphysics he uses the word also in this other sense, for sensory episodes in which how things are impresses itself on subjects.[7] So far from anticipating Davidson in ushering empiricism off the stage, Sellars shows how its charms can shine brightly when liberated from the confusions of its traditional varieties. It is sad that many of his followers, like Williams, blind themselves to this feature of his thinking. And Mind and World is, in just this respect, a much more Sellarsian work than I understood when I wrote it.

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[6] Reprinted in Sellars's *Science, Perception and Reality* (London, Routledge, 1963; Atascadero, Ridgeview, 1991).

[7] *Science and Metaphysics* (London, Routledge, 1967; Atascadero, Ridgeview, 1992), 14, where Sellars uses the locution "being under the visual impression that …".

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John McDowell

John McDowell took his first degree at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and a second degree at Oxford. From 1966 to 1986 he taught philosophy at University College, Oxford, and since 1986 he has been at the University of Pittsburgh, since 1988 as a University Professor. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His work includes *Mind and World* (1994, second edition 1996), and two collections of papers: *Mind, Value, and Reality,* and *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (both 1998).

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