

## *McDowell and the Presentation of Pains*

David Bain  
*University of Glasgow*

### ABSTRACT

It can seem natural to say that, when in pain, we undergo experiences which present to us certain experience-dependent particulars, namely pains. As part of his wider approach to mind and world, John McDowell has elaborated an interesting but neglected version of this account of pain. Here I set out McDowell's account at length, and place it in context. I argue that his subjectivist conception of the objects of pain experience is incompatible with his requirement that such experience be presentational, rationalizing, and classificatory.

### INTRODUCTION

What is one aware of when in pain? "A pain" is John McDowell's answer. He thinks that one's experience presents to one a pain *as* a pain, that pains are dependent on being thus represented, and that the experiences in which they're represented are concept-involving, hence equipped to rationalize—not merely cause—the judgments they prompt (e.g., "I'm in pain").<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, McDowell's defense of this view in the 1980s and 1990s has been largely ignored, despite the attention his work generally attracts. This is a shame, not only because of how tempting and significant is the idea that we're sensorily aware of pains, but also because of the connections between McDowell's distinctive elaboration of it and his broader view of

experience and thought set out in *Mind and World* and elsewhere. It is, therefore, high time to engage seriously with McDowell's account of pain.<sup>2</sup>

One of my central aims is simply to get McDowell's view into sharper focus. His own exposition, scattered among various writings, is hugely demanding, not least because of his fondness for "the space of concepts," "the realm of sense," and other metaphors which can profitably be cashed out in other terms. So this paper's entire first half is exegetical, unpacking McDowell's view and setting it in the context both of his broader approach to perception and thought (§§1–3) and of rival accounts of experience and sensations (§4–6). With the view in focus, I turn in the remainder of the paper to evaluating it. Ultimately, I argue it fails but for interesting reasons—concerning, principally, the tension between McDowell's subjectivist view of what pain experiences represent and his conception of them as presentational, rationalizing, and classificatory (§§8–10). If McDowell is to retain that conception, I argue, he needs instead a view on which the experience of those in pain represents not pains but something experience-independent.

## I. INNER-OBJECT VIEWS

Let's start with the inner-object (or sense-datum) approach to visual experience. It's almost universally rejected, yet in certain ways resembles the view of pain I'm attributing to McDowell. So why should we take his view more seriously?

According to one version of the inner-object view of visual experience, its looking to you as though there is a red cube in front of you, say, consists in there being a red\* cuboid\* sense-datum of which you're inner-aware. Sense-data are awareness-dependent items; "red\*" and "cuboid\*" express sense-datum properties analogous to the physical-object properties, being red and being cuboid; and inner awareness is a relation of sensory awareness, akin to perceptual awareness, but in which we stand to awareness-dependent things. So, again, the view is that its looking to you as though there is an external object with given properties consists in your having nonperceptual but sensory awareness of a sense-datum with properties analogous to those the external object looks to have.

Many complain that this view renders empirical knowledge of the external world impossible. Another concern—and a source of that epistemological worry—centers on the widespread idea that visual experiences have representational content (see §2 below). If, as many think, that idea is indispensable, then the inner-object view won't do as an alternative. But nor will it do as an *account* of such content, an account which says either (a) that one's experience having the content that there is a red cube in front of oneself consists in one's being aware of a sense-datum which is in fact red\* and cuboid\*, or perhaps (b) that it consists in one's inner awareness *representing* a sense-datum as red\* and cuboid\*. Account (b) seems preferable to (a) but it still won't do, not least because it is difficult to see how representing a sense-datum as being one way could amount to representing an external object as

being another. It might help if sense-data suitably *resembled* external objects, or if we could say that there were ways that a subject *ought to take* his sense-data; but it's doubtful good sense can be made of either idea.

Now, some think that if we must reject the inner-object of visual experience, we must also reject the following inner-object view of pain:

**Inner-object account of being in pain**

S's being in pain (or undergoing a "pain experience," as I shall put it) consists in there existing a pain of which S is inner-aware, where pains are dependent on the episodes of awareness whose objects they are.

But, actually, the inner-object view of pain is far more commonsensical than the sense-datum view. It can seem more folk psychology than philosophical theory. As well as speaking of being *in* pain, after all, we speak of *feeling pains*. Arguably, we also speak as if pains consist in being represented. Many, for example, deny that it might seem to someone as though he felt a pain when in fact what he felt was not a pain but an itch, or nothing at all. Since pain experience lacks visual experience's epistemic role, moreover, the inner-object view of pain is no threat to external world knowledge; nor need it make sense of mediated representation or such property analogies as that alleged between being cuboid and being cuboid\*. In short, the inner-object approach looks considerably less objectionable applied to pain than applied to visual experience. Hence we shouldn't be too shocked that, even while rejecting sense-data, McDowell embraces the inner-object view in the pain case.

I nevertheless think he is wrong to do so. Before making that case, however, I want to explain the distinctiveness of, and motivations for, McDowell's version of the inner-object view. This requires us to stay with perceptual experience for a while. For although McDowell rejects sense-data, he still models his inner-object view of pain on a certain conception of perceptual experience. We must now look at what that conception is.

## II. MCDOWELL ON OUTER EXPERIENCE

McDowell aspires to think about pain (in fact, "inner sense" generally) in parallel with perceptual experience ("outer sense") to "the fullest extent possible" (1994, 22). So, what is his view of perceptual experience? It's driven by what I call "normative empiricism":<sup>3</sup>

**Normative empiricism**

Subjects can think about the external world (have thoughts which it makes true or false) only because it *rationally constrains* their thinking, i.e. only because their reasons for at least some of their experience-endorsing judgements (e.g. "That object is a red cube") are world-involving impressions themselves.<sup>4</sup>

It will be useful to draw out three strands in McDowell's elaboration of this idea.

First, implicit in normative empiricism is the idea that experiences are, as I

shall put it, “presentational.” They present the world to their subjects as being a certain way.<sup>5</sup> This goes beyond saying they have content. Desires have content but are not presentational. The point rather concerns what you might regard as the “force” of experiences. While not judgments (endorsements of content), experiences are in a sense reality-claiming. Presenting the world as being a certain way, they invite their subjects to endorse their content, to judge that it is indeed that way.<sup>6</sup>

Second, experiences must not merely invite such judgments, on McDowell’s picture, nor merely cause them. They must *rationalize* them. They must, that is, be citeable in explanations of the making of those judgments, explanations of the personal-level, perspectival, normative kind available in the case of intentional actions such as one’s getting on a train.

On McDowell’s picture, finally, experiences must *themselves directly* rationalize judgments. This directness requirement is not met, for example, by a subject’s judging that things are thus and so as the inferential upshot of a judgment that he’s having an experience which is *correlated* with things being thus and so (1994, 144–45, 164–65).<sup>7</sup> And the requirement that the experience *itself* must rationalize is not met by an experience merely *causing* an episode that rationalizes a judgment that things are thus and so (1994, 139–46).<sup>8</sup>

Such, then, is the role perceptual experiences are accorded by normative empiricism. But how must they be in order to play that role? First, McDowell thinks, they must be passive, episodes which happen to us, in which we are “saddled with content” (1994, 10). In this respect, they’re to be contrasted with judgments, which are intentional actions—or, as McDowell puts it, “active” episodes, responsible exercises of “freedom” or “spontaneity” (1994, 5, 11, 13).

Second, perceptual experiences must have conceptual content, on McDowell’s view. For him, concept possession is a matter of the possession of a network of capacities for judging on the basis of reasons, which in turn requires an acquired language.<sup>9</sup> These demanding capacities, he thinks, are operative not just in thinking but also in experiencing, hence an experience can be correctly attributed only to a subject possessing the conceptual wherewithal to articulate its content (1994, 51, 56–60, 66). McDowell is led to this “conceptualist” view by his normative empiricism. He thinks that, while experiences are not themselves intentional actions, they can directly rationalize only if their content is not *utterly* beyond the realm of such action (the realm of “responsible freedom” or “rational enquiry,” 1994, 53); and he thinks experiences are given a foot-hold in that realm by their involvement of our conceptual capacities. “Responsible freedom” is those capacities’ hallmark, after all, since they’re capacities for intentionally judging on the basis of reasons, and their possessors are under a standing obligation to reflect on the rational sensitivities constituting them and to “refashion” them if necessary (1994, 12–13, 125).<sup>10</sup>

Finally, McDowell, on my reading, thinks perceptual experiences can be presentational and rationalizing—inviting and being reasons for their endorsement—only because they are world-involving impressions in the disjunctivist’s sense. Let’s call cases of veridical perception “good cases”; cases of hallucination and illusion “bad cases”; and the experiences they respectively involve “good” and “bad” experi-

ences. Disjunctivism, as I shall use the term, takes good and bad experiences to be constitutively different. It denies that a good experience is the *effect* of a perceived object or fact such that, had it been otherwise caused, the good experience might instead have been a bad experience. It says instead that a good experience *consists in* the perceiving of a fact, that a good experience is—as McDowell puts it—a case of “the fact itself impressing itself on a perceiver” (1994, 112–13).

That this version of disjunctivism figures in *Mind and World* is not uncontroversial, but the evidence is strong.<sup>11</sup> McDowell takes a step toward disjunctivism by claiming that good experiences’ contents simply are worldly facts (1994, 24–29). But he’s clear that, since the same applies to true judgments, more is needed to underwrite the “image of openness . . . appropriate for experience in particular” (1994, 29). What’s needed, he seems to think, is a conception of good experiences—the “genuinely subjective states of affairs involved in perception” (1994, 112, 113)—as not “presentiment[s]” (1994, 112), “emissaries” (1994, 143), or anything else that could also be had in a bad case (1994, 112–13), but as instances of “the fact itself impressing itself on a perceiver” (1994, 112–13), states of affairs “constituted by a subject’s letting . . . the objective world reveal itself to her” (1994, 112, 143). Although talk of “impressions” can be ambiguous between what’s impressed and the impressing of it, McDowell clearly intends the latter. So his idea is not that good experiences are effects of the world’s impressing itself on us; they *are* the world’s impressing itself on us. He distances himself from those who pack “complexity” into the idea that “impressions . . . impose rational demands on our empirical thinking” (139), i.e. those who “separate” *impressions* (the “world’s impacts on our senses,” 1994, 142) from *appearings* (the conceptually contentful experiences that rationalize thought, 1994, 141–45). McDowell finds this separation both in Wilfrid Sellars, for whom impressions merely *cause* appearances (McDowell 1994, 139, 141), and in Donald Davidson, whom he interprets as thinking that, although impressions *are* appearances, those notions belong to “radically different modes of conceptualisation” (McDowell 1994, 145).<sup>12</sup> So, for McDowell, both Sellars and Davidson miss that impressions must be *themselves* and *as such* what rationalize.<sup>13</sup>

Now, the point of this disjunctivist thesis in *Mind and World* is, as McDowell puts it, to “underwrite” the “image of openness . . . appropriate for experience in particular” (1994, 29)—that is, on my reading, to underwrite the presentational, rationalizing role of good experiences.<sup>14</sup> After all, more is needed to underwrite this role than that good experiences be passive and possess true conceptual contents.<sup>15</sup> If you bang your head and for a moment cannot stop entertaining the content that snow is white, this neither invites you nor gives you reason to judge that snow is white. Why is this, given the episode is involuntary, conceptually contentful, and true? Because, as I understand McDowell, it’s not the *impressing* of a fact on you. In short, then, experience’s rational role requires disjunctivism.

It is worth noting, since I return to it later, that Bill Brewer gives a related explanation of experience’s role, in terms of its demonstrative contents (1999, ch. 6). For Brewer, the rational role of experience depends on our appreciation, when perceiving, that perception involves “interrogation” of our environment in the sense

that we fix such enabling conditions as the direction of our gaze and then, as it were, let the world determine our experiences' demonstrative contents and thereby the contents of experience-endorsing judgments. It depends, again, on our appreciation that experience involves modes of presentation that are available to us, given the enabling conditions, only because of how the world independently is.

So we now have a sketch of McDowell's view of perceptual experience. Although *just* a sketch, it will suffice for our purposes. To summarize, his is a view on which good experiences "inextricably combine receptivity and spontaneity" (1994, 24)—on which, that is, by being passive and world-involving impressions, on the one hand, and yet implicating their subjects' conceptual capacities, on the other, perceptual experiences are equipped to themselves directly rationalize judgments endorsing their contents, judgments that things are as they are presented as being.

But how, we might ask, does any of this bear on pain?

### III. MCDOWELL ON INNER EXPERIENCE

A central aim of McDowell's is to advance the following parallel between perception and pain:

To give impressions of "inner sense" the right role in justifying judgments, we need to conceive them, like impressions of "outer sense," as themselves already possessing conceptual content; to supply the necessary limit to the freedom of spontaneity, we need to insist that they are indeed impressions, products of receptivity . . . passive occurrences in which conceptual capacities are drawn into operation . . . [W]e should connect "inner experience" with conceptual capacities, so as to think about "inner sense" in parallel with "outer sense" to the fullest extent that is possible. (1994, 21–22)

Assuming sensation experiences are impressions of "inner sense" and perceptual experiences are impressions of "outer sense," the idea is this: just as thought about the external world requires perceptual experiences to directly rationalize perceptual judgments, so too our thought about our own sensations requires sensation experiences to directly rationalize sensation judgments, and in both cases this requires experiences to be conceptually contentful.

But what are pain experiences' contents? What do they represent? In terms of "item recognised and what it is recognised to be," McDowell says, "what I feel is a pain" (1989, 286). Drawing a distinction between what I'll call "the person-concept," *being in pain*, and "the sensation-concept," *being a pain*, he resists the idea that only the person-concept figures in pain experiences' contents (1989, 284 n. 8). A person in pain is "encountering a particular" (1989, 284), he thinks, where the relevant particular is not a person or a body part, but rather "the sensation itself," "the pain" (1989, 284), which is "an object . . . of concept-involving awareness" (1989,

283), an “object of reference” (1989, 286), “experienced as instantiating the concept” (1989, 284). So just as a visual experience might conceptually represent a cube as a cube, pain experiences conceptually represent pains as pains.

But there’s a crucial difference: pain experiences *constitute* their objects. In this consists the “interiority” of inner sense (1991, 311–13). A pain, McDowell says, “has no status except as what is experienced as instantiating the concept” (1989, 284). Although they are “objects of experience,” “there for our subjectivity in an inner world” (1994, 119), pains “do not exist independently of . . . awareness” (1994, 120). They are “really nothing over and above the awareness itself” (1994, 120).<sup>16</sup> Call this “McDowell’s subjectivism.”

At last, then, we have in view McDowell’s version of the inner-object account of pain. Let’s now compare it with rival approaches, so as to highlight its distinctiveness and motivations.

#### IV. THE DIALECTICAL LANDSCAPE

McDowell’s position, we’ve seen, concerns both what pain experiences represent and how they’re related to pain judgments. What do rival approaches say about these two questions?

If pain experiences don’t represent pains, as McDowell thinks, what do they represent? “Nothing,” says the no-content view, which McGinn (1982, 8), O’Shaughnessy (1980, 169–70), Rorty (1980, 22), and Searle (1992, 84) all apparently endorse. Pain experiences lack representational content altogether, on this approach; they’re episodes of blank phenomenology.<sup>17</sup> Perceptualists, by contrast, including Armstrong (1962, 1968), Dretske (1995, 1999), Lycan (1996), Pitcher (1970), Tye (1995), and myself (2003, 2007), think pain experiences represent body parts as having some objective, nonmental property, e.g. being disordered or undergoing nociceptor activity. So rather than merely *modeling* pain experiences on perceptual experiences, as McDowell does, perceptualists think pain experiences *are* perceptual experiences, specifically somatosensory or proprioceptive experiences. This is the rival view on which I’ll focus in subsequent sections.

What about alternative views of pain/judgment relations? Consider first the following:

##### **Argument for Pain Conceptualism**

1. People make immediate pain judgments (hereafter, “ip-judgments”), i.e. judgments about their own current pain, expressible in such sentences as “I am in pain,” “I feel a pain,” “This is a pain,” or “I have a pain in my toe.”
2. Ip-judgments are possible only if some are directly rationalized by pain experiences.
3. *Therefore*, some ip-judgments are directly rationalized by pain experiences.

4. Only conceptually contentful experiences can directly rationalize judgments.
5. *Therefore*, pain experiences have conceptual content.

This, I suggest, is McDowell's basis for thinking that ip-judgments (as I'm calling them) are directly rationalized by conceptually contentful pain experiences. And it allows us to locate his principal targets. These, in my terms, are "ip-givenism," which says that ip-judgments are directly rationalized by pain experiences *that lack conceptual content*; "ip-coherentism," on which such judgments are merely *caused* by such experiences; and "ip-expressivism," which denies there *are* any such judgments. So ip-expressivists and ip-coherentists both reject sub-conclusion (3). Ip-expressivists reject it because, modeling utterances of "I feel a pain" on grimacing and the like, they deny (1). Ip-coherentists reject it because, thinking it's obvious that pain experiences lack conceptual content, they reject as too demanding the requirement that such experiences do more than *cause* ip-judgments and hence they deny (2). What about ip-givenists? Accepting (3), they take the argument to be a *reductio* of premise (4), since, for them, pain experiences lack conceptual content yet must rationalize ip-judgments anyway.

These conceptions of pain/judgment relations might be variously combined with the earlier accounts of what pain experiences represent. In particular, respectively combining ip-coherentism and ip-givenism with the inner-object account of pain generates inner versions of *Mind and World's* principal targets: Davidsonian coherentism and the Myth of the Given. Since it is inner givenism that most exercises McDowell in the pain case, let's briefly digress to consider it further.

## V. INNER GIVENISM AND NOUMENALISM

Why is McDowell so preoccupied with inner givenism? One reason is that he thinks it's an illuminating way of conceiving the target of Wittgenstein's private language argument.<sup>18</sup> (While welcoming his anti-givenism, McDowell diagnoses Wittgenstein's ip-expressivist tendencies as manifesting blindness to the option of retaining the inner-object view in a non-givenist, conceptualist form [1994, 22].)<sup>19</sup> McDowell also thinks inner givenism is even more seductive than outer givenism, given the temptation to think that the exercise of conceptual capacities in episodes of awareness of pains which (as it were) already have awareness built into them must be "an optional extra, dispensable without disrupting the status of the episode as an experience" (1989, 285).<sup>20</sup> Whether or not McDowell is right that this temptation should be resisted, it's worth noting here a related intuition which I shall later press against McDowell: that the awareness-dependence of pains makes the exercise of classificatory capacities not so much optional as deeply problematic.

Before returning to our main business, it's also worth noting that inner givenism becomes rather entangled with a final target of McDowell's: namely, the view

that, as McDowell puts it, pains are “chunks of the ‘in itself’” (1991, 308), denizens of an inner world that is “brutely alien to concepts” (1991, 307), a world which affords “a lived refutation of [German] idealism” (1991, 307), a falsification of “the idea that world and thought are made for one another” (1991, 307). This is enigmatic, to be sure. The view in question—call it “inner noumenalism”—appears to be a version of transcendental idealism on which the noumenal realm comprises pains and other sensations. It’s questionable that anyone self-consciously embraces such a view, so I take it McDowell is targeting *inadvertent* noumenalists, i.e. those who deny the world of sensations is the way he thinks any representable world must be. Since he thinks any representable world must figure in the contents of impressions, hence must comprise facts composed of Fregean senses, or “thinkables that are the case” (1994, 179), I take it he deems views noumenalist to the extent that they deny that pains are constituents of such facts.<sup>21</sup>

Inner noumenalism, as I say, gets rather entangled with inner givenism. One reason for this is an ambiguity in McDowell’s phrase, “the space of concepts.”<sup>22</sup> For both views locate pains outside that “space” in a certain sense: inner givenism in the sense that pain *experiences* don’t involve exercises of conceptual capacities; inner noumenalism in the sense that pains—thought of as *objects* of experience—are “brutely alien to concepts” (1991, 307). McDowell appears to think, moreover, that the two views can seem mutually supportive. For, according to one line of thought, if pains aren’t constituents of Fregean facts, then awareness of them cannot be concept-involving (1991, 310); and, according to another, such non-concept-involving awareness allows us to glimpse that these objects are not, or at least not essentially, constituents of Fregean facts (1989, 287).

This region of the dialectical landscape is, it must be said, particularly murky. Happily, however, we can leave it behind. For the rival to McDowell’s view on which I shall focus for the remainder of our discussion is neither inner givenism nor inner noumenalism, but perceptualism.

## VI. PERCEPTUALISM

Before turning to my objections to McDowell, it will be helpful to register just how much of his picture perceptualists can accept. They can, for example, accept conceptualism. This is often missed, since perceptualists (e.g. Tye, Dretske, and Lycan) don’t tend to be conceptualists. But my own attempts to motivate and defend perceptualism elsewhere have been formulated precisely so as to be neutral about conceptualism (Bain 2003, 2007). And I want to maintain that neutrality here. For while pain conceptualism certainly faces stiff challenges, I doubt that combining it with perceptualism itself generates fatal difficulties.

Matters might seem otherwise. While all pain conceptualists must say something about pain in animals and pre-lingual children, after all, it can seem that

those who also embrace perceptualism must further say something about the many adult humans who lack the rather arcane concept, *nociceptor activity*. If, moreover, one's judgment that one has a pain in one's toe, or that one's toe hurts, simply *endorses* one's pain experience—which it's tempting to say it does—then the content of that experience cannot simply be that one's toe is undergoing nociceptor activity. So challenges are indeed generated. But perceptualists can, I think, meet them. They can say, for instance, that even without the concept *nociceptor activity* one might represent such activity under demonstrative concepts, e.g. *that activity*, or instead that pain experiences represent a condition less arcane but no less objective than nociceptor activity, e.g. bodily disorder. As for the worrying mismatch between pain experiences and their endorsement, this can be denied by claiming that "I have a pain in my toe," and "My toe hurts" *self-ascribe* rather than endorse the pain experiences on which they're based, and that what *endorse* pain experiences are rather such judgments as "There is something wrong with my toe," or "That process [nociceptor activity] is occurring in my toe."<sup>23</sup>

Again, then, perceptualists can accept McDowell's argument for pain conceptualism. Moreover, while they should—as we have just seen—construe the ip-judgments which that argument concerns as self-ascriptions of experiences, not endorsements, they can allow that pain experiences also rationalize endorsements, e.g. "My foot is disordered," or "My foot is undergoing *that process* [nociceptor activity]." And, should they wish, they can explain these rationalizing relations by attributing to pain experiences conceptual content.

So, while not obligatory, a great deal of McDowell's picture is available to perceptualists. Indeed, I think they can accept some of his central tenets rather more easily than he. For, as I shall argue in §§9 and 10, among the many reasons for preferring perceptualism to an inner-object view of pain is the following: making sense of the presentational, rationalizing, and classificatory character of pain experiences is exceedingly difficult *unless* we take their subject-matter to be objective.

On this critical note, then, let's turn at last to evaluate McDowell's view.

## VII. ANIMALS, LOCATION, CIRCULARITY

Before turning to my main worries, there are three I want only to touch on.

The first is that McDowell's conceptualism makes it impossible for him to fully acknowledge pain in pre-lingual infants and nonhuman animals. He faces a parallel difficulty concerning animals' *perceptual* sentience, of course. But he has an account of that. Whether or not it succeeds is a moot point, but in any case it doesn't obviously carry over to the pain case. While denying that animals have our perceptual *awareness* of an outer world, McDowell insists they still enjoy perceptual *sentience*, or "proto-subjectivity," which he fleshes out in terms of their sensitivity to an "environment" comprising "problems and opportunities" (1994, 115, 119).

Moving to pain, he again denies that animals have what we have: awareness of an “inner world.” Just as you shouldn’t think that this pain you feel is a thing you might have felt even if you had never learned to talk (1989, 294), you shouldn’t think it is the sort of thing an animal might feel. But, again, he softens his denial, this time simply by asserting that “is in pain” applies univocally to animals and us (1989, 294 n. 24; 1994, 120). But is this assertion enough? If in the outer case we need the proto-subjectivity story, unpacked in terms of an environment, don’t we need some parallel story in the inner case? If so, it’s unclear what it could be. McDowell himself admits we can’t make sense of the idea of an *inner* environment (1994, 120), but he offers nothing else instead. One might wonder why he doesn’t appeal to the same notion of an environment that he invokes in connection with perceptual sentience. Perhaps he thinks something different is needed in the pain case if his story about animal sentience is to echo the distinction for us between inner and outer sense. But he doesn’t tell us what it is, leaving an unsatisfying gap in his handling of the pain case.

More work would be needed—not least some clarification of the crucial notion of an environment—to decide whether this difficulty is fatal. But it does at least point up an advantage of perceptualism: if the pain case *is* a perceptual case, then once we have an adequate general story about animals’ perceptual sentience, pain ought to present no special difficulties.

A second challenge concerns the location of pains. One point here is phenomenological: even if McDowell is right that I’m aware of pains when in pain (a case of inner sense), surely I am also aware of the body parts in which I have them (a case of outer sense). So, unlike perceptualists, McDowell owes us a story about the *integration* of inner sense and outer sense. And he also owes us an explanation of *what it is for* a pain to be had in a foot, say—particularly given he thinks that pains are “nothing over and above the awareness itself” (1994, 120), which can make it look as though our feet, absurdly, must be undergoing episodes of awareness when there are pains in them.

Perceptualism, again, appears comparatively virtuous. For perceptualists, who needn’t say pains are experiences,<sup>24</sup> can say that having a pain in a foot consists in one’s somatosensorily perceiving the foot as disordered (Bain 2007). Perhaps McDowell might suggest it rather consists in one’s experiencing *a pain* as being a pain *in the foot*. But, invoking the explanandum as it does, this explanation is problematically circular.

The final problem I want to touch on concerns another point at which circularity problems threaten. Consider these claims:

(R) Being red =<sub>def</sub> being disposed to be experienced as being red.<sup>25</sup>

(P) Being a pain =<sub>def</sub> being experienced as being a pain.

The first is a dispositionalist account of being red, which is circular in the sense that it uses its target term, “being red,” on its right-hand side. The second, which is

circular in the same sense, is a reading of McDowell's subjectivism, his claim that a pain "has no status except as what is experienced as instantiating the concept [*being a pain*]" (1989, 284). The worry is simple: if those who take (R)'s circularity to be vicious are correct, then (P)'s is too.

Is (R) viciously circular? Some say it is because its circularity renders it uninformative, indeed uncompleteable, not least because substituting its explanans for the right-hand side occurrence of "being red" simply produces a new occurrence, and so on ad infinitum. But while (R) is nonreductive, dispositionalists reply, it's not uninformative. And, not being a verbal definition, they add, it certainly doesn't entail the substitutivity of its explanans into such intensional contexts as the right-hand side occurrence of "experienced as . . ." <sup>26</sup> Another circularity objection says that (R) entails that being red has an impossible structure, or that there is an impossible cycle of dependence between being red and being disposed to be experienced as being red. <sup>27</sup> But talk of properties' structures and dependence relations strikes many as opaque at best; and dispositionalists can anyway reformulate their view so that it explicitly concerns not a property's structure, but its instantiation, as follows:

(R2) Something's being red consists in its being disposed to be experienced as being red.

So formulated, some argue, dispositionalism isn't circular since it explains what it is for red to be *instantiated*, and it explains this in terms of an experience type identified not in terms of *instantiations* of being red, but in terms of being red *itself* (McGinn 1996, 550). <sup>28</sup>

So, back in the pain case, is the following parallel reformulation of pain subjectivism free of circularity problems?

(P2) Something's being a pain consists in its being experienced as being a pain.

The foregoing makes it hard to say. Certainly, there would be a tight and problematic circle *if* (P2) figured in a view on which (i) a given pain of yours is a pain in virtue of your experience representing it as a pain, and (ii) your experience so represents it in virtue of its being a pain. But, McDowell needn't endorse this combination; he can in particular reject (ii). Again, while some externalists think a given visual experience represents a given shade partly in virtue of its object instantiating that shade (see §10) McDowell needn't make a parallel claim about pain experience. So, while it remains true that McDowell's subjectivism is viciously circular *if* dispositionalism is, our brief foray into the color debate suggests that it's far from straightforward to show that dispositionalism is indeed viciously circular.

Nonetheless, we are now in the neighborhood of a group of severe difficulties that in the remainder of the paper I want to press against McDowell—difficulties centering not on the circularity implicit in McDowell's idea that a pain "has no status except as what is experienced as instantiating the concept" (1989, 284), but

rather on a consequence of that idea: that when undergoing a pain-representing experience, your experience guarantees, first, that there is something you're experiencing and, second, that it's a pain. It is this idea, that pain experiences are self-verifying, which most worries me. And it seems to perturb McDowell too. Paraphrasing a "highly instructive worry" of P. F. Strawson's, he puts the issue as follows: "given that objects of this kind of experience are not independent of our awareness of them . . . what secures it that the experiences have the complexity of structure that they must have to be even minimally concept-involving?" (1989, 284).

Now, on my reading, McDowell identifies two worries under this head. In the next section, I sketch these and claim that McDowell deals with them effectively. But, in the remainder of the paper, I argue that he misses other, related difficulties which are far more threatening.

## VIII. SPONTANEITY AND OTHER MINDS PROBLEMS

Let's call the first of the two worries we can distill from McDowell's discussion "the spontaneity problem." The spontaneity problem arises from McDowell's attempt to make sense, quite generally, of how conceptual capacities—capacities for active judgment—could be involved in passive experience of any sort. He thinks this is intelligible if, but only if, the capacities are operative not only in experience but also in thinking, in particular thinking which provides "a good fit for the idea of spontaneity" (1994, 11). But this presents a difficulty in the pain case. For, while perceptual judgments provide a "good fit" for the idea of spontaneity, ip-judgments (immediate pain judgments) don't. While subjects can sensibly deliberate whether to endorse the content of a perceptual experience, e.g. that there is a red cube on the table, the inner-object view leaves no scope for such deliberation regarding pain experiences. As soon as you consider whether to endorse your pain experience—whether it is indeed a pain you feel—its self-verifying character *obliges* you to do so. So the pain case lacks the context of deliberative judgment required for the relevant conceptual capacities to have, as McDowell puts it, the necessary integration "into spontaneity at large" (1994, 37). That, at any rate, seems to be the worry.

McDowell's response is, in effect, is to assert the following:

### **Third-Person Requirement**

Possessors of pain concepts must be able not only to self-apply them, but also to apply them to others. (1991, 311)

Since it might issue from deliberation, the idea goes, the judgment that somebody else is in pain provides a better "fit for the idea of spontaneity" than the judgment that oneself is. Hence, provided the capacities operative in pain experiences are exercised in third-person judgments, not just ip-judgments, the spontaneity problem melts away. So, whereas the involvement of color and shape concepts in visual experience is partly vindicated by the scope for deliberating whether to apply them

on the basis of such experiences,<sup>29</sup> the involvement of pain concepts in pain experiences is rather vindicated by those experiences' not being the only basis for the concepts' application (1994, 37–38).

Strawson and Gareth Evans also impose the third-person requirement, but on the basis of considerations of generality, not spontaneity. Their idea is that a thought can have a subject-predicate structure, *a is F*, only if the capacities one exercises in thinking it are distinct from each other, so only if the capacity in which grasp of F-ness consists is a capacity to think of the F-ness not only of *a*, but also of things other than *a*.<sup>30</sup> Hence one can think that oneself is in pain only if one can think that others are. McDowell too sometimes puts things this way, as when he requires that “the subject . . . understand her being in pain as a particular case of a general type of state of affairs” (1994, 37) and worries with Strawson whether pain experiences have the “subject/predicate structure” they must have “to be even minimally concept-involving” (1989, 284).<sup>31</sup>

But, however it's motivated, the third-person requirement leads to another worry, a version of the problem of other minds: namely, that McDowell's subjectivism requires just what the third-person requirement denies is possible, that possession of pain concepts is entirely constituted by the ability to self-apply them on the basis of pain experiences. But McDowell replies, in effect, that this objection simply misconstrues subjectivism. For subjectivism is a thesis not about what constitutes the possession of pain concepts, but about what constitutes pains. Again, as McDowell puts it, the *idea* of one's being in pain has “an independence from [one's] awareness of it” thanks to the third-person requirement, even if one's being in pain does not (1994, 38).<sup>32</sup>

Thus McDowell defuses the spontaneity and other minds problems. But I now want to suggest that lurking in the neighborhood are other, less tractable problems.

## IX. RATIONALIZATION, PRESENTATION, CLASSIFICATION

My self-verification worries differ from McDowell's. His center on the idea that subjectivism renders unintelligible the possession of concepts involved in pain experiences. He appreciates that a picture of a thinker putatively responding to his pain experiences with self-applications of pain concepts is insufficiently rich to count as the depiction of the possession of a concept. So he enriches it by requiring pain concepts to be applied third-personally. But the worries I want to press concern, by contrast, not the *possession* of pain concepts, but—at a first approximation—their *operation* in pain experiences. In short, while it's crucial to McDowell's picture that pain experiences be presentational, rationalizing, and classificatory, I doubt they can be if, as McDowell thinks, they constitute their own subject matter.

Others have made kindred points in various contexts over the past century. Armstrong, for example, claims that “subject and object” must be “distinct exis-

tences” and denies a mental state can be aware of itself “any more than a man can eat himself up” (1968, 324).<sup>33</sup> Sartre says that “to be conscious of something is to be confronted with a concrete and full presence which is not consciousness.”<sup>34</sup> Strawson, in the passage McDowell paraphrases, claims “[t]here can be no experience at all which does not involve the recognition of particular items *as* being of such and such a general kind,” hence “it must be possible, even in the most fleeting and purely subjective of impressions, to distinguish a component of recognition . . . which is not simply identical with, or wholly absorbed by, the particular item which is recognised” (1966, 100). And Wittgenstein famously insists on a distinction between its *seeming* right to apply a sign and its *being* right: if one would like to say “whatever is going to seem right to me is right,” he urges, “that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right’” (1958, §258). So I’m not alone. But how should such ideas be fleshed out and turned against McDowell?

We might begin by questioning whether experiences which constitute the pains they present (call these McDowellian pain experiences) could, even by McDowell’s lights, directly *rationalize* judgments endorsing them, as he thinks they must. For in §2, I presented two accounts of what this rationalizing role depends on—Brewer’s and McDowell’s own—neither of which McDowellian pain experience fits.

Brewer, recall, thinks that what I called “good” perceptual experiences rationalize their endorsement by virtue of having their demonstrative contents determined—once the subject fixes the enabling conditions—by how the world independently is. But this picture surely doesn’t fit McDowellian pain experiences, which constitute their objects. So what about McDowell’s own account? He, I suggested, thinks good perceptual experiences rationalize their endorsement by virtue of being impressions in the disjunctivist’s sense, episodes in which facts impress themselves on subjects’ sensibilities. But again there’s a failure of fit. For McDowellian pain experiences are surely not impressions in that sense. Tellingly, McDowell does *call* them “impressions” (1994, 21–22). But, on his conception, pain experiences are surely impressions only in the etiolated sense that they are passive. They lack the world-to-mind direction of determination to be impressions in the disjunctivist sense he invokes to underwrite the rational role of experience. That role, remember, requires more than passivity alone. An involuntary entertaining of the content that snow is white is passive but doesn’t directly rationalize its endorsement. That McDowellian pain experiences are passive, then, is not enough.

This worry about the rationalizing role of McDowellian pain experiences can be expressed, more deeply, in terms of their *presentational* force, the idea being that one reason they can’t rationalize their endorsement is that they can’t so much as *invite* it. Not being impressions, the thought goes, they fail even to purport to present a world.

There are at least two replies McDowell might make. The first is to deny that only impressions can be presentational. After all, hallucinatory experiences, which are not impressions, are arguably still presentational, purporting to present a world, inviting endorsement. But can McDowell make this point given that he thinks (I

claimed in §2) that good experiences are presentational *in virtue of being impressions*? Perhaps he can, if he says that a hallucination of a pink elephant, say, is presentational in virtue of being an episode in which it is for the subject *as if* a pink elephant were impressing itself on her sensibility. Notice, however, that even if McDowell says this, my objection remains potent. For if, by contrast with visual experiences, McDowellian pain experiences *couldn't* ever involve something impressing itself on a subject's sensibility, it's hard to see how undergoing one might involve its being for the subject *as if* something were.

A second reply would be for McDowell to say I've mistaken his intentions, that in fact he thinks only that pain experiences are contentful, not that they're presentational. Despite their content, he might say, they're "idle," as it were, lacking any reality-claiming force. As mere constituents of an inner world, rather than episodes disclosing or presenting it, the point would go, all McDowell needs to claim is that pain experiences can rationalize their *self-ascription*, not that they can rationalize their *endorsement*.

But notice that even if this were McDowell's view, things would not be plain sailing. We would need an *account* of the self-ascription of pain experiences, and at least one otherwise attractive approach—modeled on Evans's story about the self-ascription of perceptual experiences—would be ruled out. Evans thinks experiential self-ascription involves a subject's appending "it seems to me" to the content of the judgment she *would* make if she lacked extraneous information, i.e. a judgment which would *endorse* her experience's content (1982, 227–28). So this account can be applied only to experiences which subjects sometimes endorse, hence (given normative empiricism) only to experiences capable of *rationalizing* their endorsement, and hence not to pain experiences if they really are—as I put it above—idle.

But, more important, I suggest that McDowell doesn't really think pain experiences are idle. He does seem to think they're presentational. Since their objects are "really nothing over and above the awareness itself" (1994, 120), his idea goes, pain experiences present *themselves*. They rationalize their self-ascription *by rationalizing their endorsement*. So his picture really is one on which pain experiences invite and rationalize endorsement—presenting, not merely figuring in, an "inner world," all of which fits with his stated aims of pressing the parallel between inner and outer sense "to the fullest extent . . . possible" (1994, 22) and carrying over to the inner case his story about rational constraint, "the necessary limit to the freedom of spontaneity" (1994, 21).<sup>35</sup> And so I stand by the objection: that there is a serious tension between McDowell's idea that pain experiences present and rationalize judgments about their subject matter and his idea that they *constitute* their subject matter.

In any case, we might set aside the notions of rationalization and presentation and develop my worry in terms of the idea of classification instead. Can it be right that even McDowellian pain experiences might involve, as Strawson puts it, "the recognition of particular items *as* being of such and such a general kind" (1966, 100)?

One source of doubt is Wittgenstein's insistence, quoted above, on a distinction between its *seeming* right to apply a sign and its *being* right (1958, §258). At first this can look too narrow a basis for an objection to McDowell, since Wittgenstein talks

about signs rather than concepts; and, even once reformulated in terms of concepts, his requirement can seem to concern judgments rather than experiences. David Pears, for example, motivates Wittgenstein's point by adverting to what McDowell calls "spontaneity," emphasizing that applying a predicate or concept is, like marksmanship, an intentional action which one can *try* to do or *aim* at doing correctly (Pears 1987, 55; 1988, 333).<sup>36</sup> Not being intentional actions, experiences can seem to fall outside the ambit of a requirement motivated in this way.

But surely we can motivate an is-right/seems-right requirement not only in terms of intentional action, like Pears, but in terms of the notions of classification and recognition, like Strawson.<sup>37</sup> So motivated, the requirement does apply to experiences, assuming with McDowell that they're classificatory.<sup>38</sup> The idea, roughly, is that experiences can correctly classify things only if they can also incorrectly classify them. And since McDowellian pain experiences are self-verifying, this is a requirement they flout.

How might McDowell reply? While conceding that the possible misapplication of pain concepts is necessary, he might claim that this requirement is met by their misapplication in third-person and past-tense pain *judgments*, hence that we don't need also to require their possible misapplication in pain *experiences*. But this appeal to judgments surely misses the point. It might help with McDowell's concern that his picture be sufficiently rich to count as the depiction of the possession of pain concepts, but it surely doesn't speak to my worry that, even granted the relevant concepts' possession, they still can't be thought to be operative in experiences that are self-verifying.

A second reply would be to say, as McDowell does, that while pain experiences involve classification, they are a "limiting case" (1989, 284), that in the pain case "the idea of encountering a particular lacks an independent robustness that we can credit it with in other applications" (1989, 284).<sup>39</sup> But, in the end, such remarks of McDowell's seem to acknowledge rather than resolve the worries I've been expressing.

Finally, McDowell might say that if I'm right that McDowellian pain experiences couldn't be rationalizing, presentational, or classificatory, then nor could certain other episodes that obviously *are*. The reply, in short, is that my objections are too strong. In the final section, I consider whether that's true.

## X. THE STRENGTH REPLY

Let's consider, then, three cases that McDowell might take to show my objections to be too strong. I argue that none of them does.

### (i) INTENTIONAL SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND JUDGING THAT YOU'RE JUDGING

To explain first-person authority, some have come close to the following constitutive account: your judging that you intend to vote, for example, can *make it the case*

that you intend to vote.<sup>40</sup> My self-verification objections might seem to rule this out, which would be problematic if there were no prospect of anything better.

But surely there is. For the constitutive account is flawed, even independently of my self-verification worries. For one thing, it's unclear the account explains our authority over what intentions we *lack*. For another, it threatens the natural idea that, while not all intentional self-ascriptions are authoritative, the states attributed by authoritative and nonauthoritative self-ascriptions are of the same fundamental kind. Even if the account entails the *infallibility* of certain self-ascriptions, moreover, it falls short of explaining self-*knowledge* if knowledge requires reasons. And, finally, there is a worry about content-determination. Suppose I *know* that I *intend* that I pick up this pen. My belief's content is that I intend that I pick up this pen; my intention's content is that I pick up this pen. Now my belief surely inherits its demonstrative content, *this pen*, from the intention on which it's based. But, at the cost of its plausibility, the constitutive view looks committed to putting things the other way around.

Now, these objections are far too quick, of course. But suffice it to say that the constitutive account is not looking obviously indispensable.<sup>41</sup> In one, special case, however, McDowell might insist that the constitutive account is indeed inevitable. Suppose you judge that you're judging. Doesn't this make it the case that you're judging? Isn't that an obvious and unproblematic case of self-verification?

No, I think it's not. For it isn't obvious that you can *simply* judge that you're judging. Certainly, you can *for the reason that you're judging that snow is white* judge that you're judging. What's not obvious is that you can judge that you're judging in circumstances where your putative judgment isn't made true by any other. Of course, you might utter the sentence, "I am judging," and even thereby express a proposition; and you might entertain a visual or auditory image of that sentence. But none of this settles that in such a case you're judging. And there are reasons to doubt that you are, not least that it's unclear what *reason* you could ever have for doing so.

But, anyway, I needn't rely on these replies to the constitutive account. For there is another point, which is crucial. In part, my objections to McDowellian pain experiences were formulated in terms of the presentational and rationalizing role of experience. What's needed to show these objections to be too strong are examples of judgments which, though self-verifying, are nonetheless presentational and rationalizing. But surely *no* judgments at all are presentational or (in the right way) rationalizing. A judgment that *p* doesn't purport to present the world as being some way. It doesn't invite, let alone directly rationalize, the endorsement of *p*. Rather, it *is* the endorsement of *p*. So, concerning judgments as they do, the cases we've been considering are unhelpful to my opponent.<sup>42</sup>

#### (ii) PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

Another case McDowell might think refutes my objections is performative utterances. If you utter, "I promise to vote," the idea goes, you assert that you promise to

vote and thereby *make it the case* that you promise to vote. Is this not a self-verifying assertion, a self-verifying classifying of oneself as promising to vote? If it is, the idea goes, my self-verification objections must be too strong.

My earlier reply that judgments aren't presentational arguably won't work here, since the present objection concerns assertions, not judgments. Still, it's open to me to deny the assumption that the utterance of "I promise to vote" is an assertion. After all, J. L. Austin denies that such utterances so much as express truth-evaluable contents (1962, 6), while Crispin Wright thinks that, even if they do, they aren't assertions of them (1998, 36).<sup>43</sup> And, even if performative utterances *are* assertions, the connection between the assertion and the realization of the circumstances asserted to obtain is surely quite different from the pain case. It's by dint of a convention that, when I assert I promise, I thereby promise.<sup>44</sup> This marks a crucial difference from McDowellian pain experiences, since it's not a merely conventional matter, on McDowell's view, that when I undergo a pain experience it has a pain as its object. And notice, finally, that we certainly need not accept that *what it is* to promise is to assert that you do. Even assuming that uttering "I promise" is asserting, you can assert that you promise without promising (e.g. when acting) and you can promise without asserting you do (e.g. by uttering, in the right circumstances, "I *will* vote"). In short, the performative case is far less threatening than it can seem at first.

### (iii) PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES AND SENSATIONS

A third way McDowell might try to undermine my self-verification objections is by citing an externalist view of visual experiences which individuates good experiences in terms of demonstrative contents which are dependent on the subject's standing in the right relations to the represented objects and property instances. On such a view, a given experience might have the content that this pig [Betty] is that shade [pink<sub>6</sub>]. And that experience, the idea goes, couldn't have been illusory, for it couldn't have had the content in terms of which it's individuated unless its object had been Betty while she was pink<sub>6</sub>. Isn't this an obviously unproblematic case of self-verification?

On the contrary, this externalist view is surely far too contentious to generate a case I'm obliged to accommodate. And, even if we accept the view, we needn't agree that the experience in question couldn't have had its contents unless its object had been Betty while she was pink<sub>6</sub>. When McDowell invokes demonstrative-predicate contents in *Mind and World*, he rightly insists that grasp of them must persist beyond the perceptual encounters that make them available (1994, 57). But in that case, a moment after an encounter with a pink<sub>6</sub> apple, say, a subject might have a perception of Betty even when *not* pink<sub>6</sub> as being *that shade* [pink<sub>6</sub>], deploying a mode of presentation anchored in the earlier encounter with the apple.<sup>45</sup> So demonstrative-predicate contents can be involved in illusory experience. And of course, in one way or another, *all* views of visual experience must accommodate the possibility of misperception, which makes it hard to see how there could ever be a way for vision experiences to vindicate the idea of self-verifying experiences.

For just that reason, it might be tempting for McDowell to shift focus from visual experiences back to sensation experiences, and to say with Strawson that, at least in their case, we “seem forced to concede” that the experiences’ objects “have no existence independently of the awareness of them” (1966, 100–101). But whether we’re forced to concede that is, of course, precisely the question at issue in this paper. And given the difficulties with so doing, and that perceptualism is an attractive alternative, it strikes me that we had better not.

## CONCLUSION

Having set out McDowell’s interesting and sophisticated account of pain, I have in the second half of this paper been critical of it. I have touched on concerns about animal pain, the location of pains, and the circularity inherent in subjectivism. But, principally, and at length, I have pressed the point that McDowellian pain experiences, being self-verifying and not impressions in the disjunctivist’s sense, can’t be presentational, rationalizing, or classificatory, as McDowell wants and needs them to be. If there were no alternative to combining these conceptions of pain experiences, then perhaps we would have to think again. But perceptualism is just such an alternative. McDowell acknowledges perceptualism, but rejects it because he thinks there’s something *sui generis*, something “inner,” about the sensation case (1991, 313). He’s right; there is. But the present paper suggests that we should not capture what it is in terms of the dependence of the objects of awareness on episodes of awareness. How we *should* capture it, compatibly with perceptualism, is a story I tell elsewhere.<sup>46</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For comments and discussion, I am extremely grateful to Carol Bain, George Bain, Bill Brewer, Bill Child, Ron Chrisley, Fabian Dorsch, Adrian Haddock, Mark Johnston, Fiona Macpherson, Michael Morris, Alan Thomas, and audiences at the 2007 McDowell workshop, “Having the World in View,” hosted by the University of Kent, and at the Centre for Research in Cognitive Science (COGS) at the University of Sussex.

## NOTES

1. See McDowell’s 1989, 1991, and 1994 (especially lectures 1 and 2).
2. McDowell’s view at least of perceptual experiences is changing somewhat, although he still regards them as having conceptual (albeit nonpropositional) content. This paper focuses not on his

- emerging view, but (even where I use the present-tense) on the account he sets out in his 1989, 1991, and 1994, since that is the account he models his conception of pain experiences on.
3. I use “normative empiricism” rather than McDowell’s “minimal empiricism” (1994, xii) because “minimal” is tendentious and because normative empiricism, which I maintain McDowell holds, might nevertheless go beyond what he calls minimum empiricism.
  4. See McDowell 1994, lecture 1 and *passim*. Sometimes McDowell (e.g. 1994, xii, xvii) obscures the distinction between explanandum and explanans by expressing both in terms of the “answerability” of thought to the world. What gets obscured is the distinction between the idea that thoughts stand in normative relations to the world in the sense that the world can make them correct or incorrect, and the idea that the world, by impressing itself on subjects in experience, rationalizes our thinkings.
  5. See McDowell 1994, 11, 26. Travis (2004, 59) expresses the point, which he rejects, in terms of experiences’ having a “face value.” See also Davies 1992, 23.
  6. One might doubt whether experiences, as against persons, say, are the sorts of things that *could* present the world as being such and such a way to a subject. But I set aside this interesting worry here.
  7. McDowell thinks this is the way bodily feelings justify judgments about organic ailments (1994, 145). Contrast the perceptualist view I introduce in §4 below.
  8. See McDowell’s reading of Sellars below.
  9. See McDowell 1994, 13, 29, 34, 47, 165, 184–86.
  10. See also McDowell 1994, 8, 11, 42, 52.
  11. The following responds to an objection Adrian Haddock made in correspondence. The crucial parts of McDowell 1994 are lecture 2 (especially 25–29), lecture 6, §3 (111–13), and afterword 1, §5 (137–46). See also McDowell 1982 and 1986.
  12. See also McDowell 1994, 98, 139–40. Notice that appearances, on the conception McDowell attributes to Sellars and makes available to Davidson, look rather like the passive entertainings of content I mention in the next paragraph. McDowell points out that, since Davidson thinks that only beliefs can rationalize beliefs, Davidson’s acknowledging a “grounding role for appearances” (McDowell 1994, 140) would require him to say that appearances are beliefs. He would do better, McDowell thinks, to instead characterize them as passive episodes not involving the endorsement of content. But McDowell is clear that this is still not enough; he must also conceive them, *qua* appearances, as the impressings of facts on a subject (McDowell 1994, 140).
  13. For “as such,” see McDowell 1994, 141, 145.
  14. (i) Why do I interpret McDowell’s idea of “openness” in terms of the presentational and rationalizing character of experience? Because he contrasts conceptions on which experiences involve openness with conceptions on which they’re “intermediaries,” which, he says, make unintelligible experiences’ “purporting to tell us anything” (1994, 144). Also, McDowell’s Davidson conceives experiences as “opaque” (1994, 145), which, McDowell says, generates a “genuinely unconstrained” coherentism (1994, 144; see also 141–42). (ii) For evidence of McDowell linking the notion of “openness” (experiences as “transparent” “glimpses of reality,” as against “opaque” “intermediaries”) with disjunctivism, see McDowell 1994, 111–13, 142–45.
  15. Brewer recognizes this at his 1999 (185).
  16. “We are required to conceive the relevant episodes in streams of consciousness as involving the experienced applicability of concepts” (McDowell 1989, 293). “That [the inner world] is inner consists in their being nothing to its states of affairs except the instantiation in consciousness of the relevant concepts; the instances of the concepts, unlike instances of the concepts of the outer, have no being independently of the fact that the concepts they instantiate figure in the content of consciousness” (McDowell 1991, 311). See also McDowell 1994, 38.
  17. See also Davidson’s worry that a definition of the mental in terms of intentionality would omit pains (Davidson 1970, 211).
  18. See McDowell 1989; 1991, 309–10; 1994, 18–21.
  19. See also McDowell 1989, 283–84.
  20. See also McDowell 1994, 21.

21. See also McDowell 1994, 26–29, 104–7, 179–80; and 1989, 287–88.
22. McDowell would concede the ambiguity, I take it, given his acknowledgment of “the ambiguity in phrases like ‘outside the sphere of thought’” (1994, 39, 28). The ambiguity also explains how McDowell can (i) insist on an “equation between the space of concepts and the space of reasons” (1994: 125), (ii) contrast the space of reasons with the realm of law (1994, 97), and yet (iii) insist that the space of concepts is “unbounded” (1994, lecture 2).
23. I say more about these responses in my 2003.
24. See my 2007 (200 ff.). As I point out there, however, some perceptualists do say that pains are experiences.
25. For simplicity, I am setting aside the required references to normal perceivers and normal circumstances.
26. Boghossian and Velleman sometimes appear to miss this point, as when they attribute to dispositionalists the view that “an experience can represent its object as red only by representing it as disposed to produce visual experiences that represent it as red” (1989, 88).
27. These two formulations owe a lot to Mark Johnston (2001a, 2001b). Boghossian and Velleman sometimes express the objection similarly (1989, 88; 1991, 134 n.6).
28. See also McGinn 1989, 14, and Wright 1992, 120–23, 132–35. Actually, (R2) is not quite identical to McGinn’s formulation, but the differences don’t matter for our purposes.
29. “Partly” because McDowell demands deeper “integration” than this. Possessing color concepts, for example, requires possession of such concepts as the visible surface of an object, he thinks, possession of which in turn requires more than the capacity to make and withhold perceptual judgments. See McDowell 1994, lecture 2.
30. See Strawson 1959, 99, and Evans 1982, 100–105.
31. McDowell is curiously silent in this context about the distinction he elsewhere emphasizes between the person-concept, *being in pain*, and the sensation-concept, *being a pain* (1989, 284 n. 8). Two issues arise. (i) How can third-personal misapplications of the person-concept vindicate the idea that the sensation-concept is operative in experience? McDowell’s reply might be to construe the person-concept, *being in pain*, as the concept, *feeling a pain* (see his 1989, 286, n. 10), hence as *containing* the sensation-concept, which one might consequently misapply if one judged correctly that Fred is feeling *something* but incorrectly that he is feeling a pain. (ii) Do considerations of spontaneity and generality make it necessary (as I take it McDowell thinks they do) for the possessor of the sensation-concept to meet the third-person requirement? Suppose a subject who possesses the sensation-concept but not the person-concept experiences pains as pains, judges of more than one pain that it is a pain, and judges of past sensations (sometimes incorrectly) that they were pains. From the perspectives of spontaneity and generality, this subject appears unimpeachable, hence it’s unclear how McDowell might rule him out. (McDowell does have grounds for requiring the subject to be able to third-personally ascribe *perceptual* experiences, namely that inner experience requires outer experience (1994, 33), which requires the self-ascription of perceptual experiences (1994, 99–104), which requires the other-ascription of perceptual experiences.)
32. See also McDowell 1994, 12.
33. See also Armstrong 1968, 100–115, especially 107, and chapter 15; and 1962, 78–80.
34. Quoted in McCulloch 1994, 104. Despite this claim, Sartre apparently thinks that colors and some other properties are, to some degree, mind-dependent; see McCulloch 1994, 111–13.
35. See also 1994, 119, “sensations [are] there for our subjectivity in an inner world,” and 1989, 286, where McDowell parses sensations’ contents “in terms of item recognized and expression of what it is recognized to be.”
36. See also Wright 1986, 257.
37. This is not to say that Strawson would approve of the following elaboration and use of the point.
38. For simplicity, I shall follow McDowell in speaking of classification and the operation of conceptual capacities interchangeably. But if a pain subjectivist denies that pain experiences are conceptually contentful yet insists they are nonetheless presentational, rationalizing, and classificatory, he is still vulnerable to my objections.
39. See also McDowell 1989, 286; and 1994, 37, 38, 120.

40. See Wright 1989, 250–54; 1991, 142–46; and 1998, 26–33, 38–45.
41. For elaboration of some of these objections, see Peacocke (1998) and Martin (1998).
42. Perhaps I might judge that I judge that p, judge that such first-order judgments are generally reliable, and for that reason judge that p; but this would not be a case of a judgment that p *itself directly* rationalizing the endorsement of its content.
43. One motivation for Wright’s denial is that we utter “I promise” on the basis of practical not theoretical reasons, which echoes my earlier point about one’s never having reason to judge (merely) that oneself is judging.
44. Note that you cannot promise by asserting that you *are promising*.
45. McDowell doesn’t consider this case. He focuses on subsequent *past-tense* applications of the demonstrative-predicative concept (1994, 57).
46. See Bain 2003.

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**NB.** (i) Page references are to reprints where mentioned. (ii) Roman numeral page references to McDowell 1994 refer to the introduction, which appears only in the paperback edition.

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