

McDowell's Transcendental Empiricism and the Theory-Ladenness of Experience*

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RESUMEN

Según el empirismo trascendental de McDowell, nuestra concepción del mundo depende de la experiencia, que a su vez depende de nuestra concepción del mundo. Esto parece estar en concordancia con la tesis según la cual la experiencia está cargada de teoría, pero también parece introducir un problema de circularidad viciosa. Argumento que la tesis de McDowell tiene recursos para evitar el problema de circularidad viciosa, gracias a la idea de un círculo más amplio que incluye más *relata* y más tipos de dependencia racional. Pero la aceptación de esta idea implica que si bien la experiencia está cargada de conceptos, *no* está cargada de teoría.

ABSTRACT

According to McDowell's transcendental empiricism, the world view depends on experience, which in turn depends on the world view. This seems to be in accord with the thesis that experience is theory-laden, but it also seems to introduce a problem of vicious circularity. I argue that McDowell's account has the resources to avoid the problem of vicious circularity by exploiting the idea of a wider circle that involves more *relata* and more kinds of rational dependence. But the acceptance of this idea entails that experience, though concept-laden, is *not* theory-laden.

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional empiricism conceives experience as providing the sort of knowledge that serves as the foundation for our world view. This foundation is, moreover, taken as presupposing no other knowledge. Thus, traditional empiricism accepts only one logical dimension of dependence: the dependence of our beliefs and, generally, of our world view on experience. In this picture, experience is understood atomistically, namely as not depending on anything else. And since, as Sellars and McDowell have argued, concepts could not be atomic,¹ experience within traditional empiricism cannot be but a pure, nonconceptual given.

But if experience were a nonconceptual given, it could not in fact discharge its role as a foundation that *justifies* our knowledge. For this reason, McDowell, following Sellars, amends traditional empiricism by

suggesting that there must be another logical dimension of dependence, the dependence of experience on the world view. In other words, the suggestion is that experience should not be understood atomistically but holistically: experience is conceptual. This conceptual character of experience guarantees that it can serve as a reason for our perceptual beliefs. It is this dependence of experience on the world view that prompts McDowell to call his empiricism “transcendental empiricism”.²

If “world view” is understood as the body of beliefs that constitute our theories about the world, then McDowell’s suggestion that there is a second logical dimension in which experience depends on world view, amounts to the suggestion that experience is theory-laden. Thus, it seems that McDowell’s acceptance of the conceptuality of experience entails the acceptance of the theory-ladenness of experience.

Let us start with McDowell’s own general characterization of the two dimensions of logical dependence:

Sellars says: “the metaphor of ‘foundation’ is misleading in that it keeps us from seeing that if there is a logical dimension in which other empirical propositions rest on observation reports, there is another logical dimension in which the latter rest on the former” (Sellars 1956, 300). This is not to object to the idea of a “logical dimension” in which reports of observation are the support for everything else, but only to warn that a natural image for expressing that idea, the image of foundations, tends to make us forget the other dimension of dependence, in which reports of observation depend on the world view that rests on them as a building rests on its foundations. When I say experiences are ultimate in the order of justification, all I mean is that they are ultimate in the “logical dimension” in which Sellars allows that reports of observation are ultimate. I simply put experiences in the epistemological position in which Sellars puts reports of observation. Experiences, in my picture, have conceptual content, and that means I have just the machinery Sellars does — a holism about the conceptual — to ensure that the other dimension of dependence is not lost. So I am not a foundationalist in Williams’s sense [McDowell (2000a), p. 14].³

Yet at this level of a general characterization of transcendental empiricism, there seems to be a problem of a vicious circularity: the world view depends on experience, which in turn depends on the world view. This is a familiar line of argumentation against the theory-ladenness of perception thesis to the effect that it leads to perceptual relativism. In this paper I will suggest that McDowell’s account has the resources to avoid the problem of vicious circularity by exploiting the idea of a wider circle that involves more *relata* and more kinds of rational dependence. But the acceptance of this idea leads to the rejection of the thesis that experience is theory-laden. In my paper, I will focus on two of these kinds of rational dependence in order to

explore their differences and I will make a suggestion about how to differentiate experience from observational belief in order to account for the foundational role that the former plays in the justification of the latter.

II. THE *RELATA* OF A WIDER CIRCLE AND AN INITIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THEIR RATIONAL RELATIONS

McDowell's initial characterization of his empiricism involves two *relata*: experience and the world view. Thus far, we have regarded the world view as the body of beliefs that constitute our theories about the world. But this cannot be right, given that McDowell accepts some kind of belief-independence for experience [cf. McDowell (1996), pp. 60-3; and McDowell (2001), p. 181]: we cannot but experience the two lines in the Mueller-Lyer illusion as being unequal, even though we believe that they are, in fact, equal. Thus experience does not necessarily depend on the totality of our occurrent beliefs.

But McDowell can certainly accommodate this point by recourse to his thesis that experience, unlike thought, involves the *passive* actualization of conceptual capacities. So, it is more accurate to hold that experience depends only on that part of our world view that can be passively actualized in experience. Let us call this "the embodied world view". The crucial issue, then, is to characterize the nature of the dependence of experience on the embodied world view. This is a rational connection which cannot plausibly be considered as inferential because that would deprive experience from the evidential role it plays in the first logical dimension of dependence. Experience is not the *conclusion* of an argument. The embodied world view — or its parts — on which experience depends is not connected to experience as premises are connected to the conclusion of an argument. The connection between world view and experience must be of a different sort but still rational.⁴ Before turning to this, however, I would like to identify the other *relata* of the wider circle and to give a preliminary characterization of the rational dependencies between them.

Along with the dependence of experience on the (embodied) world view, McDowell speaks about the dependence of beliefs on experience. Here, there are at least two distinct kinds of rational dependence: a) the dependence of observational beliefs on experience and b) the dependence of theoretical beliefs on experience. Only the latter can be usefully described as inferential because theoretical beliefs have a mediated responsiveness to the facts experience makes manifest [cf. McDowell (1995), p. 292]. On the other hand, observational beliefs have an immediate responsiveness to experience that is not inferential. As McDowell notes in relation to the first logical dimension

of dependence, experience does not play the role of *premises* from which one infers how things are: “Wright and Bernstein are wrong to say I assimilate perceptual and inferential belief-acquisition. Appearances do not standardly play the role of premises from which one infers how things are. On the contrary, appearances can simply be facts making themselves manifest” [McDowell (2000c), p. 337].⁵

Finally, there must also be a kind of rational dependence between the non-embodied theoretical beliefs and the embodied world view for the circle between experience and world view to be complete. This last kind of dependence could perhaps be metaphorically described as a “sedimentation” that takes place through a process of “slow learning”.

The examination of all the *relata* and the rational dependencies identified above is certainly not a task that can be undertaken in a single paper. Here, I shall examine, in a preliminary way, only two of the dependencies, those that directly involve experience: a) the dependence of observational beliefs on experience and b) the dependence of experience on the embodied world view. McDowell needs the former dependence in order to account for the intentionality or objective purport of our empirical beliefs, since, as he holds, the very intelligibility of beliefs as contentful states rests on their answerability to the empirical world. In Kantian terms, this “transcendental thought” is that “we need to be able to see how the spontaneity of the understanding can be constrained by the receptivity of sensibility, if we are to be entitled to the very idea of subjective postures with objective purport” [McDowell (1998a), pp. 365-6]. It is for this reason that the coherentist idea, that beliefs have only a causal but not also a rational dependence on the world, does not only lead to the loss of the world but also to the loss of beliefs: “[w]e can have empirical content in our picture only if we can acknowledge that thoughts and intuitions [i.e. perceptual experiences] are rationally connected. By rejecting that, Davidson undermines his right to the idea ... of a body of beliefs” [McDowell (1996), pp. 17-8]. Thus, for McDowell the rational dependence of observational beliefs on experience accounts for the objective purport of observational beliefs by recourse to the objective purport of experiences. On the other hand, the dependence of experience on the embodied world view accounts for the objective purport of experience by recourse to the conceptuality of experience: “[e]xperiences have their content by virtue of the fact that conceptual capacities are operative in them” [McDowell (1996), p. 66]. More particularly, McDowell’s claim is that “we can intelligibly credit perceptual experiences with objective purport only in virtue of how the conceptual apparatus that constitutes their objective purport fits into the world view that is, in the other logical dimension, grounded on the deliverances of experience” [McDowell (1998c), pp. 463-4].⁶

III. THE DEPENDENCE OF OBSERVATIONAL BELIEFS ON EXPERIENCE

I will begin with the examination of the dependence of observational beliefs on experience because this issue in McDowell's work has received comparatively more attention. In relation to this, I will consider the following two questions: a) how does McDowell differentiate experiences from observational beliefs and b) what kind of rational dependence holds between them?

McDowell clearly differentiates experiences from beliefs and this differentiation is crucial for avoiding Davidson's coherentism. For McDowell, not only a belief but also an experience can justify another belief. But what exactly is the difference between experiences and beliefs? We have already mentioned one characterization which addresses the different ways in which conceptual capacities are involved in beliefs and experiences respectively. According to that characterization, beliefs involve the free responsible exercise of conceptual capacities whereas experiences involve a passive actualization of conceptual capacities.⁷ This difference does not concern the *content* of beliefs and experiences but merely the attitude taken towards them: "[a] judgement of experience does not introduce a new kind of content, but simply *endorses* the conceptual content, or some of it, that is already possessed by the experience on which it is grounded" [McDowell (1996), pp. 48-9 (emphasis added)]. In other words, McDowell's suggestion is that experience, unlike belief, involves no attitude of acceptance or endorsement at all: "we need an idea of perception as something in which there is no attitude of acceptance or endorsement at all, but only, as I put it, an invitation to adopt such an attitude, which, in the best cases, consists in a fact's making itself manifest to one" [McDowell (2002), p. 279].

If one grants the idea that experience and observational belief do not differ with respect to their content, then the rational dependence between them cannot be usefully described as inferential. As McDowell notes: "[t]he only inferences corresponding to the rational connection in question would be of the 'stuttering' form, 'P; so P'. No doubt that inference-form (if we allow it the title) cannot lead one astray, but its freedom from risk seems a quite unhelpful model for the rationality of observational judgment" [McDowell (1998b), p. 405-6]. Thus the intentionality of observational beliefs depends on a normative context that cannot be reduced to a set of inferential relations. The basic norm that the content of observational beliefs exhibits is "the norm embodied in the so-called identity theory of truth. It is correct or incorrect to judge that something is a chair according to whether or not it is indeed a chair" [McDowell (2000b), p. 105].

In section II, I noted that McDowell's main argument against coherentism is the "transcendental thought" that the very intelligibility of beliefs as contentful states presupposes a rational dependence of beliefs on the world. For this reason, McDowell introduces experiences as contentful states that consist in a fact's making itself manifest to one, a move that relocates the problem of accounting for the intelligibility of beliefs at the level of accounting for the intelligibility of experiences thus conceived. In other words, the "transcendental thought" presupposes the intelligibility of experiences as having objective purport.

In order to deal with this new problem we have to examine the dependence of experience on the embodied world view. But before turning to this issue, we shall examine an independent argument in the form of counterexample that McDowell proposes against Davidson's claim that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" [Davidson (2001), p. 141]. McDowell's aim is to describe a case that violates this claim, in that it shows that seeing that P is not visually acquiring the belief that P. This he describes in the following way: "I thought I was looking at your sweater under a kind of illumination that makes it impossible to tell what colours things are, so I thought it merely looked brown to me, but I now realize I was actually seeing that it was brown." [McDowell (2003), p. 681]. In this situation, according to McDowell, the perceiver had an entitlement (he was actually seeing that the sweater is brown), but erroneous beliefs prevented him from acquiring the corresponding observational belief.

I would like to discuss two objections to McDowell's argument. The first objection is that this past experience can provide only an *inferential* justification for the perceiver's present belief about the colour of the sweater. This is so because the perceiver acquires the belief that the sweater was really brown on the basis of a *belief* about the veridicality of his past experience, i.e., on the basis of his *realization* that he was actually seeing that the sweater was brown. In other words, the past entitlement is already embedded in a belief and it is in that form that it is involved in the justification of his current belief that the sweater was really brown. Therefore, this past entitlement is not involved in the justification of beliefs in the non-inferential way that actual experiences are supposed to be involved in the justification of observational beliefs. But I think that this objection does not actually affect McDowell's argument, because his point is not that we can retrospectively use a past entitlement in order to acquire *observational* beliefs. Rather, his point is to show that a fact P can be available to a subject in a state of sensory consciousness without that availability to involve the belief that P.

This brings us to the second objection, which concerns the very notion of availability: how can a fact be available to a perceiver without the perceiver being aware of the fact? Does not the availability of a fact to one (or, equivalently, the experience of a fact) involve awareness of the fact? And

if it *does* involve awareness, does not this entail that it involves some kind of attitude on the part of the perceiver towards the experienced fact?⁸

McDowell's response to this objection is to reject the idea that the availability of a fact to one involves *actual* awareness of the fact: "I think that receiving an impression, having things appear to one a certain way, does not itself imply accepting anything, not even that things appear to one that way. The awareness that experience involves is a matter of its being *possible* for the 'I think' to accompany representations, to echo Kant — not of its actually accompanying them" [McDowell (2002), p. 278]. Thus, for McDowell, experience is not available in the sense of involving actual awareness, but only in that it affords the subject the possibility of becoming aware of its content.

On the other hand, becoming aware of this availability involves taking an attitude towards it, even though this could be an attitude of minimal commitment, namely that things merely *look* a certain way. This is perhaps the reason that McDowell suggests that experience — conceived as a proposition that involves no endorsement at all — does not presuppose the subject's attention [cf. McDowell (2002), pp. 283, 293-4, 299]. Yet, clearly, this is not what we understand when we speak ordinarily about experience, or even when we read that "[experience] consists in a fact's making itself manifest to one" [McDowell (2002), p. 279]. Moreover, if experiencing a fact simply translates into the *possibility* of its being available to the subject's attention, then there seems to be no principled way of differentiating between the experiencing of a fact and the sheer obtaining of a fact. McDowell responds to a related objection by Wright [Wright (2002)] as follows: "[o]f course the sheer obtaining of a fact, say some state of affairs on the far side of the moon, cannot justify someone in believing it obtains. But why does Wright think that makes it 'inept' to say an *observed* fact can justify?" [McDowell (2002), p. 289]. If "observed", in this context, means "attended", then McDowell's response does not resolve the problem because it starts too late: an attended fact already involves endorsement, so it does not amount merely to what he takes as experiencing the fact. If, on the other hand, "observed" means "experienced", then the response merely puts forward the distinction by fiat without supporting arguments. The need for an account in which the experiencing of a fact is differentiated from the sheer obtaining of a fact is imperative for McDowell given his position that "[experiencing a fact, h]aving things appear to one a certain way is already itself a mode of *actual* operation of conceptual capacities" [McDowell (1996), p. 62 (emphasis added)]; only an idealist could be happy with the idea that the sheer obtaining of a fact involves a mode of actual operation of conceptual capacities.

But one could respond to this objection by claiming that the difference between the experiencing of a fact and the sheer obtaining of a fact is exactly

that only the former involves the activation of conceptual capacities. So the real dissatisfaction with this answer stems from the adherence to the idea that the actual operation of conceptual capacities in experience necessarily involves actual awareness. This idea seems plausible at least in the case of the activation of conceptual capacities of proper sensibles [cf. McDowell (1996), pp. 29-30]. How could there be an impression that *x* is red without *x* looking red to the perceiver? Perhaps one response to this could be that the actualization of conceptual capacities does not necessarily bring things into focus [cf. McDowell (2002), p. 299], that conceptuality does not necessarily entail determinacy [cf. McDowell (2002), p. 283]. However, this response transfers the discussion from the attitude to the content, because we can certainly attend to something indeterminate (for example, we can attend to the periphery of our visual field, namely without moving our eyes). In other words, the position that conceptuality does not necessarily entail determinacy cannot support the position that conceptuality does not necessarily involve attention.

But I would like to suggest that this very move from the discussion about the attitude (or lack of attitude) towards experience to the discussion about the content of experience opens up a new way to differentiate the experience of a fact both from the corresponding observational belief and the sheer obtaining of a fact.

Thus far we did not explore this option because we took for granted the assumption that the difference between observational beliefs and experiences does not concern their content but rather the lack of attitude towards experiences. Due to this assumption we adopted a very abstract approach to experiential content, as simply a proposition *P* that is endorsed by an observational belief. So in what follows, I would like to shift the focus from the attitude to the content of experience and explore the idea that the very content of experience differs from the content of observational beliefs.

This is a point I need to clarify. What I am claiming is not that experience involves some kind of nonconceptual content, but that it involves “more” conceptual content than the corresponding observational belief endorses. In fact, this does not depart from McDowell’s own position: “[a] typical judgement of experience selects from the content of the experience on which it is based; the experience that grounds the judgement that things are thus and so need not be exhausted by its affording the appearance that things are thus and so” [McDowell (1996), p. 49, note 6].

Thus, to summarize my suggestion, experience differs from the observational belief that *P* in that it involves more conceptual content than *P*. Moreover, experience differs from the sheer obtaining of a fact in that it involves awareness of the fact through the activation of conceptual capacities.

There is an independent motivation for adopting this suggestion: it can account, as we are going to see, for the *foundational* role that experience plays in the justification of beliefs. In other words, it can account for the fact that experience is not just an ordinary reason, like beliefs, but it serves as an ultimate reason in the chain of justification. On the other hand, McDowell's image for experience as "an *invitation* — a *petition* ... to accept a proposition about the objective world" [McDowell (2002), p. 278 (emphasis added)] does not capture the force with which experience is imposed on us, a force that puts an end to the need for further justification.

In keeping with the change of focus set out above, in the final section of my paper I will examine the character of the conceptuality of experience. This should be sought in the dependence of experience on the embodied world view.

IV. THE DEPENDENCE OF EXPERIENCE ON THE EMBODIED WORLD VIEW

There is much discussion in the literature on the dependence of our observational beliefs on experience. However, the very conceptuality of experience, which allows it to serve as a reason for observational beliefs and to account for the intelligibility of their objective purport, is constituted by the second dependence, namely the dependence of experience on the embodied world view. In virtue of this dependence, experience transcends the here and now and presents us with entities *of the world* —namely, with entities that are related to a nexus of not immediately experienced facts:

the conceptual equipment that is operative in perceptual experience generally ... is dependent on a world view, in the logical dimension that the metaphor of "foundation" risks leading us to forget. We can capture this part of the picture by saying that the intentionality, the objective purport, of perceptual experience in general ... depends in that logical dimension, on having the world in view, in a sense that goes beyond glimpses of the here and now. It would not be intelligible that the relevant episodes present themselves as glimpses of the here and now apart from their being related to a wider world view in the logical dimension Sellars adds [McDowell (1998c), pp. 435-6].⁹

In section II, I argued that experience, because of its belief independence, must depend only on what I called "the embodied world view" and not on the totality of our beliefs. Moreover, I noted that the dependence of experience on the embodied world view cannot be plausibly construed as inferential because that would deprive experience of its evidential role in the first logical dimension of dependence. Experience is not the conclusion of an argument and the beliefs of the embodied world view on which experience

depends do not function as premises. The rational connection between the embodied world view and experience must be *constitutive* rather than inferential. That is why experiences serve as a very particular kind of reason: they serve as *foundations*, as ultimate in the order of justification.

In what follows I shall attempt to give an account of the foundational role that experience plays in the justification of beliefs by focusing on the structure of experiential content. In this account, I shall take for granted the conceptuality of experiential content and I shall argue only for its foundational character. My suggestion will be that it is the very constitution of this content that allows it to serve not as a mere reason, but as a *foundation* for observational beliefs.

One place to begin is McDowell's discussion of what he finds missing in the chicken-sexers as compared to ordinary perceivers: "[chicken-sexers] cannot find in their perceptual experience impressions whose content is that a chick is male, or that it is female" [McDowell (2002), p. 279]. It is for this reason that their report that a chick is male is not a report of an *observational* belief. On the other hand, their report that the chick is white *is* a report of an observational belief because it *looks* white to them. Thus, impressions are a *necessary* constituent of the content of experience.¹⁰ Yet, clearly, I can *imagine* a chick looking white. Thus, if this is all we mean by the expression "looks white", then having impressions is not a sufficient condition for having experiences — at least of a minimal kind (for instance, the experience that this is white).

What more is needed? I would like to suggest two further conditions. The first is particularity. The impressions that constitute our experience are impressions which concern particulars. But this is not sufficient either because we can also *recall* the white-looking particular we saw yesterday. For this reason we need to add, I think, a further condition that captures the object-dependence of perception, namely that experience involves impressions of *bodily present* particulars.

I would like to make a few remarks on the notion of bodily presence. The first is to notice that there is no *sensory quality* of bodily presence. Strictly speaking, to take the example of vision, there is no *visual* quality manifesting the bodily presence of what is experienced. Yet we still have the capacity to experience the bodily presence of something because the content of experience is not exhausted by the way things look. The content of experience also presents things as affording exploration. It is exactly this characteristic that allows us to distinguish, from the first person perspective, veridical perception from hallucination. In veridical perception I experience the availability of an inexhaustible wealth that I can gradually explore through my capacity to move my eyes and, more generally, my body. Hallucination, on the other hand, involves no such possibility of exploration and discovery regarding what appears in my experience [cf. Gibson (1970)].

To take an elementary example, the reason why we cannot learn anything about an after-image from the way it appears is because it does not afford us any way of exploring it.¹¹

Viewed from this perspective, the difference between veridical and hallucinatory content does not lie in the way things look or in how the way they look changes. Rather, the difference lies in how the way things look changes relative to my exploratory movements. Thus, even when the changes in how things look during the hallucinatory experience are indistinguishable from such changes in a veridical experience, the subject experiences a difference which has to do with a sense of passivity¹² that characterizes the former case.¹³

Reference to proprioception is perhaps one way of making this difference clearer. In veridical perception, every movement of our eyes or head is accompanied by proprioceptive sense. This proprioceptive sense plays a crucial role in the way we perceive the world. One way that proprioceptive sense contributes to the constitution of perceptual experience concerns the motion or rest of the perceived objects. For example, when we look at a static object and move our eyes, the projected object on the retina also moves. However, we do not experience any such movement. The experience we have is of an object that remains still — this is one kind of *perceptual constancy* among many others that characterize our perception of the world. In this case, proprioception allows the visual system to distinguish between the movement on the retinal image that is caused by the movement of the eye (or, more generally, the body) and the movement that is caused by the world. In hallucination, there is a mismatch between proprioceptive sense and the way appearances change relative to our exploratory movements. It is perhaps this mismatch which creates the sense of passivity that accompanies hallucinatory experiences.

Thus, to summarize my suggestion, experience involves more conceptual content than the observational belief that it grounds on each occasion. The content of experience is not exhausted by the way things look but it also involves their availability for exploration. It is because of this availability for exploration that experience presents things as bodily present and manages to play a foundational role in the justification of beliefs.

The fact that the content of experience presents things as affording exploration accounts, moreover, for what is called “the fineness of grain” of perceptual content. Traditionally, the idea that perceptual content is fine-grained has led philosophers to suggest that, at any given moment, our visual field is like a high-resolution photo that simultaneously presents a seamless scene with all its features in focus. But recently it has been argued persuasively that this suggestion constitutes a grand illusion [cf. Noë (2002)]. However, that does not mean that we do not experience the fineness of grain in a different way: our visual experience involves more than is *visually* seen. This surplus is *perceptually* present but not *visually* present. Noë [(2004), ch.

2] explains its *perceptual* presence in terms of its *availability* to the perceiver's exploration: the perceiver's implicit understanding of the relation between his sensory and motor system, and ultimately the world, allows him to expect that movements of his body or of the object will bring further parts of the object into view. This is, perhaps, one of the ways that "what appears to be the case is understood as fraught with implications for the subject's cognitive situation in the world" [McDowell (1996), p. 32].

More generally, the fact that visual experience, at any given moment, transcends what is visually present, in the sense that it also presents things as available for exploration, can account for other kinds of perceptual constancy. For instance, a coin seen at an angle looks elliptical but we also experience it as round — in the sense that it affords that availability.¹⁴

In this last section, I explored different ways that the content of experience transcends the here and now and is integrated into our world view. This is how I think the *passive* activation of conceptual capacities should be understood. But if we accept this, does it mean that the dependence of experience on the embodied world view entails that experience is theory-laden? I think that, to the degree that theories constitute an *inferentially* articulated body of knowledge, experience is not theory-laden though it is concept-laden.

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NOTES

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¹ McDowell summarizes Sellar's point as follows: "Even in the case of those concepts that might seem most congenial to the atomism in traditional empiricism (concepts we might be tempted to see as figuring in directly experiential acquisition of knowledge that presupposes no other knowledge of matters of fact), the very possession of the concepts requires knowledge of a lot more than is stated when one gives expression to applications of them. For instance, to have color concepts one must know what conditions are appropriate for telling what color something is by looking at it" [McDowell (unpublished), p. 2]. See, also, McDowell (2002), p. 288.

² "For it to be intelligible that experiences have objective content ..., the very capacity for experience must be recognized to depend on antecedent knowledge of the sort that depends on experience in the first dimension. It must be possible to see how what experiences purport to disclose fits into an already possessed world view. This formulation shows how this non-traditional empiricism has a transcendental aspect, in an at least roughly Kantian sense" [McDowell (unpublished), p. 17].

³ “There is indeed a relation of rational dependence, of what (if this were the whole story) we might be tempted to call ‘superstructure’ on what we might be tempted to call ‘foundations’. But just because concepts are involved in experience, and the conceptual realm is a seamless web of rational interconnections, there is also a rational dependence (*of a different sort*) in the opposite direction. We would have to say that, in respect of this other dimension of rational dependence, the ‘foundations’ are *partly* held in place by the ‘superstructure’, and that makes the image of foundations unhappy” [McDowell (1995), p. 284 (emphasis added)]. See also McDowell (1998c), pp. 463-4; McDowell (1998b), pp. 427-8; McDowell (2000b), p. 96.

⁴ See note 3.

⁵ See, also, McDowell (1998b), pp. 405-6.

⁶ See, also, note 2.

⁷ See, for example, McDowell (2000a), p. 11-12: “But once we have thus identified ...[conceptual capacities], we can countenance cases in which capacities of that very kind are not exercised, but are nevertheless actualized, outside the control of their possessor, by the world’s impacts on her sensibility. That is just how I recommend conceiving experience. I hope it is clear that it matters to keep the terms ‘actualization’ and ‘exercise’ apart. Conceptual capacities are capacities of spontaneity, but in one obvious sense there is no spontaneity in perceiving. It is not up to one how things, for instance, look to one. How things look to one does not come within the scope of one’s responsibility to make up one’s own mind. But this is consistent with understanding experience as actualizing capacities that belong to spontaneity, in the sense that to understand what capacities they are we have to focus on their being exercisable in judgement. It is just that that is not the kind of actualization that is involved in experience.”

⁸ For an elaboration of this objection, see Stroud (2002).

⁹ See, also, McDowell (1996), pp. 31-2; and McDowell (2002), p. 288: “In experience at its best one directly takes in observable facts, but that is intelligible only in the context of a whole world-view, transcending the here and now, that enters into determining the content of the conceptual capacities operative in experience. That was my point of my appeal to Sellars.”

¹⁰ One constituent of impressions are proper sensibles. In relation to these, McDowell finds plausible the idea that “the different senses have their proper sensibles, and that there is no visual experience, say, without experience of the proper sensibles of vision” [McDowell (2002), p. 281].

¹¹ Since hallucinatory content does not afford exploration, what appears, at any given moment, is nothing more than what it looks to be. It is perhaps for this reason that it does not make sense to say that one could have an *illusion* during a hallucinatory experience. In other words, hallucinatory experience leaves no room for error.

¹² This passivity refers, of course, to a different kind of involuntariness than the modality-specific involuntariness that characterizes perceptual experience [cf. McDowell (1998c), p. 441].

¹³ For a defense, along these lines, of direct realism against the argument from hallucination, see Pagondiotis (forthcoming).

¹⁴ Perhaps one could extend that account for the seeing of aspects.

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