EPISODE II

Perceiver and Knower

That the *objective world would exist* even if there existed no knowing being at all, naturally seems at the first onset to be sure and certain, because it can be thought in the abstract...But if we try to *realize* this abstract thought...and if accordingly we attempt to *imagine an objective world without a knowing subject*, then we become aware that what we are imagining at that moment is in truth the opposite of what we intended...that is to say, precisely that which we had sought to exclude.

– Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, Vol. II.

This phenomenologically necessary concept of receptivity is in no way exclusively opposed to that of the *activity of the ego*, under which all acts proceeding in a specific way from the ego-pole are to be included. On the contrary, receptivity must be regarded as the lowest level of activity.

- Edmund Husserl, Experience and Judgment

Primeness

1. In my previous episode, I concentrate on how McDowell responds to the difficult question: how can we be both rational and natural? His proposal is 'a naturalism of second nature,' or 'naturalized platonism.' The take home message is that we can legitimately regard the space of reasons as part of nature. Now, an ensuing question concerns how the operations of the space of reasons enable our minds directly contact with the world. This big question can be divided into some more specific ones. The

present episode takes up the following one: how does our second nature enable us to have *perceptual*, or more general, *epistemic* contact with the world?

Let me introduce two notions before starting the exposition. They are 'broadness' and 'primeness.' A mental state is broad if and only if its individuation condition involves external factors; a mental state is prime if and only if it cannot be analyzed by more primitive states. 1 I shall begin with broadness. Its opposite notion is 'narrowness,' which says that the individuation condition of a mental state only involve internal factors; here 'internal' can be glossed by 'in the skull' or at least 'in the body.' To insist on the narrowness of mental states is to commit one 'internalism' about the mental.² By contrast, to think that mental states are generally broad is to hold 'externalism.' Now, there are generally two versions of externalism, weak and strong. Weak externalism holds that the mental state in question can be de-composed into internal and external factors; that is, the identity of the internal / external factors can be independently specified. By contrast, strong externalism maintains that the internal and external factors are interdependent in a strong sense; theoretically or conceptually we can talk about internal or external factors, but empirically there is no such distinction. This strong externalism commits broadness as well as primeness: the latter entails the former, but not vise versa. So we can understand weak externalism as subscribing broadness without primeness; the independently-specified internal factor is often called 'narrow content.' The motivations for committing narrow content include considerations about self-knowledge and mental causation, among others, but for my purpose we do not need to go through the details here.

So much has been said for the terminological matter. As we shall see, McDowell commits both primeness and broadness; that is, he is a strong externalist. The main theme of the present episode is primeness; I will leave broadness for episode four. In this section I shall first identify the relevant target and the basic shape of McDowell's criticisms, and more about his positive thinking will be discussed in the next section.

2. McDowell introduces his target in the context of Bertrand Russell's Theory of Descriptions.³ He discerns a Cartesian strand in Russell's overall thinking and characterizes it as follows:

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¹ I notice the relevance of these notions to the present discussion by reading Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford University Press, 2000). I do not make explicit reference to his work because his context is slightly different from mine, and it takes unnecessary effort to appropriate his wordings. I discuss the relation between his invocation of the notions of broadness / primeness and his anti-skepticism in my 'Evaluating Williamson's Anti-Skepticism,' *Sorites* 21 (2008).

² Here I bypass the distinction between state and content, for it does not make significant difference in the present discussion.

³ 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' in Philip Pettit and John McDowell (eds.), *Subject, Thought, and Context* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986), pp. 137-68; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1998), pp.228-59. I refer to the later version.

In a fully Cartesian picture, the inner life takes place in an autonomous realm, transparent to the introspective awareness of its subject; the access of subjectivity to the rest of the world becomes correspondingly problematic, in a way that has familiar manifestations in the mainstream of post-Cartesian epistemology...[this inner space is] a locus of configurations that are self-standing, not beholden to external conditions...⁴

Here McDowell does not refer to Descartes' texts, but we can reasonably conjecture that what he has in mind here is the 'Method of Doubt': in order to ensure the certainty or purity of our analyses, we should first only consider factors *internal to the subject*. The gist of McDowell's negative point here is that there is a harmful metaphysical assumption lurking in this seemingly innocent methodological consideration. The assumption is that there is an autonomous inner space metaphysically speaking. This metaphysics implies a disastrous epistemic loss of the world. McDowell first mentions Barry Stroud's argument against this epistemic disaster⁶:

Barry Stroud, for instance, plausibly traces the Cartesian threat of losing the world to this principle: one can acquire worldly knowledge by using one's senses only if one can know, at the time of the supposed acquisition of knowledge, that one is not dreaming. This sets a requirement that Stroud argues cannot be met; no proposed test or procedure for establishing that one is not dreaming would do the trick, since by a parallel principle one would need to know that one was not dreaming that one was applying the test or procedure and obtaining a satisfactory result. So Stroud suggests that if we accept the requirement we cannot escape losing the world.⁷

What Stroud identifies is the so-called 'KK principle' in traditional internalist epistemology: in order to know something, I need to know that I know that thing; that is, I need to know that I am not dreaming. If one subscribes the Method of Doubt and the Dreaming argument, one thereby commits certain variety of the KK principle. But it should be clear that the principle invites a vicious infinite regress, as described in the quotation. Now McDowell thinks that this diagnosis is plausible but not the end of

⁴ Ibid., pp.236-7. As before, the term 'Cartesian' is not invoked to make explicit reference to the philosopher Descartes (McDowell might disagrees with this). 'The inner space model' may be a more neutral label. Also see my third footnote in the introduction.

⁵ 'Reductionism and the First Person,' in Jonathan Dancy (ed.) *Reading Parfit* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1997), pp.230-50; reprinted in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp.359-82. Recall my remarks about how methodologies can infect ontology in my introduction.

⁶ The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), chap. 1.

⁷ 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' p.238.

the story.⁸ As we shall see, though lots of contemporary philosophers reject, at least implicitly, the KK principle, many of them still accept the inner space model. One of McDowell's main tasks is to show that this model is responsible for our philosophical anxiety concerning perception, knowledge, thought, language, action, personal identity, and self-consciousness.

McDowell then proposes two sources for the distinctiveness of the inner space model. The first is that the inner space theorist 'extends the range of truth and knowability to the appearances on the basis of which we naively think we know about the ordinary world.' The motivation of this is that '[this] permits a novel response to arguments that conclude that we know nothing from the fact that we are fallible about the external world.' Recall that the inner space theorist's skepticism is only methodological; his ultimate concern is to bring knowledge back to us. Therefore he adopts the above maneuver so that 'we can retreat to the newly recognized inner reality, and refute the claim that we know nothing...' 10

But this cannot be the whole story. The above move allows the truth predicates to apply to our subjective states, but this looks like a piece of commonsense; we do this all the time when we say something like 'it appears to me that such and such is the case.' Of course we can apply the truth predicates to this kind of talk: it is true whenever the subject reports sincerely. So there must be something more contentious that explains the distinctiveness of the inner space model.

The explanation is 'a picture of subjectivity as a region of reality whose layout is transparent - accessible through and through - to the capacity for knowledge that is newly recognized when appearances are brought within the range of truth and knowability.' The infallibility here implies 'not world-involving.' Combined with what has been said above, the inner space model amounts to this: items in the inner space are autonomous, self-standing, which is to say that their relations to the external world are extrinsic. It follows that a given subject has immediate and unproblematic grasps of his mental items. Even in the case of deceptive experiences, the subject can readily grasp his own 'seeming' states.

But isn't this just an outmoded straw man? McDowell does not cite specific passages from Descartes, and nowadays many philosophers admit that there are limits

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⁸ In these paragraphs McDowell, following M. F. Burnyeat, ventures an interpretation concerning the crucial difference between ancient skepticism and Descartes' more radical version. Since I have distanced myself from exegesis here (see footnote 4), in what follows I will characterize McDowell's understanding of the Cartesian inner space without evaluating it. What interests me here is how the inner space model renders the idea of direct contact with the world unintelligible, and how we manage to avoid this unpalatable result. I am interested in the real history too, but that will take us too far. From now on I will simply call the target 'the inner space model.' I am indebted to Professor Christian Wenzel about this.

⁹ Ibid., p.238.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.239.

¹¹ Ibid., p.240.

of self-knowledge. Who on earth will fall into the category characterized in this way?

As I said above, McDowell aims to show that this model functions in many domains. Concerning the issues of perception and knowledge, the model appears in the guise of the so-called 'highest common factor' theory. According to this line of thought, veridical and deceptive experiences are fundamentally of the same kind; because items in the inner space only have extrinsic relations to the external world, we can have complete grasp of them regardless the experience is veridical or not. As for knowledge, true empirical beliefs and deceptive ones (consider the evil demon or the brain-in-a-vat case) are fundamentally of the same kind; for similar reasons in the case of perception, the inner items have the justificatory power they do regardless the empirical belief is true or not.

This line of thought can be elaborated further. Let me start with perception. Normally we can gain correct information through perception, but things do not always go well. In illusion or hallucination, it seems that we still perceive *something*: some non-existent properties or objects. Now a natural question is that what instantiates the non-existent properties or objects perceived in deceptive cases? Here we have many complications: some philosophers think that what instantiates those perceived properties or objects are non-intentional sense-data; some denies this and think that those properties or objects are represented by our experiences. There are many entangling puzzles here, and the relevant literature goes very wild. ¹³ For our purpose here, we only need to notice that both sense-datum theory and representationalism (or intentionalism), no matter how the details go in different versions, regard veridical experiences and deceptive ones as fundamentally of the same kind. 14 The argument most frequently cited for this view is the one from phenomenal indistinguishability: since subjectively indistinguishable illusion / hallucination are possible, and 'experience' is essentially a subjective notion, there is a common factor shared by illusion, hallucination, and veridical experience. A veridical experience is constituted by this inner common factor plus external conditions; metaphysically speaking, the inner component is individuated without any reference to external situations, for it is something shared by veridical experiences and deceptive ones. We can call this the 'conjunctive' view of perception.¹⁵

¹² 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge,' *Proceedings of British Academy* 68 (1982), pp.455-79; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.369-94, at p.386.

¹³ I have a lot to say about relevant matters in my fifth episode.

¹⁴ In the fifth episode, I shall argue that we should not use 'intentionalism' and 'representationalism' interchangeably, and the former should be used in the context of perception; besides, the common kind assumption introduced here is *not* built in the very idea of intentionalism. But we do not need all these qualifications now.

¹⁵ The terminology here is suggested by the introductory episode of Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (eds.) *Perceptual Experience* (Clarendon Press, Oxford), pp.1-30. In my fifth episode I will

Simon Blackburn is one of those who find the above argument compelling. He writes that in the thought experiment involving phenomenal indistinguishability,

everything is the same from the subject's point of view. This is a legitimate thought-experiment. Hence there is a legitimate category of things that are the same in these cases; notably experience and awareness.¹⁶

Although other philosophers in this camp may have different formulations, the general shape of the argumentation is the same. I will come back to this later.

Here goes the epistemological version. Traditionally, the notion of 'knowledge' is analyzed into 'belief,' 'truth,' and 'justification.' Edmund Gettier's short classics crashed our faith in this simply analysis, but most of us believe that either we can supplement the original analysis with a fourth condition, or we can revise the 'justification' element in one way or another, to accommodate those putative counterexamples. On a widespread understanding, the 'truth' element is undoubtedly external, and both the 'belief' and the 'justification' elements are internal. After the rise of externalism in both philosophy of mind and epistemology, the claim about belief and justification has long been shaky. In the case of justification, however, the internalist intuition stands firm. Consider the brain-in-a-vat case (BIV for short). If I were a brain envatted in a scientist's lab, presumably I would have perceptual phenomenology indistinguishable from the phenomenology owned by normal subjects. Now I form a belief that I am in a noisy café, based on my auditory phenomenology. Obviously this belief does not constitute knowledge, for actually I (if any) am in a scientist's lab. But it seems unfair to say that I am not justified in believing that I am in a noisy café because I am not in a position to know that I am in a bad case. Recall the KK principle. It requires a meta-knowledge for every bits of knowledge, which is unreasonably strong. Now even for those who subscribe this principle, to demand that I have knowledge about my overall situation before I can have justification about the café belief is far too strong. Why think that I, as a brain in a vat, am not justified in believing that I am in a noisy café, given that I do have the relevant phenomenology cause by the electronic device? If this line of thought is accepted, the justification element is internal after all, for a brain in a vat or a subject deceived by the evil demon can have justification about empirical beliefs. This is also a 'conjunctive' view, for knowledge is (at least) composed by internal justification element and external truth element.

The conjunctive view about perception and knowledge is in effect the inner space

¹⁶ Spreading the Word (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983), p.324.

argue that this way of carving the battle field is defective because it leaves out weak externalism, which accepts broadness but rejects primeness. This does not matter in the present theme.

model: on this view, there is a common factor shared by subjects in the good case and in the bad case. ¹⁷ This implies that the common factor is 'self-standing, not beholden to external conditions,' for if it were not, it cannot present in the bad case, where external condition is absent. With this picture at hand, nonetheless, we juxtapose our direct contact with world: if the inner element is present anyway, regardless our real situations, doesn't it constitute a veil that blocks our access to the world?

In the case of perception, McDowell responses to this predicament this way:

Of facts to the effect that things seems thus and so to one, we might say, some are cases of things being thus and so within the reach of one's subjective access to the external world, whereas others are mere appearances. In a given case the answer to the question 'Which?' would state a further fact about the disposition of things in the inner realm...since this further fact is not independent of the outer realm, we are compelled to picture the inner and outer realms as interpenetrating, not separated from one another by the characteristically Cartesian divide.¹⁸

In the picture McDowell recommends, the 'conjunction' presents in the inner space picture is replace by a 'disjunction.' There is no inner common factor shared by veridical experiences and deceptive ones, so there is no inner factor to be *conjunctive* with external conditions. In the good case, by contrast, perceptual experiences involve external situations essentially, which means that the relation between perception and deception is *disjunctive*: either a perceptible aspect of the world, or a mere appearance, is presented. Now a possible objection is that on this picture, we have no idea about whether we are in the good case or not. Given our refusal of the KK principle, this objection is irrelevant. We can shrug our shoulder and reply to the skeptic: *why* do I have to know about whether I am in the good case in order for me to be in genuine perceptual contact with the world?

Now we are in a position to evaluate Blackburn's remarks quoted above. McDowell says: '[t]he uncontentiously legitimate category of things that are the same across the different cases is the category of how things *seem* to the subject.' Phenomenal indistinguishability does imply there is something in common, but this 'something' is only *seeming*; after all, what guarantees it is *phenomenal* indistinguishability. And we have seen that for McDowell, this seeming should be taken disjunctively.

3. The problem of perceptual contact is in an important sense more fundamental than any problem in epistemology, for:

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¹⁷ The good / bad case talk is appropriate from *Knowledge and Its Limits*.

¹⁸ 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' p.241.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.248, my italics.

[o]nce we are gripped by the idea of self-contained subjective realm, in which things are as they are independently of external reality (if any), it is too late...[O]ur problem is not now that our contact with the external world seems too *shaky* to count as knowledgeable, but that our picture seems to represent us as out of touch with the world altogether.²⁰

The inner space model insulates us from the external world, so the deepest problem is that we do not have any contact with the world *at all* if we are locked in the inner space. A reaction to the dreaming argument is to retreat from the outer realm to the inner, as the inner space theorist does, but the price it pays is obviously too high; in order to meet the challenge posed by the unreasonable KK principle, the inner space theorist loses the world altogether.

McDowell's disjunctive conception of experience leaves the plausible part of the inner space model intact:

I approached this fully Cartesian picture of subjectivity by way of the thought, innocent in itself, that how things seem to one can be a fact, and is knowable in a way that is immune to familiar skeptical challenges. Short of the fully Cartesian picture, the infallibly knowable fact - its seeming to one that things are thus and so – can be taken disjunctively, as constituted either by the fact that things are manifestly thus and so or by the fact that that merely seems to be the case. ²¹

But if we insulate ourselves in the inner space, then the innocent part is spoiled too, for if we never enjoy perceptual contact with the world, it soon becomes 'quite unclear that the fully Cartesian picture in entitled to characterize its inner facts in *content*-involving terms - in terms of its seeming to one that things are thus and so – at all.'²² On this miserable picture, subjectivity is 'blank or blind,'²³ which does not deserve to be called 'subjectivity' indeed.

Apart from the considerations about the dreaming argument, the inner space model might well be motivated by the rise of modern science, for '[i]t seems scarcely more than common sense that a science of the way organisms relate to their environment should look for states of the organisms whose intrinsic nature can be described independently of the environment.' Worse still,

²¹ Ibid., p.242. I will say more about this 'disjunctivism' in my fifth lecture, when I discuss how McDowell conceives the conscious aspect of our human lives.

²⁴ Ibid., p.243.

²⁰ Ibid., p.242.

²² Ibid., pp.242-3, my italics.

²³ Ibid., p243.

this intellectual impulse is gratified also in a modern way of purportedly bringing the mind within the scope of theory, in which the interiority of the inner realm is literally spatial; the autonomous explanatory states are in ultimate fact states of the nervous system, although, in order to protect the claim that the explanations they figure in are psychological, they are envisaged as conceptualized by theories of mind in something like functionalist terms. This conception of mind shares what I have suggested we should regard as the fundamental motivation of the classically Cartesian conception; and I think this is much more significant than the difference between them.²⁵

McDowell does not render his reply to this argument from science explicit, but what he would say is clear: we have good reasons for thinking that the mind as such should not be incorporated by any branch of natural science, for it lives in the space of reason, a domain cannot be reduced by natural sciences. If this is so, this motivation for the inner space model should be discarded from the very beginning. Sciences can help us to understand the enabling conditions of various mental capacities, to be sure, but this should be distinguished from the constitutive questions of the mind.

Another possible motivation of the inner space model is to secure our first-person authority. In general cases, we know ourselves better than an outsider. The inner space model is sometimes thought to be a good explanation of this, for according to it the subject' introspection 'becomes the idea of an inner vision, scanning a region of reality that is wholly available to its gaze...' But notice that what first-person authority says is that *generally* we ourselves have *better* knowledge; it does not say that we ourselves always know everything. However, what the inner space model delivers is the latter, which is blatantly too strong. Moreover, the model 'puts in question the possibility of access to the inner realm from outside.' If all of us are 'beetles in the box,' how can we have any knowledge about other subjects' mental state? As McDowell asks, how can we 'perceive, in another person's facial expression or his behaviour, that he is...in pain[?]' This motivation for the inner space model is

²⁵ Ibid., p.244.

²⁶ Ibid., p.245.

²⁷ M. G. F. Martin seems to develop this line of thought in a more detailed way. See his 'The Limits of Self-Awareness,' *Philosophical Studies* 120 (2004), pp.37-89, especially pp.47-51.

²⁸ Ibid., p.245.

²⁹ 'On "The Reality of the Past",' in Christopher Hookway and Philip Pettit (eds.), *Action and Interpretation: Studies in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978), pp.127-44; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, pp.295-313, at p.305. The topic of the epistemology of other mind is the main theme of his 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge.'

ill-grounded, either.³⁰

A possible rejoinder runs like this. The inner space theorist might concede that the argument from self-knowledge does not work, and somehow render the picture and moderate (as opposed to omniscient) self-knowledge compatible. Now, 'subjectivity' may be taken as the next candidate for argument: 'the internal component of the composite picture...irresistibly attracts the attributes that intuitively characterize the domain of subjectivity.' And here goes the alleged Fregean:

It is in the internal component that we have to locate the difference Frege's constraint requires us to mark between pairs of (say) beliefs that in the full composite story would be described as involving the attribution of the same property to the same object, but that have to be distinguished because someone may without irrationality have one and not the other...Frege's notion of a mode of presentation is supposed to have its use in characterizing the configurations of the interior...³¹

This argument has some initial plausibility. Frege famously distinguishes between sense and reference, and presumably 'reference' should be located in the external world. Therefore, it is natural to identify 'sense' with the internal component. This line of thought is strengthened by the fact that sense is often seen as the constituent of the *cognitive* realm. Unfortunately, the 'difficulty is palpable':

how can we be expected to acknowledge that our subjective way of being in the world is properly captured by this picture, when it portrays the domain of our subjectivity – our cognitive world – in such a way that, considered from its own point of view, that world has to be conceived as letting in no light from outside? The representational content apparently present in the composite story comes too late to meet the point.³²

So the argument from subjectivity fails either. If we regard subjectivity as something 'inner,' we cannot make sense of the fact that we are beings *in the world*: not only our *bodies*, but our*selves*, are objective presences in the world. I shall come back to this in my episode four and five.

4. Let's turn to McDowell's parallel story concerning knowledge, or more

³⁰ McDowell discusses self-knowledge and related issues in his diagnosis of Cartesian immaterialism He attempts to argue that immaterialism is not the deepest problem with the Cartesian way of thinking. I appropriate his remarks there for my own purpose, namely to show the weakness of the inner space model.

³¹ 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' p.251.

³² Ibid., p.251.

specifically, justification. Here McDowell begins with Sellars's thought that 'knowledge – at least as enjoyed by rational animals – is a certain sort of standing in the space of reasons.' McDowell aims to disabuse a particular 'deformation' of the Sellarsian idea, namely 'an interiorization of the space of the reasons, a withdrawal of it from the external world.' This putative 'deformation' is natural enough: 'reason' is often, if not always, treated as something 'subjective' and therefore 'internal.' But as we have seen in the above discussion, this seemingly natural thought is not really natural when thought through: if subjectivity belongs to the allegedly internal factor, the very idea of subjectivity as the *cognitive* space becomes unintelligible.

Since the general lesson in the case in epistemology is the same with that of perception, I shall concentrate on issues concerning justification specifically. To begin with, consider a traditional notion concerning knowledge – 'epistemic luck.' It is commonsensical that for something to be knowledge, it must at least be a true belief, and it is also commonsensical that this is not enough. Not enough, because the two conditions do not rule out the possibility that a subject happens to have a true belief. This should be ruled out because we think that to have a piece of knowledge is to be in a normative status, and a true belief by luck does not give us this. The notion of 'justification' serves to bridge the normative gap: a subject has a piece of knowledge if and only if she holds the true belief in question with *good reasons*. Justification is thought to be a truth-conducive property; it is supposed to be something that excludes epistemic luck.

The Gettier-style counterexamples end the good old days. The moral of those cases is that epistemic luck is unavoidable; the subjects in the examples have fairly good reasons to hold the beliefs in question, but those beliefs fail to be knowledge. The literatures in epistemology became a mess during the following few decades. It is not that there was no insightful proposal; the trouble is that it seems to become a dead issue before damping the relevant misgivings: if some notion of 'justification' or some other conditions cannot preclude epistemic luck, then how is knowledge possible?

Now, a typical McDowellian move is to consider why a given question looks so urgent. Why, we should ask ourselves, do we think that knowledge requires the possessors of it manage to rule out epistemic luck completely? To answer this, imagine that somehow we do accomplish that flawless epistemic standing. It soon becomes clear that the picture is a version of the inner space model: the mental items are transparent through and through for the subject, for those items are self-standing,

³³ 'Knowledge and the Internal,' in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995), pp.877-93; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, pp.395-413, at p.395.

³⁴ Ibid., p.395

³⁵ The vague term 'something' is supposed to leave open various questions concerning the notion of 'knowledge.'

not beholden to any external conditions. Again, the fear about epistemic luck can be traced back to the argument from illusion, broadly construed. Consider the crucial step of it:

If things are indeed thus and so when they seem to be, the world is doing me a favour. So if I want to restrict myself to standings in the space of reasons whose flawlessness I can ensure with external help, I must go no further than taking it that it *looks* to me as if things are thus and so.³⁶

The metaphor 'the world's favor' denotes epistemic luck. No one, including those who are faithful to traditional epistemology, can sensibly deny that they exist. The crucial question is that what follows from this. The inner space model theorist thinks that we should 'restrict ourselves' to the inner space, for he assumes that *epistemic luck are something to be avoided in order for us to have knowledge*. This is the assumption McDowell disputes.

McDowell first lays out the desideratum – human subjects' *critical* reason. 'If it turns out to be an effect of interiorizing the space of reasons that we become unable to make sense of this critical function of reason, we ought to conclude that the very idea of the space of reasons has become unrecognizable.'³⁷ The strategy is to assume the inner space model for the sake of argument, and to see whether we can still make good sense of the very idea of the space of reasons. An obvious response is skepticism, which holds that in order to fulfill the demand of 'risk-free,' we have to stay in the inner realm. But this means, at the same time, that we will never break the inner circle, hence skepticism. McDowell does not regard skepticism as the main opponent in the paper now I am concentrating on, but we have seen above how he responds to it: if we never have perceptual contact with the world, there is no reason to think that we can characterize the inner space with content-involving terms.

Another response is to insist 'that there must be policies or habits of basing belief on appearance that *are* utterly risk-free.' As McDowell points out, this looks attractive 'in the context of the threat of scepticism,' but it is clear that it only 'express a rather touching *a priori* faith in the power of human reason to devise fully effective protections against the deceptive capacities of appearance.' This response is *ad hoc*, for it clings on the original three-fold analysis of knowledge, and insists that they *must* be jointly sufficient for knowledge. Without any substantial argument for this position, we do not need to take it seriously.

³⁷ Ibid., p.398.

³⁶ Ibid., p.396.

³⁸ Ibid., p.399.

³⁹ Ibid., p.399-400.

The response McDowell considers in details is again the composite, or conjunctive, conception. In the context of knowledge, it goes like this:

At least for rational animals, a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons is a necessary condition for knowledge. But since the positions one can reach by blameless moves in the space of reasons are not factive, as epistemically satisfactory positions are, a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons cannot be what knowledge is.⁴⁰

What does knowledge require in addition to a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons, according to the traditional picture? It is 'the familiar truth requirement for knowledge...[conceived] as a necessary extra condition for knowledge, over and above the best one can have in the way of reliability in a policy or habit of basing belief on appearance.' The notion of 'reliability' figures in the picture as the internal component, as opposed to its role in 'full-blown externalism,' which 'reject[s] the Sellarsian idea' shared by all parties considered above. Thus the composite picture can be seen as combining internal reliability (blamelessness) with external truth.

To separate reliability and truth is the source of the problem, McDowell argues. On the one hand, the inner space theorist interiorizes the space of reason, which means 'standings in the space [cannot] consist in a cognitive purchase on an objective fact...' But if that is so, then 'how can reason have the resources it would need in order to evaluate the reliability of belief-forming policies or habits?' ⁴³ The 'interiorized Fregean sense' is unintelligible, as we have seen in the case of perception.

The epistemological version of the inner space model faces an additional challenge. Consider the reason why 'justification' is introduced in the first place. A true belief held by a subject accidentally does not count as knowledge, for knowledge requires *reasons*. Now we have a subject in the good case, the other in the subjectively indistinguishable bad case; one has knowledge, the other does not. McDowell then asks: 'if its being so is external to her operations in the space of reasons, how can it not be outside the reach of her rational powers?' ⁴⁴ Epistemologists introduce 'justification' in order to account for the *rational* element of knowledge, but when we consider the good case and the bad case with the inner space model, we realize that it is *epistemic luck* that make the difference. The subject in the good case had knowledge not because he has a better standing in the space of reasons, but because

⁴¹ Ibid., p.400.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.400.

⁴² Ibid., p.401.

⁴³ Ibid., pp.402-3.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.403.

he is lucky. This is where the Gettier-style counterexamples come in. Epistemic luck do exist, but '[t]he hybrid view's concession to luck, tagged on to a picture of reason as self-sufficient within its own proper province, comes too late.' What the existence of epistemic luck shows is not that we should confine ourselves in the flawless inner space and try to work out our ways to knowledge, but that our rational power has its limits.

As a result, justification is closer to the external world than we originally envisage. The space of reasons incorporates the worldly facts as its constituents:

When someone enjoys such a position [of knowing], that involves, if you like, a stroke of good fortune, a kindness from the world; even so, the position is, in its own right, a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons, not a composite in which such a standing is combined with a condition external to the space of reasons. Whether we like it or not, we have to rely on favours from the world: not just that it presents us with appearances…but that on occasion it actually is the way it appears to be.⁴⁶

In sum, we need to 'learn to live with' ⁴⁷ the fact that we are subject to epistemic luck, that is, our rational power has its limits. The inner space model strives to preserve the fantasy of human reason, but the resulting picture is quite implausible. Why is it so tempting to lapse into that picture then?

Again, consider the good case and the bad case. Intuitively, the BIV or the victim of the evil demon seems to have the same epistemic standing with normal subjects, for subjectively there is no difference. 'How can we blame the BIV for not having knowledge?' One might ask. But consider a parallel case in action. Someone may unintentionally kill others in a car accident. Now it maybe true that he shouldn't be blamed, but *is what he has done thereby justified*? It seems clear that the answer is negative. By the same token, the BIV is not to be blamed epistemically, but he is *not justified* in holding those empirical beliefs either. To be in a satisfying standing in the space of reasons, blamelessness is not enough. Justification is indeed an epistemically positive notion, while 'exculpation' is only negative. ⁴⁸

I open this section with the notion of 'primeness.' It says that both perception and knowledge cannot be factorized into simpler elements; both of them involve external conditions *essentially*. Against the mainstream epistemology, primeness says that what

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.406

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.405.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.408.

⁴⁸ The distinction between exculpation and justification is used by McDowell to criticize the Myth of the Given (*Mind and World*, p.8), which will be discussed presently. Although the context is different right now, the distinction nicely uncovers the central motivation of the interiorization of the space of reasons.

the Gettier-style counterexamples show is not that we should engage further analyses for knowledge, but that knowledge is unanalyzable.

I shall do some reprise before closing this section. In both the case of perception and knowledge, the (Cartesian) inner space model is motivated by phenomenal indistinguishability. From this indistinguishability, it is argued that there is a common internal factor – 'experience' for perception and 'justification' for knowledge – shared by the good case and the bad case. Since the factor is also present in the bad case, its relations to the external world must be extrinsic. They are free-floating items in the self-sustaining inner space. There are many problems with this picture, but the deepest one is that it makes cognition and rationality unintelligible: in order to account for subjectivity, the inner space theorist renders it as purely inner, but this makes the very idea of subjectivity unrecognizable: as our commonsense tells us, subjectivity is 'a vantage point on the external world.⁴⁹

Openness

1. We have seen how McDowell establishes the primeness claim. According to this view, the external world is incorporated in the space of reasons; the space of reasons has no outer boundary. This naturally brings us to the further stage of the argumentation: our 'openness' to the world.

The openness claim is the main theme of McDowell's Locke Lecture. His overall topic there, as himself makes clear, 'is the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world.'50 As the previous section shows, the world is embraced by the space of reasons; now McDowell's further claim is that the space of reasons is the space of concepts. It follows that the world is in the space of concept, hence the title of his second lecture, 'The Unboundedness of the Conceptual.'51

McDowell situates his discussion in the Kantian-Davidsonian background. Kant famously remarks that 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.'52 He glosses this with Davidson's attack on scheme-content dualism. 53 'Scheme' means 'conceptual scheme'; the opposite means 'nonconceptual

⁵² Critique of Pure Reason, Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998),

⁴⁹ 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' p.241.

⁵⁰ Mind and World, p.3.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.24.

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'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,' in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American* Philosophical Association, 47 (1974); reprinted in his Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001), pp.183-198. Following McDowell, I shall not go into the details of Davidson's criticisms and his disagreements with Davidson in the present context. The details and disagreements are important, but for my purpose all these issues will be postponed towards the end of the whole thesis. The reason for postponing those matters is that in Mind and World McDowell emphasizes his agreements with Davidson, while in other contexts, he insists on his own distinct way

content' or 'given.' When one uses the term nonconceptual 'content,' she probably concerns the issues generated by the 'fineness-of-grained' argument and the argument from human infant and mere animals; this is the main theme of McDowell's third lecture. For our purpose, the term nonconceptual 'given' is better. What 'given' signifies is *passivity*, as opposed to scheme's *active* operations. From now on I will use 'dualism of scheme and Given' to denote McDowell's target.

McDowell mentions that in the Kantian framework, 'the space of reasons is the realm of freedom.' 55 However, '[t]he more we play up the connection between reason and freedom, the more we risk losing our grip on how exercises of concepts can constitute warranted judgements about the world.'56 The point is that we need 'external constraint on our freedom,' otherwise our mentality will collapse into a 'self-contained game.' The idea of the Given is supposed to undertake this external constraint. On this view, nonconceptual given can nevertheless serve as reasons, as McDowell describes, 'the space of reasons is made out to be more extensive than the space of concepts.'58 Notice that the dialectics is primarily semantic; '[e]mpirical judgements in general...had better have content of a sort that admits of empirical justification...⁵⁹ This is shown by the fact that McDowell never uses the label 'foundationalism' to identify his target. Start with the recognition that there are close relations between reason and freedom, one is prone to accept coherentism, and if one also recognizes the need of external constraint, one tends to embrace the idea of the Given: the thought is that there must be something given from outside, in order for our thoughts to have directedness. In what I just said above, there is nothing directly concerns epistemological foundationalism.⁶⁰

McDowell adumbrates the debate between coherentism and the Given as follows:

It can be difficult to accept that the Myth of Given is a myth. It can seem that if we reject the Given, we merely reopen ourselves to the threat to which the idea of the Given is a response, the threat that our picture does not accommodate any external constraint on our activity in empirical thought and judgement is to be recognizable as bearing on reality at all, there must be external constraint....Realizing this, we come under pressure to recoil back into the Given, only to see all over again that it cannot help. There is a danger

of understanding the dualism. This deserves a separate section.

⁵⁴ Mind and World, p.4.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.5.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.6, p.5 respectively.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.6.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.6, my italics.

⁶⁰ This will prove to be important when we consider Dreyfus's objections in he fourth episode.

of falling into an interminable oscillation. 61

McDowell's metaphor for the situation is an oscillating 'seesaw.' ⁶² We can appreciate this more by comparing another position, 'bald naturalism.' As we have seen in my introductory episode, bald naturalism denies 'that the spontaneity of the understanding is sui generis in the way suggested by the link to the idea of freedom'; it 'opt[s] out of this area of philosophy altogether.'63 The way bald naturalism dismounts from the seesaw is to reduce the space of reasons, to erase what is distinctively human. Coherentism and the Given are on the seesaw precisely because both of them recognize the sui generis character of the space of reasons. In addition, they (and bald naturalism) share the assumption that 'experience' is to be put on the Given side, as dualistically opposed to the scheme side, on the ground that experience is 'passive.' 64 For coherentism, since experiences are passive and hence confined in the realm of law, it cannot have rational relations with beliefs and judgments, which are denizens in the space of reasons. For the Given, though experiences are passive and hence confined in the realm of law, there must be rational relations between beliefs and judgments on the one hand, and experiences on the other, on pain of 'a frictionless spinning in a void.'65 For bald naturalism, though experiences are passive and hence confined in the realm of law, there can be rational relations between beliefs / judgments and experiences, for beliefs and judgments are in the realm of law either. Thus, we get a clearer sense of the dialectical situations surrounding the seesaw metaphor.

Now we are in a position to understand McDowell's Kantian solution. We have seen that coherentism, the Given, and bald naturalism all assume that because experiences are passive, they are inhabitants of the realm of law. McDowell's key move is to argue that the inference here is a *non sequitur*:

The original Kantian thought was that empirical knowledge results from a co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity. (Here 'spontaneity' can be simply a label for the involvement of conceptual capacities.) We can dismount from the seesaw if we can achieve a firm grip on this thought: receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation.

The relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity...It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity...In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one

⁶² Ibid., p.9.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.8-9.

⁶³ Ibid., p.67.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.11.

can also, for instance, judge. 66

The passivity of experiences is a plain fact; indeed, this passivity is what distinguishes experiences from judgments. 'In experience one finds oneself *saddled* with content,' ⁶⁷ McDowell admits. It doesn't follow, however, that experiences are not inhabitants of the space of reasons: experiences can be *at the same time conceptual and passive*. In judgments, we *exercise* conceptual capacities; in experiences, conceptual capacities are *operative*. ⁶⁸

2. An immediate doubt is that if conceptual capacities are operative *only passively* in experiences, how can we ensure that they are conceptual? After all, conceptual capacities are often seen as constituents of judgments, and judgments are active if anything is. McDowell agrees that '[the putative conceptual capacities] would not be recognizable as conceptual capacities at all unless they could also be exercised in active thinking..., 69 Judgments are indeed the paradigmatic locus for conceptual capacities, but it doesn't mean that they cannot be operative in other cases. Recall how McDowell reaches his Kantian conclusion: if we think experiences are not in the space of reasons, we will face quandary illustrated by the stalemate between coherentism, the Myth of the Given, and bald naturalism. The quandary is that all of the three positions make intentionality unintelligible. So we should uncover and reject the ungrounded assumption shared by them. The assumption in question is the thought that experiences are in the realm of law because they are passive. McDowell's conclusion that experiences are participants of the space of reasons follows from the rejection of that assumption. This is a transcendental argument: intentionality in general requires that the space of reasons incorporate experiences, and intentionality does present in human activities, therefore experiences are in the space of reasons. To say that it is hard to conceive passively operative conceptual capacities does not touch the transcendental argument at all.

But there is still a gap between the conclusion of the transcendental argument and McDowell's actual conclusion, namely that conceptual capacities are operative all the way out in experiences, for one might hold that the space of reasons are not exhausted by conceptual capacities. Many philosophers think that there are nonconceptual content in play in our experiences, but this doesn't relegate experiences out of the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.9.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.10.

⁶⁸ For more on this, see 'Conceptual Capacities in Perception,' in Günter Abel (ed.), *Kreativität: 2005 Congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie*, pp. 1065-79. Elsewhere, McDowell also uses 'actualization' in 'The Woodbridge Lecture 1997: Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality,' *Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998), pp.431-91. Dreyfus disagrees with McDowell at this point; I shall come back to this in my fourth episode.

⁶⁹ *Mind and World*, p.11.

space of reasons. They maintain this position for many different reasons, notably the fineness-of-grained / richness argument, the argument from human infant and mere animals, and the argument from concept-formation, among others. This is the main theme of McDowell's third lecture, but for our purpose we can bypass this for the moment: what concerns us in this essay is how McDowell identifies a model of subjectivity that responsible for various puzzlements concerning human subject as perceiver, knower, thinker, speaker, agent, person, and (self-) conscious animal, and further, how he manages to develop a positive account that makes our direct contact with the world intelligible. For this purpose, the discursivity of experience is relevant, but by far not in the main thread.⁷⁰

So let's cling on the main thread. The primeness claim, as discussed in my previous section, has it that the space of reasons incorporates the external world: in the case of knowledge and veridical experience, the worldly facts themselves are unfactorizable part of the states. This repels the composite picture, which regards the worldly facts as only extrinsically related to the states in question even in the case of knowledge and veridical perception, which means that there is a common inner factor shared by the good case and the bad case. The primeness claim goes with the disjunctive conception and the composite / conjunctive claim goes with the common factor conception. Now McDowell takes up this aspect of his thought again in *Mind and World*:

I insist...that when we acknowledge the possibility of being misled, we do not deprive ourselves of 'taking in how things are' as a description of what happens when one is not misled... That things are thus and so is the content of the [veridical] experience, and it can also be the content of a judgment...So it is conceptual content. But that things are thus and so is also, if one is not misled, as aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are. Thus the idea of conceptually structured operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks.⁷¹

In this passage, McDowell combines the primeness claim and the conceptuality thesis: the worldly facts that figure in the content of experience are characterized by 'that things are thus and so.' 'That things are thus and so' is both the conceptual content of veridical experiences and an aspect of the layout of reality. This radically changes the traditional picture: on the traditional, composite picture, the conceptual content of experiences is 'in the head,' or at least 'in the subject,' and that inner conceptual

 $^{^{70}}$ I will nevertheless say more about this in my later episode on agent and person. 71 Ibid., p.26.

content 'represents' outer, worldly facts. On McDowell's openness view, by contrast, the conceptual content of experience is identical with an aspect of the world.

The following passage is another expression of the same line of thought:

[T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks is what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case...there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world.⁷²

As McDowell himself notices, nevertheless, an obvious and strong objection to this 'unboundedness of the conceptual' is the charge of 'idealism.' The line of thought is quite simple: concepts are mental, so if the conceptual has no outer boundary, then the 'external' world becomes mental. How does McDowell respond to this fairly straightforward argument?

McDowell invokes the act / content distinction in reply:

'Thought' can mean the act of thinking; but it can also mean the content of a piece of thinking: what someone thinks. Now if we are to give due acknowledgement to the independence of reality, what we need is a constraint from outside thinking and judging, our exercises of spontaneity. The constraint does not need to be from outside thinkable contents.⁷⁴

The identity McDowell commits is between thinkable contents, i.e. what one thinks, and worldly facts. Read like this, it becomes a tautology. As Wittgenstein says, the openness claim 'has the form of a truism,' quoted by McDowell.⁷⁵ But if it is indeed a truism, what's the point of insisting it? The answer should be clear when we consider the inner space model. On this view, there are self-standing items populated in the mental inner space, and these items somehow 'represent' outer states of affairs. The items function as *inner* representations that are distinct from aspects of the *outer* world. Since this inner space model is very popular in contemporary philosophy, as I will try to show in this essay, McDowell's insistence on that truism has a real point.

⁷³ Ibid., p.25.-6

⁷² Ibid., p.27.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.28. Recall my quotation of A. D. Smith at the early stage of the introduction. He thinks 'Realism' and 'Idealism' constitutes a dichotomy, and notices that in formulating this he uses terms like 'cognized' and 'states,' which belong to the 'act' side in the act / content distinction. Smith's formulation leaves open the possibility that we can have a reasonable idealism formulated in terms of 'content.' I will say more about this in the fourth episode, where I explain that McDowell does propose certain version of idealism. ⁷⁵ Ibid., p.27.

3. I almost finish my exposition of McDowell's conception of perceiver and knower. Before closing this episode, however, I would like to consider a larger objection to McDowell's overall position. In arguing for primeness cum openness, the notion of 'experience' plays a crucial role for McDowell. This reflects his 'minimal empiricism: the idea that *experience* must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are...'⁷⁶ But not everyone accepts this claim. Recall that coherentism, in recognizing that the Given is a myth, only acknowledges experiences' causal role. In repudiating scheme-content dualism, the third dogma of empiricism, Davidson asserts that 'if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to call empiricism.'⁷⁷ Robert Brandom follows this and writes:

[W]hen we are properly wired up and trained, and favorable circumstances, the perceptible facts wring from us perceptual judgments. In order to *explain* how this is possible – quite a different enterprise from *justifying* the resulting judgments – we postulate the existence of something like sense impressions, whose properties systematically covary with the contents of the judgments they causally elicit from us. But these sense impressions are features of the physiology of perception. They are not something we are aware of, and they do not themselves have conceptual content.⁷⁸

Similar line of thought can also be found in other authors who take experience more seriously, for example Charles Travis and Anil Gupta.⁷⁹ I shall confine myself to the criticisms raised by Brandom, for his principal argument is from the *social*, *public* character of intentionality, which is very important throughout my essay.⁸⁰

In his positive project, Brandom elaborates '[a] *social*, linguistic account of intentionality.' ⁸¹ He complains that '[t]he social nature of spontaneity...is acknowledged [by McDowell], but only belatedly, in the discussion of the need for knowers and agents to be properly brought up in order to be sensitive to various sorts of norms.' ⁸² In short, Brandom argues that McDowell's emphasis on experience betrays a 'residual *individualism*.' ⁸³ In what follows I shall argue the otherwise.

No one will deny that experiences in some way mediate the relations between mind

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⁷⁶ Ibid., xii, my italics.

⁷⁷ 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,' pp.189-90.

⁷⁸ 'Perception and Rational Constraint,' p.253-4.

⁷⁹ For the Former, see 'The Silence of Senses,' *Mind* 113 (2004), pp.57-94; for the latter, see *Empiricism and Experience* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2006).

⁸⁰ Some of the materials below are drawn from 'Openness and the Social Initiation into the Space of Reasons,' which I co-author with Professor Lin.

⁸¹ Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment (Harvard University Press, 1994), p.xv, my italics.

^{82 &#}x27;Perception and Rational Constraint,' p.256.

⁸³ Ibid., p.258.

and world, but McDowell and Brandom have very different view about the way in question. For McDowell, experiences have both semantic and causal roles to play; for Brandom, experiences are like sense impressions in old empiricism's sense. Before evaluating these two views, it would be helpful to know more about their conceptions of the world and the mind-world relation generally.

Brandom urges, in a Fregean vein, that 'facts are just true claims.' Fact' presumably refers to a constituent of 'world.' He further distinguishes 'what is claimed' and 'the claiming of it.' To say that facts are just true claims does not commit one to treating the facts as somehow dependent on our claimings; it does not, for instance, have the consequence that had there never been any claimers, there would have been no facts... Talk of facts as what *makes* claims true is confused if it is thought of as relating two distinct things – a true claim and the fact in virtue of which it is true... Ho for Brandom, facts are true contents, not truth-makers. In other words, Brandom also accepts the openness thesis that the world is in the realm of the conceptual. The only discernable difference between him and McDowell in this context is that where Brandom uses 'claimings,' McDowell uses 'experience.' As I have said, Brandom avoids 'experience' because he thinks that implies individualism, which has it that social elements are not essential to the constitution of intentionality in general. In principle, a normal individual will do, so to speak. Does McDowell unwittingly commit this implausible picture?

Brandom quotes McDowell: 'The world itself must exert a rational constraint on our thinking,' 89 and goes on to argue that 'in his positive suggestions, McDowell looks to rational constraint, not by the facts, but by experience of the facts.' 90 Brandom then makes two claims: first, what McDowell really has in mind here is 'experience,' but his insistence on 'the need for conceptually structured pre-judgmental experiences that warrant our perceptual judgment is a non sequitur.' 91 Second, as we just briefly described, 'the aetiology of [McDowell's] blindness to alternatives should be traced to a residual individualism... [which is] a systematic underestimation of the significance of the fact that talk of the space of reasons is an abstraction from concrete, essential social practices of giving and asking for

⁸⁴ Making It Explicit, p.327.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.327

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.328.

⁸⁷ And both of them express their faithfulness to Wittgenstein's remark: '[w]hen we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, we – and our meaning – do not stop anywhere short of the facts; but we mean: this-is-so' (*Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, *PI* for short; trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, §195). See *Making It Explicit*, p.333 and *Mind and World*, p.27.

⁸⁸ Mind and World, p.26.

⁸⁹ 'Perception and Rational Constraint,' p.253.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.253.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.255.

reasons. 92 Against this, I shall argue that actually McDowell never slide from world to experience, and his talk of experience by no means commits him individualism.

Brandom is not alone in noticing McDowell's putative oscillation between experience and world. Hannah Ginsborg, for example, questions:

If the streets are wet and, recognizing that fact, I come to believe that it has rained, is my reason for believing that it has rained my belief that the streets are wet or the fact that the streets are wet? If, as some philosophers hold, the right answer in these cases is that it is the fact rather than the belief which serves as a reason, then Davidson [and McDowell are] mistaken about something more fundamental... ⁹³

Their worry seems to be this: McDowell is not determinate (or worse, consistent) about the ultimate step in his picture; sometimes he thinks it is the world that fits the bill, but in other occasions he retreats that claim and let experience play the role. Brandom, in particular, provides a diagnosis for this oscillation: he thinks in regarding experience as the final step for both intentionality and justification, McDowell betrays his residual individualism, which is inherited from his 'predecessor' C. I. Lewis. ⁹⁴ The correctness of this diagnosis aside, Brandom's move shows that he thinks individualism and the emphasis on the role of experience goes hand in hand. To be sure, he does not claim that there is any implicative connection between the two, but at least he takes the emphasis on experience as a symptom of individualism.

Granting this point for the sake of argument, I would like to suggest that the above doubt cast by Brandom, Ginsborg, and Ayers (see footnote 87) presupposes a gap firmly and reasonably rejected by McDowell: the gap between experiences and the facts they take in.

'Experience enables the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks,'95 McDowell remarks; he makes clear that it is the layout of reality itself, rather than our experiences of it, that serves the rational constraint required. 'But if that is so,' one might ask, 'why does McDowell sometimes talk as if it is experiences that do the trick?' Recall the act / content distinction discussed above. The distinction is invoked to explicate the openness of thought, but for McDowell, this can

'Reasons for Belief,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72 (2006), pp.286-318, at p.287. The quotation is appropriated for encompassing both Davidson and McDowell. According to Ginsborg, this debate between the two is in some sense only a family quarrel, for there is a more fundamental issue concerning the status of psychological states as reasons in general. Michael Ayers raises a similar consideration in 'Sense Experience, Concepts, and Content – Objections to Davidson and McDowell,' in Ralph Schumacher (ed.), *Perception and Reality: From Descartes to the Present* (Paderborn, 2004), pp.239-62.

⁹² Ibid., p.258.

⁹⁴ 'Perception and Rational Constraint,' p.256.

⁹⁵ Mind and World, p.26, my italics.

be naturally generalized to the openness of experience. The 'act' of experience is what makes facts available to us; the 'content' of experience is the fact itself when we are not misled. There is no extra item for McDowell to 'lapse into': the act is not a 'thing' that can exert the rational constraint; it is a way to make the true content available to us and therefore able to exert constraint on us; the content, when veridical, is the fact itself, which exerts rational constraint. Individualism won't strike back in McDowell's picture, for he does not commit the existence of a thing called 'experience' whose individuation condition excludes the world. Brandom's worry applies only to the picture McDowell objects to: if one postulates mental representations representing the world, he *does* need to make a choice between 'experience' and the world. McDowell, in repudiating this picture, should be exempt from the kind of charge made by Brandom, Ginsborg, and Ayers.

In defense of Davidson's claim that 'nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief', against Ayers' charge, McDowell writes: 'Davidson's claim is obviously not that one bases a belief on *one's believing* something else...It is *what* one believes, not one's believing it, that is one's reason in the sense Davidson is concerned with.' There is no problem for Davidson and McDowell here; what justifies our beliefs is a given fact, not its 'psychological surrogate.' But we need some way to make the fact available to us, hence the crucial role of experience, conceived as an act: '[i]t is not...that the fact itself, as opposed to the fact that one experiences its obtaining, is one's reason for believing what one believes.' This looks like a 'narrow content' theory only on the assumption that experience is something internal and whose individuation condition excludes the fact it takes in. This is in no way McDowell's conception of 'experience.'

This is not the end of the story between McDowell and Brandom, to be sure, but for my purpose this should be enough. Brandom's argument from social elements against McDowell's use of experience fails. But one might still tend to think that McDowell does not take social elements or publicity seriously enough. In the next episode I will spell out this aspect of McDowell's philosophy by considering his view of thinker and speaker. The main interlocutors are Saul Kripke and Donald Davidson, both of whom stress the social aspects of language painstakingly.

⁹⁶ 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge,' in *Kant oder Hegel?* (1983); reprinted in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001), pp.137-153, at p.141.

⁹⁷ 'Conceptual Capacities in Perception,' p.1073.

⁹⁸ 'Reply to Dancy,' in Cynthia MacDonald and Graham MacDonald (eds.), *McDowell and His Critics* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp.134-41, at p.135.

¹⁰⁰ I discuss more about the differences between McDowell and Brandom in 'Openness and the Social Initiation into the Space of Reasons.' McDowell further argues that Brandom commits the composite picture in his account of knowledge; I bypass this for that will take us too far. See his 'Knowledge and the Internal Revisited,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64 (2002), pp.97-105.