

Missing the Experiential Presence of Environmental Objects: A Construal of Immediate Sensible Representations as Conceptual

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McDowell (1998) does not succeed in his effort toward accounting for the wonder of nature that the experiential presence of environmental objects is, owing to his exclusive attention to the conceptual capacities involved. Thus, he construes immediate sensible representations to be involuntary actualizations of conceptual capacities exercised in judging and speech. Only in possessing propositional contents to the effect of being caused to occur by their respective objects, are immediate sensible representations proposed to differ from thoughts evoked by their objects, and claimed to be phenomenologically colored. Implying the actualization of a perceptual capacity distinct from the conceptual capacities about which he explicitly speaks, McDowell attempts to compensate for his self-limited conceptual resources by asking us to imagine how the subject directs firsthand the mental counterpart of *there* to the immediate environment. Insisting that, intrinsically, an immediate sensible representation is a relation to its object, McDowell seeks to capture thereby the object's experiential presence sans having to enrich his conception of perceptual awarenesses beyond the fact of their having certain conceptual contents. However, repeatedly, the immediate sensible representations are declared to be conceptual shapings of sensory consciousness. This characterization of them amounts only to a reassuring slogan at this point. Indeed, the sensory consciousness that is purported to be shaped is not even identified. But, if, along with this characterization, there comes a recognition that immediate sensible representations are, on every occasion of their occurrence, actualizations of both conceptual and perceptual capacities, we may have a key to how to explain experiential presence.

What the Main Topic of the Present Article Is: Immediate Sensible Representations, So-Called!

Discussing in depth Wilfrid Sellars's (1956/1963, 1968) influential conception of perceptual experience, John McDowell (1998) naturally expresses cer-

tain theses that he himself believes to be true regarding the experiential phenomena that proceed at the heart of perceiving. In a recent article (Natsoulas, 2002), I consider an ascription of McDowell's that, however, McDowell but not Sellars holds. A "conceptual shaping of sensory consciousness" is how McDowell describes Sellars's second, successive component of a perceptual experience: the perceptual taking, which possesses only conceptual content. But the relation between sensations (or sense-image models: Sellars, 1978b) and perceptual takings is, in Sellars's view, that (a) the sensation component of a perceptual experience *evokes* the perceptual taking and (b) the second of these has the first as its *direct object*. McDowell's own account of perceptual takings has reference to something that he calls "sensory consciousness," which he does not identify. Whereas McDowell's account could be a step in the right direction, it is evident that Sellars does not integrate his two components of a perceptual experience into a unitary occurrence (Natsoulas, 2002).

It is not clear, I state in my article, how McDowell proposes a conceptually shaped sensory consciousness is achieved, nor even what he means exactly by this achievement. I do gather that he considers perceptual experiences to represent objects of the environment in a special way that makes those objects immediately present to consciousness, but I am not sure what it is that he is proposing gets conceptually shaped, and how this happens, so as to give McDowell the result he wants. Is the familiar experiential presence of a tree in the garden, for example, a matter of the somehow occurrence of certain conceptually structured sensations? Is McDowell proposing that perceptual experiences are in the first place sensations that, as the perceptual process expands in the temporal domain, become transformed into experiential/conceptual episodes?

My present strategy is somewhat less controversial than in the second of my two articles on Sellars's account of perceptual experience (Natsoulas, 1999a, 2002). Here, I do more and better by what I understand to be McDowell's conception of perceptual experiences. Indeed, I favor the assumption that his shaping thesis is not as subject to objection as Sellars's externally relating his two components of perceptual experience to each other. As some of my past articles show (e.g., Natsoulas, 1996, 1997a, 1997b), I want to find or to develop a sufficient comprehension of the immediate presence of objects to sense. McDowell (1998) calls those mental occurrences that he believes intrinsically embody this wonder of nature the "immediate sensible representations."¹

¹Even more frequently he calls them "intuitions," after Kant. I am suppressing this usage here. Many readers of this article will be psychologists and would be troubled by the unfamiliarity of the Kantian meaning. In place of *intuition*, I use throughout McDowell's own explicit synonym: *immediate sensible representation*. Note too that, except in the introductory paragraphs, I do not use Sellars's term *perceptual taking* for his second component of a perceptual experience. It is not a term that McDowell favors, owing to the involuntary character of the mental occurrences which he has under discussion in the main.

For some time now, it has seemed to me that the experiential presence of objects could not be a mere matter of perceptual takings' possessing a corresponding conceptual content. Sellars, too, states that there is clearly more to perceptual experience than the conceptual occurrence that he specifies as being the second of a perceptual experience's two components. I appreciate being able to quote a forthright phenomenological report of his: "*Something, somehow* a cube of pink in physical space is present in the perception other than as merely *believed in* (Sellars, 1978a, p. 178). In my view and evidently Sellars's, a perceptual taking that possessed content of a purely conceptual character, could accomplish no more than a pink ice cube's occurrently believed-in presence (Natsoulas, 1999a, 2002).

By means of a comparative study of Sellars's Kantian approach to the problem, McDowell (1998) gives a reading of Immanuel Kant on intentionality understood to be "the directedness of subjective states and episodes toward objects." I address here, however, only one of the products of McDowell's indirect approach, namely, what I understand to be McDowell's own conception of immediate sensible representation. Selecting, as I do, from the complex fabric of McDowell's discussion, only the thread that expresses directly his own account seems to me not inconsistent with his own purposes. For he claims to be moving us toward how we should be thinking about intentionality, since more than anybody else, McDowell's major influence, who is Kant, is on the right track.

What the Ostensible Seeings Are Supposed To Be: Involuntary Actualizations of Conceptual Capacities

McDowell (1998) starts with the actualization of conceptual capacities, a notion that does a great deal of work in his account. He asserts that the paradigmatic mode of such actualization is that exercise of conceptual capacities which is called "judging," in the sense of one's making up one's mind what to think about something. Judging is an exercise of freedom, something that is freely done, but actualizations of conceptual capacities also take place involuntarily, as typically occurs in the acquisition of beliefs.

Moving on to perceptual experiences, McDowell makes his points, as Sellars does, in terms of experiences in the visual sense modality. Sellars calls them "ostensible seeings," for there are two kinds: actual seeings and merely ostensible seeings. That is, an ostensible seeing need not be capable of yielding a piece of knowledge about the world. But, all of the ostensible seeings, too, are actualizations of conceptual capacities, as is conveyed in saying that they are non-overt "conceptual episodes."

McDowell elaborates on the latter point by returning to the paradigmatic activity of judging, and addressing briefly what it is for multiple conceptual

capacities to be exercised “together” in a non-overt conceptual episode. McDowell’s example is judging there to be in front of one a single something both cubical and red, as distinct from judging there to be in front of one (a) something cubical and non-red along with (b) another something that is red and non-cubical. He states that, in the pertinent instance of judging,

the two conceptual capacities I have singled out would have to be exercised with a specific mode of togetherness: a togetherness that is a counterpart to the “logical” and semantical togetherness of the words ‘red’ and ‘cube’ in the verbal expression of the judgement, “There is a red cube in front of me.” (McDowell, 1998, p. 439)

Being actualizations of conceptual capacities, too, basically like judgments, visual experiences (ostensible seeings) as well are to be understood on analogy to linguistic acts. However, notice that visual experiences are involuntary; they are actualizations of conceptual capacities without being *exercises* of them. In this way, they diverge from judgments, although one can judge there is a red cube in front of one even when visually experiencing the red cube as there before one.

All of the conceptual capacities that are actualizable in visual experience are also conceptual capacities judging can actualize. Comparing an ostensible seeing that there is a red cube in front of one with a judging of the same, McDowell states and soon repeats that, in both instances, the *same* conceptual capacities are actualized with the *same* mode of togetherness: understood to be analogous to what is taking place in overtly asserting, “There is a red cube in front of me.”

There is a way in which ostensible seeings are different from all other conceptual episodes. McDowell (1998) follows Sellars on this point but then takes it further, as can be seen below. He states that “in a visual experience an ostensibly seen object ostensibly impresses itself visually on the subject” (p. 441). Thus, a visual experience is construed not simply as being an involuntary conceptualization of, in the example, a red, cubical object at a particular environmental location. The thesis would seem to be that the perceiver ostensibly sees the object to possess, in addition, a certain causal property. Namely, the ostensibly seen object is ostensibly seen to be “impressing itself visually” on one.

What More a Visual Experience Is Claimed To Contain: A Second, Causational and Reflexive, Propositional Content

The thesis seems to be as I am about to state it but McDowell does not make it thus explicit. I believe he must mean that, in the having of a visual experience, there is awareness of having it. For visual experiences are the way that objects visually impress themselves on us. By means of the patterned

light which an environmental object reflects or radiates into one's eyes, the object causes one to have a visual experience of the object itself. Thus, the thesis would amount to: in ostensibly seeing objects, in the form of those very visual experiences, there is as well, ostensible awareness of the objects' having this experiential effect on one. This ostensible awareness is the more that is being proposed as involved in ostensibly seeing a red cube in front of one.

And this evidently ostensible awareness, too, is an actualization of conceptual capacities. In being ostensibly aware of this causal effect on one's visual experience owed to its object, it is not as though one is able to apprehend in a different, non-conceptual way something of the red cube or visual experience, like the experiential presence of the ostensible object. Conceptual episodes analogous to linguistic acts are the only awarenesses possible. By speaking of a pink ice cube as "present in the perception other than as merely *believed in*" (p. 178; original emphasis), Sellars (1978a) is giving expression, according to McDowell's evident view, to the non-overt conceptual episodes that are apprehensions of the effect of a pink ice cube on one's visual experience of it.

Key to my suggestion concerning McDowell's view is a certain understanding of what it is for an object to impress itself visually on one. Is my understanding correct? McDowell (1998, pp. 440–441) relies, at this point, on phrases from Sellars to convey his meaning. Thus, based on the last clause in the following Sellars sentence, McDowell derives that the propositional content of an ostensible seeing is "*ostensibly necessitated by an object ostensibly seen*":

It is clear that the experience that something is green is not *merely* the occurrence of the propositional claim "this is green" — not even if we add, as we must, that this claim is, so to speak, evoked or wrung from the perceiver by the object perceived. (Sellars, 1956/1963, p. 144)

I read this sentence to say that the propositional content of the experience includes not only the first claim in the sentence but also the second claim, which has reference to how the experience is produced.² And the same thesis is considered to be expressed elsewhere as well:

²However, the continuation right after the sentence makes it clear why the addition of the second claim is not enough in Sellars's view to characterize the content of the experience. Sellars states, "The something more is clearly what philosophers have in mind when they speak of 'visual impressions' or 'immediate visual experience'" (p. 145). Thus, Sellars distinguishes between, on the one hand, the two claims that occur in the having of a visual experience and, on the other hand, the something more that is involved in the experience. Evidently, in his view, the addition theoretically of the second claim to the experience's propositional content cannot yield somehow an ostensibly seen object with an ostensible presence to consciousness other-than-as-believed-in.

In *Science and Metaphysics*, Sellars puts the same point by saying that, if it looks to so-and-so as though there were a red and rectangular physical object in front of him, one is attributing to so-and-so (who may, of course, be oneself) a conceptual representation, of a particular kind, that there is a red and rectangular physical object in front of him; and the kind is "that kind of representation which is being under the visual impression that . . . there is (or of there being) a red and rectangular object in front of one" [Sellars, 1968, p. 14]. (McDowell, 1998, p. 440; his emphasis and elision)

This will not seem to be the same thesis. An ostensible seeing's second propositional content is not explicitly mentioned; the only such content to which there seems to be a reference is the propositional content that there is a red and rectangular physical object in front of one. However, McDowell believes Sellars's use of *impression* in the above quoted sentence is to convey that, in an ostensible seeing, an awareness is included of the experience as involuntary, as forced on one by its object. McDowell explicates Sellars's above use to refer to the propositional content of an ostensible seeing: to the effect that this seeing is being "visually imposed or impressed on [its] subject" (p. 440).

The emphasis that McDowell places on these two words may constitute an effort to suggest that representations with suitable conceptual content can qualify as something more. There is no theoretical need to add anything non-conceptual to an experience to secure experiential presence of an experience's ostensible object. This presence is accomplished by the visual experience qua conceptual episode.

However, Sellars proceeds to insist: an understanding of experiential presence requires the theoretical introduction of sensations or sense-image models. That Sellars would not agree with McDowell is perhaps not important for the present purpose. But such agreement would provide phenomenological support from someone adept at it. It would surely be useful to McDowell if Sellars, too, could not see anything except as its causing the respective visual experience to take place.

The crucial element in McDowell's account of what distinguishes ostensible seeings from other conceptual episodes is not: ostensible seeings' not being *exercises* of conceptual capacities, that is, their being involuntary actualizations. The crucial element is, McDowell says, *the special kind of involuntariness* that characterizes ostensible seeings. Here, once more, is how McDowell specifies that special kind: "In a visual experience an ostensibly seen object ostensibly impresses itself visually on the subject" (p. 441). I quote this sentence a second time in order to comment further.

It would seem that McDowell holds that an ostensible seeing's propositional content has a *reflexive* character. An ostensible seeing of a red cube characterizes the ostensibly seen object not merely as, for example, being red and cubical and located before one. Also, the ostensibly seen object is characterized as: its being seen owing to its causing this visual experience to take

place in one. McDowell's above sentence resembles a phenomenological description of a visual experience that is proffered by David Woodruff Smith (1989): "In this very experience I see this wriggling snake" (p. 99). The propositional content of McDowell's instance of ostensible seeing would be as follows: "In this very experience I see the red cube that photically evokes it." This content includes (a) that the experience is visual, (b) that the red cube causes it to occur, (c) that the red cube does so by affecting the visual perceptual system and (d) that the visual experience's occurrence is involuntary.

What Conceptual Episodes Can Somehow Instantiate: Phenomenological Color Without Qualitative Content!?

Objecting to Sellars's resort to the non-conceptual in his two-stage conception of perceptual experience, McDowell (1998) accuses him of not realizing that ostensible seeings are themselves — in their one and only stage — actual

cases of being under the visual impression that such-and-such is the case. It is not that as conceptual episodes they are phenomenologically colorless, so that they would need to be associated with visual sensations in order that some complex composed of these conceptual episodes and the associated visual sensations can be recognizably visual. These conceptual episodes are already, as the conceptual episodes they are, shapings of visual consciousness. If we need [a non-conceptual] element in our picture, it is not in order to ensure that the picture depicts states or episodes of visual consciousness. (p. 442; last two emphases added)

This passage calls for three categories of comment, corresponding to the above three emphases.

a. It is not yet clear what McDowell wants to convey when saying one's visual experiences are cases of one's being under a visual impression. Does he intend to say more by this than that the conceptual episodes that one's visual experiences are seen to one to be involuntary products of light that is reflected or radiated to one's point of observation (Gibson, 1979/1986) by the very object of the respective visual experience? Sellars seems fully cognizant of this point; compare his sentence in the third section of the present article (Sellars, 1956/1963, p. 144). McDowell must have in mind, as having escaped Sellars, something else about visual experiences. Could McDowell mean that Sellars should have realized visual experiences are a kind of actualization of conceptual capacities that already involves what Sellars (1956/1963) refers to as a "descriptive content" and is distinct from an ostensible seeing's propositional content? Also, Sellars identifies this additional feature belonging to an ostensible seeing as the "immediate experience" involved therein. A glossary entry for Sellars's term *immediate experience* that is useful here is supplied by Wilem A. deVries and Timm Triplett (2000):

What there is to a perceptual experience that is not accounted for by the notion that the state of affairs before one evokes or wrings from one a propositional claim. The qualitative or phenomenal aspect of experience. [First use in Sellars, 1956/1963, p. 145.] Equivalent to *impression*, *descriptive content of an experience*, and "sensation." Sellars remarks [p. 176] that "immediate experience" is an "unfortunate term." Our guess is that he thinks it is unfortunate because an immediate experience is supposed to be a *part* or an *aspect* of a perceptual experience [e.g., an ostensible seeing]. It seems odd, then, to say that one kind of experience, namely, immediate experiences, are a part or aspect of another, namely perceptual experiences. (p. 187)

b. McDowell states in the above passage that, according to his interpretation, the ostensible seeings are not phenomenologically colorless conceptual episodes. This statement will only elicit skepticism in the absence of any explanation of where these conceptual episodes are supposed to be getting their "color" from. Suppose a behaviorist declared as "colored" the covert linguistic acts that he or she is proffering as instance of awareness (Natsoulas, 1983a). The first objection would be that the behaviorist has theoretically described them in such a way that does not allow for "color." Except for being involuntary, McDowell's visual experiences are like exercises of conceptual capacities. The additional occurrent belief — that the particular ostensible seeing is being evoked by its object — is also conceived of as an involuntary actualization of conceptual capacities, and is no more phenomenologically colored than a thought of a red and cubical object in front of one. Ostensible seeings qua conceptual episodes — their being phenomenologically colorless would seem to be why Sellars wants to add a non-conceptual stage as a component of each of them.

c. McDowell (1998) quickly eliminates the latter phenomenological explanation of Sellars's behavior as a theorist. He claims that Sellars's ostensible seeings — omitting their proposed non-conceptual component — are already conceived of by Sellars as being "conceptual shapings of sensory, and in particular, visual consciousness" (p. 451).³ The notion that McDowell attributes to Sellars urgently requires attention: an actualization of conceptual capacities can be a visual experience or, it would seem, depending on which conceptual capacities are actualized, it can be an experience in another sense modality. That is, McDowell must say more: one needs to know how actualizing a particular conceptual capacity in judging differs from actualization of the same capacity in visual perceiving. Surely, simply voluntariness cannot be the difference, nor can an awareness of how the respective conceptual episodes are produced. McDowell seems to hint at the difference when he

³The reason that Sellars adds a non-conceptual element to his picture of perception, according to McDowell, is this: Sellars (1968) thinks that conceiving of these conceptual episodes as causally determined by manifolds of sensations entitles us to speak of conceptual visual impressions, that is, of someone's being under the visual impression that so-and-so.

speaks of the conceptual actualization in the visual case as a “shaping.” Between the conceptual actualizations that are shapings and those that are not shapings, what is the difference? Are all conceptual-capacity actualizations shapings of something or other? Are judgments, for example, shapings of something that might be called “thought consciousness,” and are overt linguistic acts conceptual shapings of certain behaviors?⁴

In any case, McDowell states and repeats that ostensible seeings qua conceptual episodes are states of visual consciousness — which naturally leads one to raise the question how they are so, rather than being mere thoughts ostensibly evoked by their ostensible objects. The latter, evoked thoughts would be of the same kind as a thought regarding a red cube’s environmental location in relation to oneself and, simultaneously, about its evocation by its object. McDowell speaks of there being “so much” that goes into the idea of a conceptual episode of the relevant kind. But, what has gone in so far, just as it stands, does not seem to be enough for distinguishing a visual experience from a thought.

I suppose that the phrase “ostensibly visually *imposed* or *impressed* on their subject” could be smuggling in something that is not captured by my statement that, so far, visual experiences are merely the kind of thoughts that I specify just above. Thus, to say an ostensible X ostensibly evokes Y may be implicitly to conceive of the ostensible X as visually experienced to evoke Y, in the ordinary, qualitative sense of *visually experienced*.

What Difference an Absence of Apperception Makes: An Experience Becomes a Mere Object-Evoked Thought!

Adding something further regarding the kind of conceptual episodes under discussion here — someone’s being under the visual impression that . . . — McDowell (1998) asserts that “they are, simply as conceptual episodes, available for apperception when they occur” (p. 449). By their being “apperceived,” McDowell means (to use three of his own phrases): that ostensible seeings are objects of consciousness, that they, too, are apprehended non-inferentially, that they are directly available for self-attribution.

Clearly, he is exercising a version of the concept of consciousness₄, as I call it following the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* (OED’s) numbered list of defini-

⁴A footnote calls our attention to a book of McDowell’s (1994) which recommends a conception of experience as consisting of “states or episodes in which conceptual capacities are operative in sensibility” (McDowell, 1998, p. 441). On the specific pages to which we are referred, there is the following sentence, which seems to be expressing the same view as in McDowell (1998): “The impressions of the world on our senses, the deliverances of our receptivity, are — as such — the appearances (or at least some of them) that can . . . innocently be taken to belong together with our world-views in the space of reasons, since they are already in the space of concepts” (McDowell, 1994, p. 141).

tions under *consciousness*. Here is a past statement of mine regarding what consciousness₄ is:

The OED's definition, quoting [William] Hamilton, tells us that consciousness₄ is the individual's "recognition" of his or her own mental-occurrence instances. This must be a firsthand recognition, one that occurs on the spot as one's mental life unfolds, since this recognition was said to be a "condition and concomitant" of one's mental life (of the conscious₄ part of one's mental life, we would now say). (Natsoulas, 1994, p. 388; see also Natsoulas, 1983b)

McDowell (1998) then explains that he is not suggesting that ostensible seeings are actually apperceived when they occur, as opposed to being "available" to be apperceived. This view of the ostensible seeings, as being only available for apperception, and not necessarily apperceived in each of their instances, leads me to raise questions regarding the second propositional content or second half of the propositional content that McDowell is ascribing to ostensible seeings (see the third section of the present article). In the case of an ostensible seeing, does an ostensibly seen object perforce *ostensibly* impress itself visually on the subject? Or are there instances of ostensible seeing in which, although a certain environmental object may well be actually visually impressing itself on the subject, the object does not do so ostensibly? In such a case, the visual experience would not be apperceived, at least not apperceived as being evoked by its object.

What follows concerning such a case? Would not the ostensible seeing be merely a thought that is evoked by its object? If, anyway, it is a visual experience and is, therefore, different from the thought, in what does their difference consist? What is it that constitutes a visual experience that makes it more than an actualization of the same conceptual capacities as in an exercise of the same concepts in judging? To answer this question, McDowell may have to exploit qualitative contents somehow. These are often believed to belong to the visual experiences themselves, thus to be distinct from the sensations to which Sellars resorts, as being the direct causes and objects of the conceptual episodes that are, in his view, merely the second component of every ostensible seeing. After all, has not McDowell firmly, however vaguely, declared ostensible seeings to be conceptual shapings of visual consciousness?

Useful for grasping my point of the preceding paragraph is some criticism that, elsewhere, McDowell (1994/1998) himself brings against Daniel Dennett's (1978) conception of perceptual experiences as being "presentiments" (cf. Natsoulas, 1983a, pp. 427–431). Thus, when Dennett is looking at the pages in front of him as he is engaged in writing, it just comes to him that there are pages in front of him. That this is the case occurs to him in just the way he is sometimes struck, in what is commonly called a presentiment, by the thought that there is someone looking over his shoulder as he

writes. We can put it that Dennett's visual experiences that are actual seeings are, in his view, just thoughts that their respective objects evoke. McDowell (1994/1998) objects to Dennett's conception of visual experiences partly as follows:

This suggestion seems phenomenologically off key, perhaps especially about visual experience. What it seems to threaten is the presentness to one of the seen environment. On Dennett's suggestion, that a seen object is there before one is a mere premonition, something one finds oneself inclined to suppose, unaccountably so far as anything contained in the experience itself goes. (p. 343)

And an additional occurrent conviction to the effect that the occurrence of the visual experience is causally owed to its object is not yet equivalent to the object's presence to one's awareness. To this, McDowell (1994) soon adds,

Since there is no rationally satisfactory route from experiences, conceived as, in general, less than encounters with objects — glimpses of objective reality — to the epistemic position that we are manifestly in, experiences must be intrinsically encounters with objects. (p. 344)

These earlier comments of McDowell's (1994) are useful for making clear an implication of how McDowell (1998) seems now to be conceiving of visual experiences that are actual seeings. Sometimes, in his view, they are not apperceived: then they are not apprehended as being effects of their respective object in the environment. In such instances, the experiences would seem to be merely actualizations of the same conceptual capacities as are actualized in thoughts about the object. Thoughts about the object are not conceptual episodes wherein the object has experiential presence. Even if such a thought is apperceived and is hypothesized to be caused to occur by its object, an experiential presence of the object is not thereby brought into existence, not even by a powerful and correct conviction concerning the thought's causal source in the present situation.

What the Specificity of Visual Content Entails: A Perceptual Capacity to Mean Determinate Places!

When McDowell (1998, p. 459) addresses the *specificity* of an ostensible seeing's content that there is a red cube in front of one, one cannot help but be reminded of the contents of visual experiences that may not be conceptual or thoroughly conceptual. McDowell states, at once, that the content of the ostensible seeing is more specific than that there is a red cube before one, even if the latter content is included (cf. Sellars, 1956/1963, p. 151). For example, the ostensible cube will ostensibly have a location more determinate than the phrase "in front of one" designates.

In his article that is partly about Dennett's construal of visual experiences as presentiments in the "dark," McDowell (1994) objects more generally, that, as Dennett conceives of them, the visual experiences are missing the particularity of a "basic (demonstratively expressible) singular empirical judgement" based on its object's perceived presence. The contents of these purported presentiments would not relate to, say, a particular cat — *that* cat, picked out perceptually — but to any cat that may satisfy a general specification. Evans (1982) is referenced at this point, his sixth chapter especially.

In his later article, McDowell (1998) proceeds as follows: considered from the first-person perspective, the content of the ostensible seeing will be expressible by an utterance like "There is a red cube *there*." I italicize the second *there* because the ostensible seeing that is expressed by this utterance has reference to a specific ostensible location in the environment. The respective capacity that, among others, is actualized in the occurrence of this particular ostensible seeing is able to single out an ostensible specific place in the ostensibly seen environment. For McDowell, who says much as I am in somewhat different words, the perceptual capacity that corresponds to the use of *there* is to be understood on the model of a certain use of this word to make a claim. In this use, the word possesses its "determinative significance by virtue of the subject's directing it in a specific way at the ostensible layout of the ostensible environment" (p. 459).

McDowell (1998) speaks of "a capacity to mean determinate places by utterances of 'there' or [by these utterances'] nonovert counterparts" (p. 461), as though it is the same capacity that is involved in both the utterances and the visual experiences. I believe that this case of modeling is problematic. In the use of *there* here under consideration as model, *there* acquires determinative significance in a way *requiring* ostensible seeing with reference to a specific ostensible location in the environment. That which McDowell proposes as the suitable model for understanding the perceptual counterpart of *there* already involves this counterpart. Notice how he describes the subject's "directing" the word *there*: "in a specific way at the ostensible layout of the ostensible environment." Does this description have reference to something other than a process dependent on the perceptual capacity to single out ostensible places in the ostensible environment? What other process could this possibly be?

The problem to which I am calling attention becomes more evident perhaps when McDowell focuses on an ostensible seeing that is an actual seeing. Thus, a red cube is at the place to which both *there* and the corresponding actualized perceptual capacity refer. McDowell (1998) states,

In the conceptual occurrence that the experience is, the red cube that there actually is, given that the experience is a seeing, is itself directly in the subject's view. It is in the subject's view as *that red cube*. (p. 459)

This is not quite accurate as an expression of McDowell's meaning. Of course, McDowell does not mean that visually experiencing a red cube in a specific position in the environment involves some sort of covert utterance of the phrase *that red cube*. He is indicating an analogous relation between a certain use of the phrase and a visual experience of the red cube as being at a certain location.

And the problem I brought out above is still with us. The kind of use of *that red cube* that McDowell is selecting, in order to help us understand the visual experiential presence of objects, is actually a use that requires the red cube be either directly in the subject's view or ostensibly so.⁵ There is a sign that McDowell may recognize the problem I am raising when he speaks of imagining ourselves into the point of view of the subject in order to apprehend the significance of the particular use of *there* and of *that red cube*. Having a visual experience of the red cube at a specific environmental location is the model for understanding the significance of the subject's claim made using those words in this situation.

What Else the Specificity of Visual Content Entails: More Perceptual Capacities than Locus Determination!

In my view, the spatial specificity belonging to the content of a visual experience entails a certain visual-perceptual, as distinct from conceptual, capacity to mean determinate places. This is a capacity on which conceptual capacities depend for their actualization. The same argument can be applied in support of additional perceptual capacities. McDowell's specificity point about *there* can also be made for *red* and *cubical*. Visual-perceptually, we can mean both colors and shapes of greater determinacy than we can mean purely conceptually. Visual-content specificity entails the actualization of additional visual-perceptual capacities.

One cannot rightly speak of visual experiences as simply being conceptual episodes, that is, as being actualizations of merely conceptual capacities. There is need for a theory that addresses the inability to describe exhaustively the contents of visual experiences through spelling out their propositional or conceptual contents. Sellars acknowledges the more to visual experiences there is than their conceptual contents, but he finds no way to combine the actualizations of perceptual capacities with the actualizations of conceptual capacities that constitute the visual experiences with which we are so apperceptively familiar.

⁵I do not enter here into whether the sense of a red cube's "being in the subject's view" needs to be broad enough to include seeing red cubes by means of pictures, motion pictures, and the like (see Natsoulas, 1999b).

Nevertheless, McDowell (1998) declares himself to have achieved what is needed to give an account for experiential presence of environmental objects, namely, “a conception of a kind of representation (or at any rate *Vorstellung* [i.e., presentation]) of an object that fits a standard Kantian characterization of intuitions: immediate sensible representations of objects” (p. 460). McDowell’s conception of immediate sensible representations follows Sellars’s conception in the following respect: that immediate sensible representations are immediately related to their objects does not mean that they are not actualizations of conceptual capacities. Under the name *perceptual takings*, Sellars (1968) holds them to be “representations of *thises* and . . . conceptual in that peculiar way in which to represent a *this* is conceptual” (p. 3). Following Kant, McDowell states, “The function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgement* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition*” (McDowell, 1998, p. 457; original emphases). That is to say, in an immediate sensible representation.

But again, in treating of immediate sensible representations, McDowell insists that one must take the perspective of the subject. First, recall that, in the case of the ostensible seeings that are actually seeings (that, e.g., there is a red cube before one) the involved conceptual capacities are proposed to be actualized with the same “togetherness” as they are exercised in the respective judgment (see second section of present article). Now, according to McDowell, if one considers an actual seeing, which is an actualization of conceptual capacities, from the point of view of the subject, they are themselves, for example, the red cube’s being immediately present to his or her visual consciousness: “Visual intuitions of objects simply are seeings . . . , looked at as it were from a different angle” (McDowell, 1998, p. 462). The experiential presence of environmental objects is accomplished by conceptual capacities, these actualizations’ having a subjective aspect or side.⁶ The objection that springs to mind is not, of course, to the idea that visual experiences can be, and extremely often are, actual instances of the experiential presence of environmental objects.

The asserted equivalence between the occurrence of visual perceptual experiences (seeings) and the presence to visual consciousness of objects other than as believed in causes wonder as to the kind of occurrence that a visual experience is, what there is about a visual experience, that it provides us, from our first-person perspective, with the immediate sensible presence

⁶I borrow the term subjective side from Sigmund Freud (1895/1966, p. 311; Natsoulas, 2001) who holds that all conscious psychological processes (his term for conscious mental occurrences) are a distinct kind of brain happening, which differs from all of the other kinds of brain happening in possessing qualitative content and a subjective side. As I argue elsewhere, “subjective side” here means that, for Freud, conscious psychological processes are, individually, instances of (a) ostensible awareness of something else and (b) witting apperceptive awareness each one of itself.

of, say, a pink ice cube. The objection that comes first to mind in reaction to McDowell's approach is how unsatisfactory it is to be told that (a) an occurrent belief in the ice cube's physical presence in the environment and (b) the ice cube's being experientially present in a perception, are both of them actualizations of the same conceptual capacities. The subjective aspect of this occurrent belief is not the experiential presence of its object.

There is no mention of any perceptual capacity of the sort on which I have commented in the sixth section and in the first paragraphs of this section. From the point of view of the subject, the two kinds of mental episodes, the non-perceptual and the perceptual, to which McDowell refers repeatedly as analogous, are too different from each other to amount to the same thing. In effect, McDowell would seem to be answering the latter objection simply by a reference to its seeming to us, quite rightly in the case of an actual seeing, that the object of this visual experience is itself producing the experience; the difference we detect from the subjective perspective is owed to a certain propositional content. However, that is not how it seems to us the two episodes differ. Is McDowell ready to hold this ostensible difference is nothing more than an apperceptive illusion, that there is nothing of a qualitatively visual kind in the case of the photically evoked immediate sensible representations? Do we just find ourselves irresistibly compelled to think that there is a red cube there? Or, rather, are we eye-witnesses to our environment, including to this object and some of its properties (e.g., its specific location)?

McDowell (1998) gives the impression of wanting to agree with my point when he declares, "What makes [an ostensible seeing] an ostensible seeing, as opposed to a conceptual episode of some other kind (for instance, a judgment), is that this actualization of conceptual capacities is a conceptual shaping of sensory (and in particular visual) consciousness" (p. 460). He also speaks of a conceptual capacity's being "actualized in one's sensory consciousness" (p. 461). But, as I have already pointed out, he may not be saying what, on the surface, he appears to be saying. In this instance, he states equivalently that the conceptual capacity is "actualized in a conceptual occurrence whose content is, so to speak, judgment shaped" (p. 461) and then he identifies the conceptual occurrence as a seeing "that there is a red cube *there*." In effect, I am asking about the perceptual capacities on which the involved actualizations depend according to McDowell's own admission. Indeed, their role in perceiving is suggested to us subjectively, as we compare the various specificities that characterize our visual contents with the conceptual contents of our thoughts and judgments.

**What the Right Metaphor for Experiential Presence Is:
Do Seen Objects Address Us or Show Themselves to Us?**

At various points, McDowell contrasts his own view with that of Sellars, who maintains that conceptual episodes that are the second component of a visual experience are caused to occur by visual sensations, the distinct, first component of the experience; visual sensations are thus said “to guide from without” the conceptual episodes involved in visual experience. To expand on a contrast between this view of Sellars’s and his own, McDowell calls attention to Sellars’s (1968, p. 16) statement that sensation “has a strong voice in the outcome” that is the conceptual episode partially constituting the perceptual experience and takes issue using Sellars’s metaphor of voice.

McDowell points out that, in a visual experience, the sensations that are proposed to be part of the experience do not speak to us. That is to say, when sensations are acting so as to complete a perceptual experience, on McDowell’s reading of Sellars, we do not apperceive them.⁷ Nor can they be said to speak to Kant’s Understanding, for then we have the undesirable implication of a cognitive subject within us who is distinct from us. Sensations just evoke the second component of the perceptual experience, which is the conceptual episode.

Having laid the groundwork for applying Sellars’s image of voice to express his own view, McDowell (1998) thereupon states,

But suppose we take it that the external constraint Sellars sees to be required is exerted, in intuition [i.e., immediate sensible representation], by objects themselves, the subject matter of the conceptual representation involved in perception. Now the image of voice fits more easily. A seen object as it were invites one to take it to be as it visibly is. It speaks to one; if it speaks to one’s understanding, that is just what its speaking to one comes to. “See me as I am,” it (so to speak) says to one: “namely, as characterized by *these* properties” — and it displays them. (p. 468)

According to McDowell, it is not Sellarsian sensations but environmental objects that evoke the conceptual representations involved in visual perception; that is, objects evoke the immediate sensible representations that are our visual experiences of those objects. Being actualizations of conceptual capacities, the immediate sensible representations are like our involuntary thoughts about those environmental objects (and their properties) whose effects on the visual-perceptual system cause the immediate sensible representations to occur.

⁷For the present purpose, I do not need to discuss McDowell’s understanding of Sellars on the apperception of sensations. The present article is not an effort to spell out Sellars’s account of perception. However, a discussion of Sellars’s sensations as objects of direct awareness, with important quotations from and references to Sellars’s work, can be found in a recent article by the Sellars scholar Jay F. Rosenberg (2000).

Most interestingly, McDowell finds it necessary to switch metaphors right at the end of the passage quoted above, suggesting thereby that the environmental objects do not merely *speak* to us about themselves. In visual perception, more than the actualization of conceptual capacities takes place. That is, using McDowell's further metaphor, environmental objects *show* themselves with some of their properties to us. Thus, when we have visual experience of it, Sellars's cube of pink ice is present to us not merely as believed in; visual experiences are not merely instances of believing in the subject matter's presence at a certain environmental location.

Indeed, we are sometimes compelled to stare at the subject matter in disbelief, doubting the very beliefs that, as we look, we automatically acquire. From the first-person perspective, the subject matter of a perceptual experience is, also, *on display there*: (a) It is *there* in the sense in which McDowell uses this word to convey a determinate place from one's perspective. (b) It is *on display* in the sense that the subject matter appears to one. Thus, a visual experience is not an immediate representation; it is an immediate sensible presentation. Having a visual experience of McDowell's red cube there is not a mere predication of its redness, cubicity, and location; the red cube makes an appearance to the subject of the visual experience, with these and some others of its visible properties.

Very soon after his metaphorical comments, McDowell (1998) develops reason to mention with approval Kant's "insistence that the things in themselves that matter for his thinking about empirical knowledge are the very same things that make their appearance in [immediate sensible representation]" (p. 469). These same things, McDowell insists, "come into view for us [appear to us?] in actualizations of conceptual capacities in *sensory consciousness*" (p. 470). The latter emphasis is to distinguish the actualizations of conceptual capacities that McDowell intends from such actualizations that take place instead in thought consciousness. Perceived objects are not projections of our thinking. They stand over against the subject for whom they come into view, to whom they appear owing to his or her conceptually shaped sensibility.

Resuming his use of the metaphor of voice, McDowell argues that the environmental objects cannot speak to us in the world's own language. They speak to us as in the language of our own conceptual capacities. McDowell may want to expand his view to a point where he is able to say, quite rightly, that the modes in which environmental objects show themselves to us, the modes in which they display their properties to us, are modes belonging to our own sensory modalities, not to the objects themselves. Objects appear to us only in sensory consciousness.

But, McDowell (1998) continues insisting that immediate sensible representations "*just are* the actualizations of conceptual capacities, with the requisite togetherness, that constitute those ostensible seeings that are seeings"

(p. 472). These capacities include the capacity by which a highly specific position is singled out as the location of the object seen; the concept involved is the mental counterpart of *there* when this is used to refer to a particular determinate place in the environment.⁸ Whenever McDowell comes to a point where an objection is forthcoming that, as it were, he has left the perceiver lost in thought, he reminds us again that, after all, the conceptual activity that is the crux of his account is actually a shaping of *sensory* consciousness that enables environmental objects to come into view for the perceiver, to be immediately present to him or her.

What Threatens the Experiential Presence of Environmental Objects: Theoretical Additions of Extra Conceptual Content to Visual Experience

In the third and last of his revised Woodbridge Lectures, titled "Having the World in View," McDowell (1998) continues his discussion of Sellars's effort toward a Kantian understanding of the intentionality of visual experience. In the present article, I touch from time to time on some of McDowell's remarks on Sellars, but my topic is McDowell's own account of the presence of environmental objects to visual consciousness and I stick closely to it throughout. But I want to comment next on another of McDowell's criticisms of Sellars's view, a criticism that McDowell develops into further exposition of his own view. This material has a direct relation to the third section of the present article: which is concerned with the second propositional content ascribed by McDowell to every ostensible seeing.

McDowell brings out that, in footnotes added later, Sellars (1956/1963) amends his original view by including that, in order for an ostensible seeing to be an actual seeing, the subject must know that the viewing circumstances are normal. To this, McDowell (1998) objects, "What matters is that the circumstances should be normal, not that the subject should know they are" (p. 474). For the present purpose, I need not present Sellars's argumentation nor all of McDowell's. The relevant point is his rejection of the general idea that the notion of seeing can be built up by adding conditions to an independent notion of visual experience. McDowell writes,

We debar ourselves from [the proposed Kantian] notion of the immediate presentness of objects to subjects if we let it seem that a seen object would have to figure in the content of a conceptual occurrence that is a seeing of it as, for instance, occupying a position at the outer end of a causal chain that generates the subject's current experiential situation in some suitably designated way . . . [Sellars's proposal] suggests that seeings that . . . would have to "contain" not just claims about the environment but also claims to the effect that the subject's experience is "normally" related to the

⁸See my sixth and seventh sections for criticism.

ostensibly seen environment (this being what the subject is supposed to know in enjoying an experience of the relevant kind). That introduces a mediation that would threaten our ability to take these same conceptual occurrences to be [immediate sensible representations of objects]. (pp. 473–474)

What is the nature of the “threat”? Why cannot an immediate sensible representation include the extra “claims” without its losing its status as such?

The propositional content of a visual experience, what the experience “claims,” is crucial to its being an immediate sensible representation. McDowell’s view is understandable, I believe, if one recalls that the actualizations of conceptual capacities that are ostensible or actual seeings are proposed to occur with the same logical and semantical “togetherness” as when, in an instance of judging, the same conceptual capacities are exercised together with respect to an object. Thus, in McDowell’s view, a “claim” to the effect that the object occupies the outer end of a causal chain that leads to the experience, would not be compatible with the experiential propositional content that the object is *there*.

It will be recalled that the visual experiential counterpart of the concept *there* as exercised in judging gains its highly determinate significance from the specific way the subject directs it at the ostensible environmental layout. This specific way is immediate; the experiential *there* is not applied by means of another subject matter, which lies, as it were, between the experience and its ostensible object; light and retinal activity, for example, are transparent. The implication would seem to be that, in that actualization of conceptual capacities which is the ostensible seeing, the ostensible location of the ostensible object does not logically combine with its ostensibly having an indirect causal role in the production of the experience. This suggests, however, that, contrary to McDowell’s view as he stated it, judging and visual experience do not involve throughout the same conceptual capacities.

McDowell would surely allow we can be simultaneously seeing a red cube *there* and having separate thoughts about it, even strange thoughts that contradict the propositional content of the visual experience. For example, the philosophical thought that the red cube does not exist, or that all ordinary objects do not exist, can occur in the same person at the same time as the red cube is an object of immediate sensible representation and is therein veridically experienced as being *there*. Such extra thoughts would not be a part of the propositional content of the visual experiences that are seeings. No problem of incompatibility arises, I should think, between an extra separate thought concerning the object and those respective visual experiences that are of the identical object, no incompatibility, that is, owing to which McDowell could not consider the visual experience an immediate sensible representation.

It will also be recalled, from my third section, that McDowell (1998) himself does attribute an extra “claim” to all visual experiences, namely that the

ostensible object of the experience has the causal property of impressing itself visually on one. Thus, the ostensible object is visually experienced as directly causing the experience of it to take place. Evidently, this causal "claim" is compatible with the "claim" that the object is *there*; it is no "threat" to the experience's status as being an immediate sensible representation.

In the third section, I emphasize that this extra causal "claim," proposed to be part of each visual experience's propositional content, is concerned not only with something present in the environment. In apprehending the ostensible causal relation between its ostensible object and itself, the experience is therein apprehending itself. And there is indication McDowell (1998, p. 448) would hold a visual experience's being an apperceptive object would prevent its qualifying as an immediate sensible representation, owing to diversion of the subject's attention. However, the elimination of the causal "claim" from the content of visual experiences would render them indistinguishable, as described, from mere thoughts that are evoked by their object.

Nevertheless, McDowell (1998) expresses with favor a thesis from Gareth Evans's (1982) conception of the perceptually demonstrative thoughts: "Demonstrative thoughts in the most basic sense are carried to their objects by an 'information-link' that connects the objects to the subjects, rather than by a thought of that link" (p. 175). McDowell agrees, and proposes to take further the absence of extra content, in Evans's latter sense. He makes no direct mention of the role of extra content in his account of visual experience, extra content of the kind that I identify in the immediately preceding paragraph, although he does mention that "thought can go directly to its object like this [i.e., via an "information-link"] only against the background of a richly situating self-consciousness on the part of the subject" (1998, p. 448). But he leaves the matter at that.

Before proceeding with how McDowell takes Evans's thesis further, let me return briefly to why he insists, in a different section, that the visual experiences as he has conceived of them — namely, as being involuntary actualizations of conceptual capacities exercised in judging — are occurrences that are ostensibly caused by their ostensible objects? Somehow, this conceptual content is supposed to serve in place of any kind of qualitative or phenomenal content, which phenomenologically, I believe, led Sellars to the introduction of visual sensations as parts of visual experiences. McDowell's perceptual conceptualism, as his orientation might be called, leaves him little choice than to assign that extra conceptual content to visual experience so as to distinguish visual experiences from other thoughts produced when one is looking at their objects. His visual experiences, conceived of as actualizations of conceptual capacities, are not, he holds, phenomenologically colorless. One may understandably wonder "How come?" because one has in mind that these actualizations are proposed to differ only in their

being involuntary from their counterparts in judging. Does this not make them as “colorless” occurrences as, for example, a mathematical thought would be about a space of many dimensions?

The only answer evidently available to McDowell is that a visual experience is ostensibly a product of its ostensible object. In further considerations of McDowell’s account of perception, it is important to attend to two matters: (a) What role is to be played therein by this extra content of perceptual experience, the difference it makes that we (ostensibly) see what we (ostensibly) see as being (ostensibly) the cause of our (ostensibly) seeing it? (b) The fact is that, according to McDowell’s account, the extra content that is supposed to play this role, whatever the role turns out to be, is propositional entirely. The extra content results from the actualization of conceptual capacities no less so than do the perceptual propositional contents that have reference only to the respective environmental subject matters.

**What the Immediate Sensible Relation to an Ostensibly Seen Object Is:
Perceptual and Conceptual Shapings of “Visual Consciousness”
May Hold the Key**

McDowell (1998) develops his notion of immediate sensible representation without mention of any need for extra content. In his view, only the actual seeings, not also the merely ostensible seeings, are actualizations of conceptual capacities that make objects immediately present to one; a merely ostensible seeing can only be an ostensible immediate sensible representation.

We do not have objects in view when we only ostensibly see them. The merely ostensible immediate sensible representations only subjectively seem to make objects immediately present to subjects. McDowell speaks of a subject’s coming “under the illusion of being perceptually confronted by an object” (p. 175). That is, in some instances, an ostensible seeing may have the identical propositional content as a certain actual seeing and it may be apperceived as being an actual seeing. However, there is more than this to having objects immediately present to one.

McDowell describes the illusion of having an object in view, such as a red cube, as likely to be accompanied by an apperceptive illusion to the effect that one’s experience has a content that is expressible by the phrase “*that red cube*” or the like. How is this apperception illusory? Is not the primary illusion owed, according to McDowell, to the likeness of visual experiential content between merely ostensibly seeing and actually seeing a red cube? McDowell (1998) states,

In a merely ostensible seeing that there is, say, a red cube at a position one can mean by a use of ‘there,’ there are *actualized* in one’s visual consciousness conceptual capaci-

ties corresponding to the presence of the words 'red,' 'cube,' and 'there' (in a use that exploits one's experiential situation)^{9]} in a verbal expression of the experience's content. None of that conceptual content is an illusion The content in question is the same as the content of a judgment the subject might express by saying "There is a cube *there*." (p. 476)

If an actual seeing's content is expressible using "*that* red cube," why cannot the corresponding ostensible seeing's content be so expressed, using the same phrase?

What is the apperceptive illusion to which McDowell has reference? McDowell's answer is that, when a merely ostensible seeing has the same content, this content does not correspond to the fact of the matter, which is that there is not a red cube at the location specified. Although, one's visual experience has content that is expressible with the demonstrative phrase "*that* red cube" or the like, in this regard the visual experience is erroneous. I would say, the experience's content is wrong; the apperception of this content is right — unless there is involved not merely an acceptance of the content as such, but also an acceptance of it as true to the environmental fact of the matter.

Immediate sensible representations, according to McDowell, are therefore to be understood as relational occurrences. If a conceptual episode that is an ostensible seeing of a certain object is not suitably related to that object, then the conceptual episode is therein missing the content of an immediate sensible representation. That is, this conceptual episode lacks a necessary element of content that would make it such a representation.

This seems somewhat misleading because McDowell has been speaking of a red cube as an object and cause of actual seeing. And now, although it plays no other role, he is referring to the red cube as being part of the content of the conceptual episode in the cases of actually seeing the red cube. The red cube in the environment is what is actually seen and so, it would seem, there is also, distinct from it, the actual seeing's conceptual content — which is the same conceptual content as that of certain merely ostensible seeings that there is a red cube *there*. To speak of the red cube as a "content" of the actual seeings would seem to be a misleading choice of word. One is thereby led to infer, perhaps, that a more intimate relation of the red cube to the seeing of it is being proposed to exist: more intimate, that is, than a causal relation — red cube produces the seeing — along with the cube's being conceptually represented in the seeing just as it would be in an instance of judging.

This connects directly with a particular point that McDowell (1998) makes in a substantial discussion of Sellars on meaning and aboutness.

⁹In my sixth and seventh sections, I criticize McDowell's reliance on the experience of a spatial layout and specific places therein in his attempt to explain the object's experiential presence in terms of actualization of conceptual capacities, as distinct from perceptual capacities.

McDowell proposes that an intrinsic difference among conceptual episodes exists in their "being about whatever they are about" (p. 481). He does not mean their specific aboutness is the only way in which they differ intrinsically, only that "a difference in what they are directed toward can itself be an intrinsic difference [among them]" (p. 481). McDowell comments with favor on Sellars's (1960/1963) rejection of the view that conceptual episodes are "diaphanous:" all of them being the same except for that to which they are intentionally directed. But McDowell adds that the relation between an immediate sensible representation and its object in the environment is, too, an intrinsic property of the immediate sensible representation.

But what relation is it that McDowell has in mind as intrinsic? He speaks of the relation's immediacy, meaning that there is no content that mediates the relation. That is, it is not because the red cube, for example, has some sort of presence in a visual experience of it that enables the experience to be related as it is to the red cube in the environment. Thus, he does not mean what Sellars does when Sellars (1978a) writes, "*Something, somehow* a cube of pink in physical space is present in the perception other than as merely *believed in*" (p. 178).

But what is the intrinsic relation of the visual experience in an actual seeing to that object of which this experience is a seeing? The perceptual object's being in view, its being immediately sensibly present, is to be explained in terms of that relation. That relation makes possible the object's experiential presence; such presence cannot occur where the object does not stand to a conceptual episode in that relation. It is obviously very important to know what that necessary relation is. It will be recalled that Evans spoke of an "information-link" connecting the relevant kind of conceptual episode with its object. And McDowell brought in, consistently with Evans, a "background of richly situating self-consciousness" as also necessary to the relation between a conceptual episode and its object.

How can aboutness ("a determinate intentional directedness") be both an intrinsic character of a conceptual episode and a relation in which a conceptual episode stands to something in the environment? At some length, McDowell addresses Sellars's inability to see aboutness as both of these; and he states that a key to such an inability could be having a problem, as Sellars does not, with how "something as natural as sensory consciousness could be shaped by conceptual capacities" (p. 486). Sellars's ostensible seeings are such shapings, in McDowell's view.

Thus, McDowell is implying that a conceptual episode's being about something in the world can be rendered more comprehensible using the notion of conceptually shaping something called "sensory consciousness." A conceptual episode can be an actualization of conceptual capacities that in some way transforms "sensory consciousness." There exist conceptual capacities, in

this view, whose actualization does not modify a "sensory consciousness." Such actualizations find their target by means other than the interactions of concepts with "sensory consciousness."

We are not told what this crucial "sensory consciousness" is, but we may safely gather that the conceptual capacities of which, for the greatest part, McDowell (1998) is speaking are not, in their important dimension of bestowing conceptual shape, analogous to the conceptual capacities exercised in judging. Their being different is of such a magnitude that the experiential presence of environmental objects depends on it. And the place of "sensory consciousness" in the picture that McDowell is drawing causes one to surmise that the ostensible seeings, being so different in the respect indicated, may have been too easily assimilated to the conceptual episodes similar to speech episodes.

McDowell emphasizes that, when environmental objects come into view, it is conceptual episodes that have the character of determinate intentional relatedness to objects. But only his repeated claim that, in the relevant conceptual episodes, conceptual capacities have operated on something called "sensory consciousness" gives promise of possible progress toward explaining experiential presence. The attraction of McDowell's (1998) immediate sensible presentations is that, through them, a way may somehow be found to "exploit the receptivity of sensibility" (p. 490). I have expressed doubt in this article that having the world in view is possible without the actualization of perceptual capacities along with the conceptual capacities on which McDowell exclusively relies.

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