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Perceptual Presence and the Productive Imagination

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This paper has three aims. The first is to characterize the problem of *perceptual presence* and to argue that it needs to be taken seriously in the philosophy of perception. The second is to evaluate a solution to this problem pioneered by Kant (1781; 1783) and refined by Sir Peter Strawson (Strawson 1971) and Wilfrid Sellars (Sellars 1978). I will argue that this composite neo-Kantian view is the only available solution to the problem of perceptual presence. My third aim is to examine the role that this account of imagination in perception plays in the recent work of John McDowell. He objects to a theory of this kind during his discussion of Sellars's work in McDowell's Woodbridge Lectures (McDowell 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). In later work his assessment of this aspect of Sellars's view is revised; this partly involves a more sympathetic treatment of Sellars's views on imagination in perception (McDowell 2009f, 114, 123–24). However, I will argue that the theory I defend here not only solves the problem of perceptual presence, but makes far more of a positive contribution to McDowell's own views about perceptual intentionality than he recognizes. The irony is that McDowell is a rapidly moving target and in his most recent work he seems to have abandoned his Sellars-inspired view of perceptual intentionality as involving "claims" more or less completely (McDowell 2009h). I will argue that this most recent change in his views is poorly motivated.

I. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The problem of perceptual presence is that of explaining how our perceptual experience of the world gives us a sense of the presence of objects in perception over and above the perceived sensory properties of that object. Objects possess other properties that are phenomenologically present, but sensorily absent. (Stipulatively, I will refer to these properties as *represented as present* in perception even though they are not *sensorily present*.) This problem seems to me comparatively neglected in contemporary philosophy of perception. Here is a succinct description of the problem by Alva Noë:

Consider as an example a perceptual experience such as that you might enjoy if you were to hold a bottle in your hand with eyes closed. *You have a sense of the presence of the whole bottle, even though you only make contact with the bottle at a few isolated points.* Can we explain how your experience in this way outstrips what is actually given, or must we concede that your sense of the bottle as a whole is a kind of confabulation? . . . One way we might try to explain this is by observing that you draw on your knowledge of what bottles are. . . . You bring to bear your conceptual skills. This is doubtless right. But it does not, I think, do justice to the phenomenology of the experience. For, crucially, your sense of the presence of the bottle is a sense of its *perceptual* presence. That is, you do not merely think or infer that there is a bottle present, in the way, say, that you think or infer that there is a room next door. The presence of the bottle is not inferred or surmised. It is *experienced*. (Noë 2002b: 8–9, both emphases added)

My aim in this paper is not discuss the “grand illusion” hypothesis, which is Noë’s primary concern in this passage. I am interested in his insightful recognition of the problem of perceptual presence.

I think that Noë’s description of the phenomenology of our perceptual experience is exactly right. Your experience of the bottle is as he describes: of the whole bottle as a voluminous, three-dimensional, object with sensory properties that are represented as present in our experience in addition to those that are sensorily present. However, I will argue that this sense of perceptual presence is not based on presented sensory properties, nor based on an argument to the best explanation, nor any general capacity for theory that “fills out” those properties that are explicitly represented by adding those that are not (by a process like “confabulation”). Your experience is clearly, in some way, *dependent* on such theoretical knowledge, but it is not that in which your perceptual experience consists. In a way that has to be explained your perceptual experience of the object *is* of the whole object as present to you in a way that seems to outstrip something, which, for sake of a better term, I shall call simply “sensory experience” in or across one or more of the sensory modalities.¹ Explaining how this is so much as possible seems to me a serious challenge to any theory of perception, but only Kant and twentieth-century neo-Kantians seem to me to have recognized this fact, let alone supplied a solution to the problem that it raises.

I concede that a solution to this problem will avail one little if one has failed to make the case that there is a problem in the first place. I will now begin to canvass some ostensible solutions to the problem of perceptual presence, both to explain why I find them implausible and to sharpen the appreciation of the problem.

The first putative solution that I will consider is Noë's own. Having identified and described this problem of perceptual presence, and having denied that it is to be solved by an appeal to theory, Noë goes on to give an explanation of this problem of perceptual presence in terms of an enactive, or sensorimotor, account of perception. The first step in his argument is to note that we do not sense the whole object in our perceptual consciousness, but, rather, that we have "access" to the whole object in consciousness. The next step is to claim that this access consists in our tacit grasp of sensorimotor skills "whose possession is constitutive of sensory perception":

Our sense of the perceptual presence of the detailed world does not consist in our representation of all the detail in consciousness now. Rather, it consists in our access now to all of the detail, and to our knowledge that we have this access. . . . My sense of the presence of the whole cat behind the fence consists precisely in my knowledge, my implicit understanding, that by a movement of the eye or the head or the body I can bring bits of the [object] into view that are now hidden. (Noë 2002b, 10–11)

While I am convinced by Noë's description of the problem, I am not convinced by his solution to it.² It is a sophisticated proposal that deserves more consideration than I can give it here. For present purposes all I will say that it is a *dispositional* solution to the problem. ("Access" is clearly a dispositional notion.) For that reason I do not find Noë's solution plausible.

Any such dispositional explanation faces a dilemma: either, implausibly, we have to assume that we *can* perceive dispositional properties themselves in visual experience or we have to concede that, contrary to the initial description, the envisaged properties are *not* in our perceptual phenomenology precisely because they are not sensorily presented in visual experience.³ In the course of solving the problem of perceptual presence Noë re-defines it so as to make it soluble. But then the initial appeal of his description of the problem loses its force. Merely accessible properties, it seems to me, are not present in experience in the initial sense that Noë described. His phenomenological report was that the whole bottle was *present* to you, not simply *available* to you, and his explanation seems inadequate to substantiate that claim.

I will appeal throughout this paper to an example of Sellars's, namely, the presence in your experience of the white interior of a red apple that has not been cut open (Sellars 1978). The sensory property of whiteness is not, in this example, a dispositional property of the apple. If I perceive an intact red apple then I know that it can be pressed to make apple juice, but I do not perceive its crushability or its other dispositional properties when I perceive it intact. I can perceive the manifestation of its dispositional properties when I crush the apple in a press, but up to

that point I do not perceive its crushability in the same way in which I experience the whiteness of its interior as perceptually present. Yet Sellars argues that the white interior of the apple is represented as present in your perceptual experience of the apple, even when the apple is intact and has a covering red surface. The white interior is present just as the voluminousness of the bottle was present in Noë's initial description. It is presented in your perceptual experience and, as Sellars further remarks, not present as *imagined* but present, simpliciter. This sense of presence undoubtedly depends on prior background knowledge that one might, in an extended sense, call "theoretical." If you did not know that the interior of apples are typically white then whiteness is not the property that you would represent as perceptually present. But perceptual presence only presupposes such background knowledge: it is not an application of it. I will now describe what seems to me a far more promising treatment of the problem in the work of Sellars and Strawson.

II. A NEO-KANTIAN STRATEGY OUTLINED

Sellars worked out a solution to the problem of perceptual presence inspired by Kant. Taking vision as an exemplary case, Sellars took visual experience to present the mental subject with certain kinds of *claims* that he called "ostensible seeings" (Sellars 1963, §7, §16). These claims are not beliefs, but they are analogous to beliefs in that they use concepts and those concepts are tied together with an analogue of conceptual structure (Sellars 1963; McDowell 2009a, 10–12). Sellars follows Kant in arguing that the deployment of the concept of an object within such ostensible seeings is essentially supplemented by the operation of the productive imagination. (The full details of this crucial supplement to Sellars's theory of perception are given in his comparatively late paper of 1978.)

Our concept of an object, as applied to a perceptual experience, generates a rule for the construction of a model of that object in the experience. This rule-governed process of generating a model, which Kant called schematization, is not a theoretical construction, but a use of the productive imagination. The imagination plays a distinctive role in filling in the contours of a plan laid down for its operation by our concept of an object. If endorsed by a subject, such ostensible seeings are matched by perceptual beliefs. Those beliefs are derived from perceptual experience, but not in such a way that we can reduce the idea of perceptual experience to the holding of a certain kind of belief. Within such beliefs, concept application is schematized in such a way as to complete the perceived situation. That is because schematization has been applied by the imagination, operating within the understanding and supplementing its operations, so as to shape the deliverances of sensibility. This solves the problem of explaining perceptual presence.

This process of completion transcends the sensorily given properties in experience, but allows one to represent certain properties as phenomenologically pres-

ent within the perceptual experience itself. Here is Sellars's example in his original discussion:

Consider the visual perception of a red apple. Apples are red on the outside (have a red skin) but white inside . . . We see it as not only having a red surface but as white inside . . . How can a volume of white apple flesh be present as actuality in the visual experience if it is not seen? . . . It is present by virtue of being imagined. . . . Notice that to say that it is present in the experience by virtue of being imagined is not to say that it is presented as imagined. (Sellars 1978)

This claim can only be made, Sellars believes, for the "occurrent proper and common sensible features" of objects and it cannot be extended to dispositional or other causal properties of an object (Sellars 1978).

This general account had been developed, in parallel, in an even more ambitious way by Sir Peter Strawson (1971). He noted that Kant, like Hume, very often used the term "imagination" in a familiar and mundane way, but also then used the same term in various technical senses to refer to:

A connecting or uniting power which operates in two dimensions. In one dimension, (a), it connects perceptions of different objects of the same kind; in the other dimension, (b), it connects different perceptions of the same object of a given kind. It is the instrument of our perceptual appreciation both of kind-identity and of individual-identity, both of concept-identity and of object-identity. (Strawson 1971)

Strawson was prepared to extend this role for the imagination in filling in our singular perception of a particular object to a wider class of properties that are represented as present in the phenomenology of perceptual experience. It seemed to him that object recognition *itself* involved a connection between an occurrent perceptual episode and other nonactual episodes. Appeal to nonactual perceptual episodes helps to explain how a subject can take him or herself to be perceptually recognizing an object, as opposed say, to discriminating for a moment a salient part of one's environment. One could do the latter without applying the concept of an object to that discriminated part (not even the concept of a **fleeting object**, like a lightning bolt). Strawson argued that in this case more occurs than simply consciously attending to a phenomenologically salient part of one's experience that can be singled out. For that experiential part has to be classified with other nonactual experiences simply in judging the presence of an object. Strawson extends this idea of the "presence of the non-actual in the actual" to cover classifications of objects under kinds and also to explain object constancy. (The latter is our capacity to re-identify one object through time as one and the same object.)

It seems to me that a more restricted claim here is more defensible, but then it is also a very fundamental case: I will be concerned solely to establish that singular perception of an object involves the productive imagination. Kant's extensive appeal to the use of the productive imagination in perception is based on his wide correlation between concept use and the imagination (Strawson 1971; Bell 1987). *Any*

mediation of the particular and the general in object constancy and reidentification, or the classification of a particular under a kind, seems to him to involve imagination and Strawson followed him in this extended use. My particular focus in this paper will be on that which is the most basic case: the “presence as actuality” in perceptual experience of properties such as the white interior of the uncut apple in the case of singular judgments about particular objects. This has to be a primary use of the imagination in perception. One could accept alternative explanations of the generality in perceptual judgments that departed to a greater or a lesser extent from Kant provided that his central claim was preserved for this case.⁴ Clearly, most of Strawson’s arguments are crucial for this case, too, but one does not have to extend the claim to support object constancy or classification under kinds (as opposed simply to falling under a concept such as **this such**). Having described this neo-Kantian theory I will now discuss some of the main lines of objection to its plausibility.

III. IMAGINATION VERSUS THEORY

How plausible is Kant’s view? It seems to me that the best argument for it is, simply, that no other explanation seems feasible. I agree this strategy is hostage to fortune: one has to refute, case by case, competing explanations. One cannot rule out that an innovative new theory, or an innovative development of an old one, might overturn Kant’s view. So be it, but at present, it seems to me that Kant’s view is really the only game in town. The main competing alternative would seem to be the claim that the perceptual representation of the white interior of the red apple is an instance of theoretical knowledge being used to “fill in” what is immediately given in experience to create a sense of perceptual presence.

In this alternative explanation a distinction is to be drawn between that which is immediately sensorily given as an impingement of energy on one’s sensory surfaces (to borrow Quine’s formulation) and the theoretical interpretation of this sensory data. The whiteness of the apple’s interior falls into the latter category. It is a case of the very rapidly applied, top down influence of background belief on the uninterpreted sensory basis of one’s perceptual experience. The only sense in which the property of whiteness is present in your experience is that it is theorized to be there. But this distinction between the given and the theorized does not, it seems to me, mark an explanatorily useful distinction for present purposes. The concepts of objects are undeniably used in the context of a complex web of beliefs and theoretical principles. I have conceded that such beliefs serve to constrain how one’s imagination completes one’s perceptual experience. But that the concept of an object can be understood in such a way is not necessarily to endorse the view that the problem of perceptual presence is to be solved by appealing to theory. This is for four reasons that seem to me to be compelling objections to the “theoretical” proposal in all its forms.

First, many properties are represented in theory that are not part of your perceptual experience and could not be. These include dispositional properties and unobservable properties. There is a clear distinction between the presence in perceptual experience of the crushability of an uncut red apple and the presence of its white interior. The latter is perceptually present in the way that the former is not, because the former could not be perceptually present in the relevant sense.

Second, and purely *ad hominem*, as it were, it would be surprising if Sellars had simply forgotten, in defending a Kantian solution to the problem of perceptual presence, one of the central aspects of his own philosophy. That is his “methodological” treatment of the theory/observation distinction. For him this is not a principled distinction but one relative to technological limitations. It is a distinction between what one can only know by theory and what one can report on noninferentially, or *avow*. If we follow *that* Sellarsian line then one could concede that the property of the white interior of the apple was applied to our experience by background theory, but as a result of training we can all now spontaneously *avow* reports of its “presence.”

However, Sellars clearly took himself to be making a *further* point about this class of properties that are represented as perceptually present while not sensorily present. Therefore, there is *for Sellars* no direct alignment between the perceptually present/not explicitly presented distinction and the noninferential/inferential distinction. That undermines this proposed Sellarsian refinement to the theory proposal. It is not enough to say that the perceptual presence of the white interior of the apple is explained by two things. First, the generation of a sense of presence when sensorily given properties are supplemented by prior theoretical knowledge and, second, a training that allows one to report on the perceptual presence of the object “directly” and without inference. The relevant sense of presence has simply been omitted from this explanation. I believe that Sellars was aware of the further distinction that needs to be drawn: from his perspective there are two issues here, not one. I do not think, then, that it is plausible to use one of Sellars’s theses to undercut another.

That point is connected to my third objection to the “theory” proposal, which is that these properties characterize the phenomenology of schematized visual experience, construed as containing claims, *even when the claim is not endorsed*. A schema has been applied even in the case of ostensible seeings, which are not, and need not give rise to, perceptual beliefs if the subject withholds endorsement from them. But any theoretical diagnosis of the presence of these properties takes them to be applied to your experience, very rapidly, by the application of background belief. That, it seems to me, clearly implies that the theory is applied to perceptual beliefs. But that explanation arrives too late. Schematization has already been applied to those “shallow” outputs of the visual system which, tied together by an analogue of conceptual structure, are not beliefs (Fodor 1983, 93–94). But top-down theoretical influence by background beliefs could influence only other beliefs.

Fourth, if one is to represent the perceiver as theorist and ordinary objects as analogous to theoretical posits, then such objects are going to play a role in mapping

out a range of possible pathways of an observer through an objective world not of her making.⁵ How much of that world can plausibly be represented as contained “within” immediate perceptual experience? The answer Kant can give is: as much as imagination places within it. By contrast I do not see how the theorist can draw any principled line between all our theoretical knowledge in which a particular concept of an object is embedded and how many of an object’s features are represented to us as present in perception. We can certainly, as the phenomenalist urges, conceive of a perceptual pathway through an objective world and assign our notion of an object a place in such a pathway as analogous to a “route marker.” The beliefs that we form on this basis are informed by theory. But how can we limit, in our representation of such a pathway, those properties attributed to objects in all the different contexts in which we might encounter them solely to those that are plausibly construed as perceptually present? That problem seems to me intractable.

This seems to me a problem for the closest defense of the Sellarsian view of the role of the imagination in solving the problem of perceptual presence to my own, namely, that of Paul Coates (2009, forthcoming). Even though Coates is a sympathetic expositor of Sellars’s view, even he balks at Sellars’s claim that the white interior of the apple is represented as perceptually present. He argues:

I don’t find Sellars’s claims about the way that images are present in experience entirely convincing . . . in anticipation of eating an apple I may form an image of its juicy centre but I don’t in corresponding fashion normally form an occurrent image of the whole volume of flesh contained within a dog’s furry exterior, although I may imagine it getting up and wagging its tail. Yet I still experience the dog as a solid, three-dimensional physical thing. So what explains the phenomenological difference? I suggest . . . the actions that I would be likely to carry out in respects to the two kinds of thing. (Coates 2010, 72–73)

This seems to me a tactical retreat from Sellars’s central claim and, in fact, a sophisticated version of the dispositionalist proposal very like Noë’s proposal that I considered and rejected. A defender of the Kantian view owes Coates an explanation of why the white interior of the uncut apple is perceptually present when the interior of the dog chasing the apple rolling on the floor is not.

I think that that explanation will appeal to the generality and the stereotypical nature of the schematized model, comparable to a Roschian stereotype (Rosch 1977; Putnam 1975a; Rey 1983). Kant’s schema applies a model in our experience of the stereotypical apple or dog. But that does not alter my central point, which is that background theoretical knowledge is undeniably a *prompt* for the way in which the schema operates but the operation of the schema depends on the productive imagination, not background theory. I typically perceive apple interiors as white and have not (fortunately) typically experienced dogs as dissected. Background theoretical knowledge primes the content of the model that is applied in perception. But there remains a difference between the prompts that cue the operation of the model and that which the model places in perception if its operation succeeds. I

believe that Sellars's apparently more extravagant claim is actually the more defensible on the grounds I have given, namely, that no other view preserves the explanandum. In this respect I think Coates's skepticism is typical: it is a denial that the datum that Sellars invokes actually exists.⁶ The danger of that skepticism is that far from explaining what Sellars and Strawson mean when they appeal to the role of imagination in experience we have redefined the problem to make it soluble, but at the cost of losing that which we sought to explain. The neo-Kantian claim that the imagination can explain perceptual presence is simply an irrelevance if there is nothing distinctive for it to explain. But then the onus is on the critic to explain the apparently compelling nature of Noë's initial description of the problem.

The devil is in the details and I will describe how Kant envisages his proposals in the 'Schematism' as working in the next section. But at this point it is important to note that Kant does not find a role for the productive imagination by downgrading our ordinary sense that in perception we encounter an objective world, not of our own making, that is there "anyway" (Strawson 1979). I think that would be a fair accusation to make against any view that took the perceptual representation of the whiteness of the apple's interior to be a confabulation or a fiction. Kant is concerned, precisely, to defend the objectivity of the world encountered in perception. He begins, in his phenomenological description of the objectivity inherent in our experience, from a world of robustly existing independent objects and his appeal to the role of the imagination is transcendental precisely in the sense that, as Strawson put it:

The Kantian synthesis . . . is something necessarily involved in, a necessary condition of, actual occurrent reportable perceptions having the character they do have. So it may be called 'transcendental' in contrast with any process, for example any ordinary associative process, which presupposes a basis of actual, occurrent, reportable perceptions. (Strawson 1971, 90)

Kant does not inflate the claims of imagination in perception by giving it a lot of work to do in rebuilding our conception of an objective world from an impoverished conception of perceptual experience (Strawson 1979). On the contrary, if one makes one's account of the objectivity of perceptual experience as robust as one chooses, one still needs to appeal to the imagination.

IV. PERSPECTIVE IN PERCEPTION AND A ROLE FOR THE "SCHEMATISM"

Sartre intriguingly remarked that imaginary objects are composed of several possible points of view on them:

Imagined objects are seen from several sides at the same time: or better—for this multiplication of points of view, of sides, does not give an

exact account of the imaginative intention—they are ‘presentable’ under an all inclusive aspect. (Sartre 1972, 141)

I think some sense can be made of that Gnostic utterance in the consideration of the role of Kantian schemata in perception. In any particular instance of the generation of a schema from the concept of an object following a rule, that schema will be perspectival, generating a representation “as from” a point of view.

Given the objective commitments of perception, I take it that we understand the metaphor of perspective as precisely that—a metaphor. Furthermore, it is an inherently realist metaphor, of the way in which an object is presented as from a point of view, such that the idea of that object as being from no point of view *in particular* figures in the explanation of how it appears from the particular point of view that it does in any particular instance (Campbell 1995, 5–8). One could attempt, as a phenomenalist might, to identify this notion of an independent object as a limit concept based solely on the systematic transformations within different perspectives but I take it that is precisely to violate what we ordinarily take the objectivity of our perceptual experience to be (Berlin 1950). In a plausible further extension of his view, Kant seems to take the perspectival feature of perception, the presentation of objects *as from* a point of view, as a feature contributed by the productive imagination.

This is not a retreat from his first claim. His first claim was that in the singular perception of a particular object a property can be represented as present when it is sensorily absent. By adding that imagination further contributes the perception of the perspectival features of perception, Kant seems to be supplementing these absent but phenomenologically present features with further features that are simply perceptually present. Do we not simply perceive that an object is presented to us “from a point of view”? If we look down on an opaquely colored red cube, do we not see that the three facing surfaces we perceive are not square but three parallelograms? In that sense, are perspectival features not simply there in perception, in the way that the red surface of the apple is and the white interior is not? Why, then, a further appeal to productive imagination? Kant seems to have conflated two quite different issues.

I do not believe that there is a conflation here. While the relevant sensorily identified features are present in visual experience, their being taken *as* perspectival, as being from a point of view, is not present in visual experience. Perspectivalness enters into how the features are taken when they are conceptualized and a sensory model applied to them (Rosenberg 2007, 272; see also McDowell 2009a, 31). Perspective is brought into play by the application of that rule, generated by the concept, which generates a sensory model of the object. The perspectival features, in being so perceived as part of a sensory model generated by the concept of an object, are contributed by the productive imagination. Thus, in taking the three parallelograms as the representation of a cube as from a point of view, and in taking the cube to have non-facing sides, in *both* cases one is applying that sensory

model generated by one's concept of that object that is produced by the productive imagination. That is one interpretation that can be placed on Sartre's remark that imaginary objects are from multiple points of view: the productive imagination generates a point of view corresponding to every possible perceptual "take" on an independent object.

If one could establish this claim as independently plausible then it has consequences for what Coates calls the "navigational" aspect of perception. This is true even if this application of a schematized model in our experience cannot be explained wholly in terms of these consequences (as Coates hopes that it will). He notes:

I am implicitly prepared for transformations of the sense-image model, and particularly for transformations that occur as a result of my own actions . . . These connections play a crucial role in ordinary perception, in accounting for the connection between the two components of experience. (Coates 2010, 76)

This idea connects the implicit objectivity of perception to its perspectival character and hence to the transformatory sequences implicit in a schema of the kind that Kant envisages. In perceiving an object as objectively located in a world not of my making, the perspectivalness of the schema is reflected in the law-like way in which its content is transformed as I navigate through the world. This seems to me importantly true and a Kantian insight into the need for schematization in perception but I also believe that Kant is right to draw more out from this solution than Coates allows. Schematization also solves the problem of perceptual presence. Sellars is sensitive to the *two* tasks that imagination discharges in passages such as the following:

[The imagination] . . . is a unique blend of a capacity to form images *in accordance with* a recipe, and a capacity to conceive of objects in a way which *supplies* the relevant recipes. (Sellars 1978, §36; quoted also by Rosenberg 2007, 273)

Highlighting these two complementary aspects of Kant's creative solution to the problem of perceptual presence redeems this aspect of his philosophy: his discussion of the concept identity is one of the most criticized views. The chapter on the "Schematism" is allegedly a failed solution to a pseudo-problem (Bennett 1966; Wilkerson 1976). Having insightfully highlighted a fundamental dichotomy between concept and intuition his critics charge that Kant then tries incoherently to glue the two terms of his fundamental dichotomy back together again by asking a muddled question: what third term is needed to unite concept and intuition? Having created a cloud of dust and then complained that he cannot see, Kant re-introduces a schema as the mediating term between general concept and particular intuition where none is needed.

This is not the place for a full discussion of Kant's views, but it is noticeable that a schema is, as Sellars points out, both *produced by*, and *is a rule for*, the imagination. Therefore, finding a distinctive role for the imagination in mediating the

relation between the general and the particular would vindicate Kant's strategy (Bell 1987). The solution to the problem of perceptual presence, and a description of the role of the imagination in taking features to be perspectival so as to draw out the connection with the navigational element in perception, both indicate such a distinctive explanatory role. The standard criticism of Kant misrepresents his aims: given that he has independent reasons for describing the role of imagination in perception, it makes sense for him to introduce the idea of a 'Schematism'. His motivation is not confusedly to go back on the very distinction between the generality of concepts and particularity of intuitions from which he began. It is, rather, to solve a problem of perceptual presence for which we seem to have no other plausible explanation. I will now argue that Kant's proposal can also form part of a constructive solution to a problem in one recent contribution to the philosophy of perception, that of John McDowell.

V. REPRESENTATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND "MANIFEST PRESENCE TO MIND"

John McDowell's recent work constitutes a sustained engagement with the basic idea of Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*; namely, that one can develop a "realism without empiricism" which rejects one, traditional, empiricist view of the content of perceptual experience but wins through to another in which conceptual capacities are jointly exercised with sensory capacities in perception.⁷ In this superior conception we can make sense of perception as both the responsible exercise of our free, spontaneous, standing as a rational being but also as constrained by the ways things are, "the independent reality disclosed in experience" (McDowell 2009d, 82). For McDowell, the most important aspect of this view is that there is a sustained risk in talking of the boundaries of the conceptual. The image of a "boundary" suggests a division of space into a location within and a location without, but in this context that metaphor is unhelpful. The sphere of the rational, the responsible exercise of concepts, cannot be shaped from "without" as the involvement of the conceptual in perceptual experience extends all the way to the periphery of experience.

McDowell takes that basic Sellarsian insight to supply the material for Sellars's later engagement with the work of Kant. Sellars takes over many Kantian ideas but believes that Kant's treatment of the forms of intuition, space and time, is incompatible with this insight about the boundaries of the conceptual. In his attempt to explain that different kinds of makers of perceptual judgments need not have our human forms of sensibility while we are subject, qua thinkers, to constraints that apply to thinkers per se Kant misplaces his central insight. He did so in a way that it took Hegel to correct (Sellars 1968, ch. 1; McDowell 2009d). The historical and exegetical issues here are complex, but basically McDowell thinks that both Hegel

and Sellars were right about Kant, but that Sellars then reproduces a new version of Kant's mistake in his own work, notably in *Science and Metaphysics*.

The crux of the dispute is that Sellars achieved the insight that Kantian intuitions are "shapings of sensory consciousness by the understanding." But he then misinterprets his own insight: he takes Kant not only to acknowledge the role that preconceptual sensations feature in experience (for that represents a mere truism), but that "objects of intuition" in the case of *individuals* have spatial form (Sellars 1967, 8). The perception of individuals involves a manifold of sensations but one that is *already structured*. McDowell rejects that thesis as involving a return to the myth of the given. But he believes that it stems from Sellars's deeper mistake of seeing nonconceptual representations of individual objects as playing the role of a "guide [for] the flow of representations in perception," guidance that on the relevant page of *Science and Metaphysics* is called guidance "from without" the sphere of the conceptual. McDowell objects strongly to that notion of guidance "from without."⁸

McDowell has developed this correction of Sellars's views in two distinct forms. In his original treatment of this issue McDowell simply describes Sellars's adaptation of Kant's views on the imagination in a footnote in order to set the topic aside (McDowell 2009a). By the time of his later paper, "Sensory Consciousness in Kant and Sellars" McDowell now acknowledges the importance of Sellars's views on the role of imagination in perception but does not think that it really helps with the deeper issue of how Sellars explains spatiality.⁹ (In fact, Sellars's appeal to the imagination continues to confuse matters by appealing to sense-image models that again try to span the fundamental dichotomy between the conceptual and the sensational (McDowell 2009f, 124). I am not going to adjudicate the four-way argument between Kant, Hegel, Sellars, and McDowell over the relation between the conceptual and the material of sensation here (others have started this task¹⁰). My more modest aim is to establish two points about McDowell's treatment of the role of the imagination in perception along the lines defended in this paper.

First, I think such a view would address a pressing concern about McDowell's own view of perception (at least in the papers up to "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" where his view changes radically). Second, I think incorporation of this Sellarsian view forms an important part of a defensible overall theory of perception from which there was no need to retreat—but McDowell has so retreated in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given." I will discuss both points in turn.

The first is the more important: McDowell believes that we have a clear idea of the intentionality of thought, but it is an open question how one can characterize the kind of intentionality characteristic of perception. We want to avoid "the given" but there is a philosophically innocuous sense in which perceptual intentionality must exhibit a form of passivity in the sense that it is involuntarily impressed upon us. John Searle describes this feature of perceptual intentionality as follows:

If, for example, I see a yellow station wagon in front of me, the experience I have is directly of the object. It doesn't just "represent" the object,

it provides direct access to it. The experience has a kind of directness, immediacy and involuntariness which is not shared by a belief I might have about that object in its absence. (Searle 1983, 46)

All parties to this discussion agree this is a crucial feature of perceptual intentionality; McDowell wants to preserve it without explaining it in terms of perceptual “givenness” as characterized by what Sellars labeled “traditional empiricism.” McDowell wants to avoid Sellars’s putative error of lapsing back into the “myth of the given” but he also wants to do justice to the idea that there is a mode of intentionality specific to perception. The sophisticated Sellarsian proposal is that the mode of intentionality specific to perception is that it involves the passivity of sensation. But for McDowell that claim is part of a wider picture in which the conceptual is guided from “without.”

It is reasonable to ask what positive account McDowell does give of perceptual intentionality? In the Woodbridge Lectures he argues that perceptual experiences involve claims, or ostensible seeings, that may or may not be endorsed by the perceiver. McDowell is clear that if perceptual intentionality has distinctive features as such it will apply as much to these embedded claims as to the perceptual judgment that results if the claims are endorsed. But all that he says to identify their distinctive mode of intentionality is to stipulate that they are “shapings of visual consciousness” and he also appeals to their involuntariness.

This dual characterization is, it seems to me, clearly insufficient to characterize the distinctive nature of perceptual intentionality. That is where McDowell’s later endorsement of Sellars’s neo-Kantian view of the role of imagination in perception can help. This can be brought out by considering John MacFarlane’s challenge to McDowell’s earlier presentation of his views in *Mind and World*. MacFarlane asked why McDowell had restricted himself in that book to empirical knowledge and set aside questions about the objective validity of mathematical knowledge, so central to Kant’s own concerns? (MacFarlane 2004). The Woodbridge Lectures suggested an answer: perceptual intentionality simply has a distinctive phenomenology, that which licenses talk in this instance of perceptual “impressions.”¹¹ It is not simply that perceptual experience is concept involving, or concept involving in an involuntary way. Over and above this it has a distinctive phenomenological character as the sensory shaping of visual consciousness in which experience impresses itself upon the subject. In other words, McDowell is in a position to demarcate the domain of the genuinely empirical.

That claim that he has identified the distinctive aspects of perceptual intentionality features in both of McDowell’s diagnoses of why Sellars illegitimately traffics in ideas that his critique of the myth of the given has disqualified him from using. The first is a general, transcendental anxiety about why there should be such a thing as the manifold of experience, such that it is judgeable. If that is indeed a motivation on Sellars’s part the idea of the “affinity” of the manifold does, indeed, *not* require any transcendental underpinning. More pertinently, concept formation is to be “guided” by visual impressions, which, McDowell argues, only looks like a

view Sellars needs to hold because he has overlooked that in visual consciousness there are visual impressions that are *already* shapings of visual consciousness.¹² We do not need to appeal to anything outside the conceptual shaping of sensibility in visual consciousness, but this is, as it were, simply the relevant kind of intentionality. Perceptual intentionality is the shaping of visual consciousness by visual impressions.¹³

But without an appeal to the role played by the imagination this answer does not seem to me sufficient; MacFarlane's objection remains pressing. A mathematician going through a proof has her thought externally guided and exercises concepts in a way that is constrained and nonvoluntary. (Yet also responsible and within a space of reasons.) We need to say something *more* about the external guidance of distinctively empirical thought. An appeal to the role of the imagination seems to me crucial, otherwise McDowell's overall view seems inconsistent. I will now try to bring out this inconsistency.

The first point to note is that McDowell eventually concludes that what supplies the external guidance to perceptual *knowledge* is the manifest presence to mind of objects and properties themselves. Objects conceived under a *de re* mode of presentation, and the properties that they instantiate, supply the guidance.

This thesis reflects McDowell's balancing act between neo-Fregean views of perception like those of Austin, Travis, and Martin that simply deny that perception involves representation at all, but rather "manifest presence to mind," and representationalist views of perception such as those of Harman, Tye, and Dretske where perceptual success involves truth *in* representation.¹⁴ McDowell's distinctive form of disjunctivism, by contrast, explains perceptual knowledge in terms of manifest presence to mind, but *also* retains the claim that perceptual experiences are intentional and have accuracy conditions. (The neo-Fregean denies this latter claim.)¹⁵

In McDowell's disjunctivism we cannot, in an account of perception, intelligibly set ourselves up as appraising a class of perceptual mental states and ask whether or not they represent the world. That is the kind of exercise represented by metaphors of experience as a "tribunal"; this would be a courtroom without witnesses just as Austin implied when he observed that the senses are "silent." For an alternative understanding of perceptual representation McDowell suggests that what he calls "objective purport" is built into this class of mental states. We can only understand the kind of intentionality that they possess if we always maintain a sense of "having the world in view" in understanding the kind of states that they are. This issue of intentionality is prior to that of knowledge, but it explains why, in certain privileged cases when we do have perceptual knowledge, experience does not fall short of the fact known. The potential for that was built into understanding what it was for this class of mental states to be the kind of states that they are.¹⁶ They always possess "objective purport" and have the world in view—hence the title of the Woodbridge Lectures.

So far, so good, but now a problem emerges in the overall structure of McDowell's position. *Ex hypothesi*, objects and properties are not available to supply

external guidance for merely putative “ostensible seeings.” This term takes me back to the exposition of the theory of perception that McDowell develops from Sellars. Visual experiences, simply by involving concepts that are “bound” by structure, express putative claims that may, or may not, be endorsed by the perceiving subject. Thus ostensible seeings form the larger class of which veridical ostensible seeings form an important subclass: the latter are cases of perceptual knowledge. Yet the phenomenological feature that marks off distinctively perceptual intentionality applies to that entire class of visual experiences that express “claims,” whether endorsed or not. (I have already noted that McDowell states this explicitly in his third Woodbridge Lecture; Jay Rosenberg notes the point but to a different purpose in his (2007, 273).¹⁷ This is where the inconsistency emerges.

This set of commitments does not add up. McDowell wants to acknowledge the distinctive form of intentionality involved in perception without simply stipulating that it is *sui generis*. He sees clearly that it attaches as much to embedded ostensible seeings as to endorsed perceptual judgments. But some of the former will turn out to be nonveridical. If they are nonveridical, then the only mark they possess that is distinctive of them as perceptual states is that they are “involuntary.” But that is clearly inadequate as an account of their intentionality as thought can be involuntary, too. That criterion does not mark off the empirical. If they are veridical, then we can appeal to the manifest presence to mind of the external world to explain perceptual intentionality. But then we need to drop the claim that ostensible seeings possess the mark of perceptual intentionality as, *ex hypothesi*, they possess that mark whether veridical or not. Taken together all these claims are jointly inconsistent.

It would be a mistake, analogous to the misunderstanding of McDowell’s disjunctive theory of perception, to take the characterization of the intentional states involved in perception and the characterization of what perceptual knowledge consists in to be one and the same account. That interpretative error would confuse necessary and sufficient conditions. Characterizing perceptual intentionality does not deliver knowledge, but the latter presupposes an account of the former. Perceptual knowledge involves representations, but those that possess objective validity, that always have the world in view. However, the pressure from MacFarlane’s criticism is that we need to understand a distinctive *kind* of external constraint in the case of empirical knowledge. That leads in the Woodbridge Lectures to a disjunctive account of perceptual intentionality. In the case of veridical empirical judgments, the distinctive sense that the external world impresses itself upon the perceiver is explained by *the fact known*. Experience falls away, and the fact known discharges this task. In the subsuming class of ostensible seeings, this feature that perception impresses itself upon the perceiver is explained by the *kind of intentional states* involved in such judgments. In explaining how this can be a disjunctive account of *one and the same sense* of a subject’s being impressed upon in a distinctively visual way, I do think one needs to say more about the apparent inconsistency that two quite disparate accounts are offered to explain the very same features of perceptual intentionality that demarcate it from thought.

That is why it seems to me that McDowell's overall position is greatly strengthened by incorporating the neo-Kantian account of the productive imagination that I have described. In "Sensory Consciousness in Kant and Sellars" McDowell's primary concern is with developing his critique of Sellars, but there is no reason to believe that McDowell thinks it is a mistake to assign imagination a role even in direct perception of the kind Sellars defends. With the view described in more detail in this paper at his disposal, McDowell's can describe both the perceptual intentionality of ostensible seeings (where the issue of endorsement has not arisen) or endorsed claims (perceptual judgments) by appeal to the role of the imagination. That which is distinctive is the use of the productive imagination in applying a schematized model in the way that I have described. This allows one to keep the attractive form of disjunctivism that McDowell takes over from Sellars but say something to characterize what is distinctive about the intentionality of perception, as opposed to the intentionality of thought. Kant certainly believed that the imagination was active in mathematical thought but not via the application of a schema, a sensory model in *empirical* thought.

There are two respects in which appealing to the role of imagination in perception can give McDowell some more room for maneuver here, particularly in his dispute with the Neo-Fregeans such as Travis.¹⁸ Summarily, Travis's view is that in perception one is simply open to the world in a way incompatible with construing experience as "containing" representations. Travis thinks that those who treat perception as involving intentional states with accuracy conditions interpret it as too much like thought in a way that does not do justice to the idea of perceptual openness to a reality that is simply laid open to one, to be represented this way or that. On Travis's view *people* represent; intentional states do not. However, this criticism would be blunted if one could give greater depth to the idea of a distinctive kind of perceptual intentionality, of a kind that McDowell already needs to explain why his account is restricted, as he explicitly claims that it is, to empirical knowledge (allowing the explanation of nonempirical knowledge to remain moot).

My proposal, then, is that appealing to the role of imagination in perception can play a role in articulating what is *meant* by a distinctive kind of perceptual intentionality. Conceptually structured claims in visual experience involve a substantial phenomenology in which the subject is "impressed upon": one way in which we might try to amplify that idea is by arguing that we have a robust sense of the presence of objects and part of that idea of robustness is that our visual experiences are schematized in such a way as to represent, using the imagination, such features as the white interior of the apple or the *taking* of a perspective on an object to be a perspective on the nonperspectival. The imagination is involved in the explanation of why our experience is not, indeed, simply of two-dimensional colored pictures but of an objective world. Furthermore, this is an aspect of distinctively perceptual phenomenology that is available both in the case of an ostensible seeing *and* in the case of manifest presence to mind. We have a robust sense of perceptual presence and of being perceptually impressed upon in the two cases because the imagination is equally active in both cases. Facts cannot discharge the role of

explaining perceptual intentionality given that it possesses its distinctive feature of impressing itself upon the subject when those facts are absent. We have, then, *more* than conceptual structure in the class of ostensible seeings of which veridical seeings are a subclass: we have conceptual structure and the operation of a schema in which a rule is applied for the construction of a sensory model of the perceived object.

My basic argument for recognizing the role that imagination plays in experience remains the same: no other putative explanation can explain the relevant phenomena. However, if McDowell withdraws his objection to the operation of anything within the understanding that is not conceptual, but, rather, permits its supplementation with a rule for the construction of a sensory model as the 'Schematism' suggests, then his overall position is strengthened and an inconsistency in his views is removed.

This leads directly, however, to my second point. I noted at the outset of this paper that my proposal represents a road not taken in McDowell's most recent views on perception. Impressed by Travis's neo-Fregean criticism that the position taken in the Woodbridge Lectures resurrects an interfacing, "narrow," conception of experience when it permits talk of ostensible seeings, McDowell's very different tack in his most recent work has been to abandon the idea that perceptual experience involves conceptually structured claims at all (McDowell 2009h). McDowell now works with the different thesis that perceptual experience involves "intuitional" as opposed to "propositional" conceptual content. The former involves material that the latter would exploit *were* discursive thought to articulate the intuitional content into a judgment apt to be known; there is conceptual content without propositional content. Marie McGinn explores some of the difficulties that face McDowell's new view in this volume. For reasons of scope I cannot assess McDowell's most recent position here. However, for those troubled both by McGinn's powerful objections to the view, and unconvinced by Travis's thesis that perceptual experience does not involve implicit claims, there remains the option of returning to the views defended in the Woodbridge Lectures and in McDowell's subsequent publications up to "Avoiding the Myth of the Given." I have argued that it is an independently attractive account of the nature of perceptual intentionality, particularly so given its recent incorporation of the insight that perception constitutively involves the productive imagination as Strawson and Sellars have also compellingly argued.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that there is a problem in the philosophy of perception, the problem of perceptual presence, that has not received sufficient recognition. Kant and twentieth-century neo-Kantians have a worked-out solution to the problem, whereas most

other putative solutions do not even begin to address the problem. I have further argued that the incorporation of a view of this kind into McDowell's own views would remove an inconsistency in his treatment of perceptual intentionality and solve two problems in his overall position. One is to explain what he means by empirical knowledge and the other is to deflect the Neo-Fregean objection to his intentionalism.

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NOTES

1. I should note that I am not going to discuss one very important aspect of this problem, which is extension in time. It may seem artificial to separate spatial from temporal location but even those who note the equal importance of both in explaining what Husserl called the "inner horizon" of the object (Husserl 1997, §8, 22, 33) separate the two dimensions in their reflective treatment of the problem, Husserl being a case in point. My sole reason for not discussing the temporally extended nature of objects is limitation of scope.
2. Noë's arguments here are parallel to those of Dan Zahavi, who in turn attributes this view to Husserl (Zahavi 1999, ch. 6, "The Perceiving Body"). In Zahavi's exposition and endorsement of this claim it takes a very strong form: "The central point is not that we can perceive moving objects in space, but that our very perception of these objects is itself a matter of movement" (Zahavi 1999, 97).
3. I concede that the former view has its able defenders: see Nanay (2009).
4. I am grateful to Ken Westphal for pressing me to clarify the scope of my claim, given that Kant takes the imagination to be very widely implicated in, for example, our knowledge of dispositions and laws. I have not established these more ambitious claims here (fortunately) and I will not try to undermine the leading rival view to my own, that takes perceptual presence to be explained by background theory, by taking Kant's line that even theoretical knowledge is underpinned by imagination.
5. This is one important aspect of Sellars's thinking about perception brought out very well by Paul Coates in Coates (2007 ch. 7; 2010) and in his contribution to this volume (2009). Coates calls this Sellars's "navigational account."
6. Coates notes that "in one rather dense footnote he [Sellars] allows that he may be conceding too much to the demands of phenomenology" (Coates 2010). I interpret this hedging of his central claim by Sellars as endorsed by Coates. In his view, the problem of perceptual presence does not exist in the form that Sellars (and I) thinks it does.
7. The phrase is Wittgenstein's but it seems to me to capture McDowell's guiding aim. "Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing. (Against Ramsey.)" Wittgenstein (1978, 325).

8. This is the earlier form of McDowell's criticism in (2009b); contrast (2009f, 114–15)—but the basic line of criticism remains intact. See also next footnote.
9. McDowell does note that “I have imported the metaphor of guidance from Science and Metaphysics so as to bring out that the picture Sellars offers in “The Role of the Imagination in Kant's Theory of Experience” is not vulnerable to my objections in [“The Logical Form an Intuition”] against the way the metaphor figures in the earlier work” (McDowell 2009f, 115 n. 14; I have inserted the identifying reference to McDowell 2009b).
10. For McDowell's treatment of Kant and Hegel, see Westphal (2008); for McDowell's treatment of Sellars see Rosenberg (2007) and Williams (2008).
11. I should issue an important caveat here: in Kant's own philosophy of mathematics, he once again appeals to the imagination, notably to explain his distinctive kind of intuitionistic constructivism in which the mathematician explores constructions in the imagination. I take it that MacFarlane and others are right to simply give up on this account of mathematical knowledge. I have, therefore, to perform radical surgery on Kant's actual views, but his views on mathematical knowledge are open to serious question in any case.
12. Jay Rosenberg, in his (2007) attempts an extended defense of Sellars's views from McDowell's critique. However, his characterization of McDowell's position is very uncharitable. Rosenberg thinks that Sellars's views address an explanatory need that arises because McDowell allegedly treats the manifold of sense as an “amorphous stuff” that could be worked up by the imagination and concept use into virtually anything (Rosenberg 2007, 274–75). That seems very strained. Given that explanatory need, imagination-cum-conceptualization needs to presuppose in the given manifold of sense “items (states of the perceiver) that admit of intrinsic characterization in terms of ‘analogical counterparts of the perceptible qualities and relations of physical things and events’ (S&M, 30)” (Rosenberg 2007, 276). The former presuppose the latter; they are “evoked” by them in the sense of caused. I think what gives the game away here for the Sellars-Rosenberg proposal is precisely what the idea of “analogy” here suggests, namely, that the only grounds for positing these “analogical counterparts” is that they are read off from the fully conceptualized judgment and placed in the manifold of sense by an inference to the best explanation; Rosenberg candidly admits as much (2007, 279). This seems to me just as vulnerable to McDowell's objections as Sellars's own view; see HWV, 450, 467.
13. Following McDowell in taking vision as representative; the claim will be reinterpreted for each sensory modality (McDowell 2009a, 13).
14. Such first-order representationalists claim that manifest presence to mind can only be explained, within the representationalist paradigm, as the idea that when a representation is true it does not fall short of the objects and properties it represents the perceptual scene has having because phenomenal properties simply reduce to representational properties (Harman 1990; Tye 1995, 2000; Dretske 1995, 2003). We have truth in representation not a manifest presence to mind in which experience does not fall short of the fact represented.
15. J. L. Austin and Charles Travis hold this radical style of view in which perceptual experience does not involve representations. Assessing this radical view would go beyond the scope of this paper (Austin 1962; Travis 2004). It is, however, one striking way of interpreting the direct nature of perception as, in favorable cases, an instance of that which McDowell has called “manifest presence to mind.”
16. This is connected to one, familiar, misunderstanding of McDowell's so-called disjunctive theory of perception. That view goes beyond the claim that, in perception, either it is with the subject a case where she genuinely knows, and her experience does not fall short of the fact, or it is a case where she is deceived, such that there is no highest common factor across the two cases. There is, obviously, such a common factor and any unprejudiced phenomenology cannot deny it. However, that phenomenologically salient common feature is not relevant to appraising the epistemic status of the subject: whether or not she is a knower. The connection is more indirect: the intentional states involved when a person does perceptually know must be of a kind, such that the very idea of being able to manifest objects and properties directly to mind must be built into the very idea of such states from the outset. They must, in other words, have objective validity.
17. Rosenberg argues that “McDowell's own Kantian gloss on Sellars's EPM thesis that visual experiences ‘make’ or ‘contain’ claims in fact usefully elucidates the role of concepts whose ‘paradigmatic

mode of actualization is in judgments' ("Having the World in View," 438) as 'recipes' with respect to the 'unified structure' of such an image-model" (Rosenberg 2007, 273). (The reference Rosenberg appeals to here is, in the reprint of the lectures as part of a book, McDowell 2009.) He continues, "That the *same* conceptual capacities are exercised in an ostensible seeing of a red cube in front of one as in the corresponding judgment is McDowell's reading of Kant's Clue (A79/B104)" (Rosenberg 2007, 274).

18. This is not the place for a detailed examination of this dispute, but my interpretation of Travis's strategy against McDowell is that Travis simply repeats McDowell's critique of the highest common factor in perceptual experience. However, Travis re-directs this critique against the model of implicit claims that can be endorsed or not endorsed that McDowell develops out of Sellars. I do not see anything in the model of implicit claims that resurrects an "interfacing" model of narrow content that was McDowell's original target in his early paper.

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