

Perceptual Presence and Imagination

This paper has three aims.¹ The first is to characterize a problem, that of *perceptual presence*, and to argue that it is, indeed, a neglected problem that needs to be taken seriously in the philosophy of perception. The second aim is to evaluate a solution to this putative problem, pioneered by Kant [1781; 1783] and refined by Sellars [Sellars, 1978] and Sir Peter Strawson [Strawson, 1971]. The third is to defend the kind of view I favour from the criticisms of John McDowell, who objects to a theory of this general kind during his treatment of Sellars's work in McDowell's Woodbridge lectures. I will argue that the kind of theory I favour would explain the phenomenological fact of perceptual presence, acknowledge the role of the productive imagination in direct perception while also making a positive contribution to McDowell's own views about perceptual intentionality.

1 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 sensory properties explicitly represented in perception. Objects possess other properties which are, one might say, phenomenologically present even though they are sensorily absent. This problem seems to me comparatively neglected in contemporary philosophy of perception; here is a succinct expression of the problem by Alva Noë:

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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, first emphasis added]

My aim in this paper is not to contribute to the discussion of the “grand illusion” hypothesis, which is Noë’s primary concern in this passage. I am interested in this paragraph for its insightful recognition of the problem of perceptual presence. I think that, as a report of the phenomenology of perceptual experience, Noë’s description is exactly right. Your perceptual experience of the bottle is as he describes: of the whole bottle. Yet I will argue that this is neither based on explicitly represented 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. Your experience is clearly, in some way, dependent on such theoretical knowledge, but it is not that in which your perceptual experience consists. In some way that has to be explained your perceptual experience of the object *is* of the whole object as present to you in 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.² 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.

2 Two Putative Solutions

A solution to a problem will avail one little if one has failed to make the case that there is a problem in the first case. To deepen the argument that there is a problem of perceptual presence, I will now explain why I find two ostensible solutions to the problem unconvincing with the aim of sharpening the appreciation of what the problem is.

The first putative solution that I will consider is Noë's own: having acutely 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":

² 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.

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.³ It is a sophisticated proposal that deserves extended consideration but for present purposes let me say that it looks like a *dispositional* solution to the problem of explaining those properties that are present in the phenomenology of our perceptual experience but not, as it were, represented in our sensory experience. "Access" is clearly a dispositional notion. But 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 represented in visual experience. 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. To switch to an example of Sellars's, if I perceive a red apple I know that it can be pressed to make apple juice, but I do not perceive its crushability or its other dispositional properties. I can perceive their manifestation when I crush the

³ Noë's arguments here are parallel to those of Dan Zahavi, who in turn attributes this view to Husserl [Zahavi, 1999 chapter 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, p. 97]

apple in a press, but up that point I do not perceive its crushability in the same way in which I experience the whiteness of its interior, were I to cut it open, as present. Yet Sellars argues that the white interior of the apple is present in your perceptual experience of it, even when the apple has not been cut open. 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*.

A second sophisticated proposal from a contemporary "analytical phenomenologist" is that of Sean Dorrance Kelly: Kelly develops from Merleau-Ponty the idea that perception is an active engagement with the world shaped by a certain kind of normative interest. [Kelly, 2002] Kelly derives this moral from an examination of Merleau-Ponty's dispute with Husserl over precisely the issue of what is, and is not, explicitly represented in perception. However, Kelly derives a single fundamental idea from the disparate problems of the relation between figure and ground, the problem of perceiving determinate objects in the light of changing perceptual conditions, and the problem of speaking of a determinate object given that all that experience contains is perspectival representations of objects. (These seem to me, in fact, three additional problems to that of the presence in experience of properties that are not explicitly represented.) Those various problems seem to me to require different solutions; however, the idea that perceptual engagement involves one in actively being drawn to take up the most advantageous point for the perception of the object, while an insight, does not solve the problem of perceptual presence. If the white interior of an apple is perceptually present, it is not because it is normatively required, part of that interaction with my

perceptual environment that best represents the object. I conclude that this putative solution does not help either.⁴

3 A neo-Kantian Strategy Outlined

Here is an alternative solution that I will introduce by placing it in a wider framework that I will focus upon later. Taking vision as an exemplary case, visual experience presents the mental subject with certain kinds of *claims*: claims which Sellars called “ostensible seeings”. [Sellars, 1963] 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 1994, 1998] The use of a concept of an object within such ostensible seeings is essentially supplemented by the operations of the productive imagination. Our concept of an object, as applied to that experience, generates a *rule for the construction of a model* of that object in our perceptual experience. This rule governed process of generating a model, which Kant called schematisation, is not a theoretical exercise, but a use of the 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, acquired 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,

⁴ Although the proposal I describe in this paper is not incompatible with Kelly’s proposal if the latter has an independent motivation. For one sense in which the role of the imagination in perception allows one to represent an object in the best way – as from no point of view in particular and hence from every point of view – see section 5 below.

but that is because schematisation has been applied by imagination, operating within the understanding and supplementing its operations, so as to shape the deliverances of sensibility.

This process of completion transcends the sensorily given properties in experience, but allows one to represent certain properties as *phenomenologically present* within the perceptual experience itself. Here is Sellars's example:

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.

This general account was taken up, endorsed, and further developed even more radically by Strawson. 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 which are, as it were, represented, in their absence, in such a way as make them perceptually present in the phenomenology of perceptual experience. Object recognition *itself* seemed, to him, to involve a connection between an occurrent perceptual episode and other non-actual episodes. Appeal to non-actual perceptual episodes helps to explain how a subject can take him or herself to be perceptually recognizing an object, as opposed say, to discriminating momentarily 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). More occurs, in this case, Strawson argued, 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 non-actual 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 re-identification, 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 apple in the case of singular judgements about particular objects. In a sense this *has* to be a primary use of the imagination in perception. One could accept alternative explanations of the generality in perceptual judgements that departed to a greater or a lesser extent from Kant provided that his central claim was preserved for this case.⁵ 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**).

4 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 to work. I agree this strategy is hostage to fortune: one has to refute, case by case, putative explanations and 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 presence of the white interior of the red apple is an instance of theoretical *knowledge*. A distinction is to

⁵ 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 do not have establish 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.

be drawn between that which is immediately sensorily given as an “impingement on one’s sensory surfaces” 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. But this does not, it seem to me, mark an explanatorily useful distinction for present purposes. The concepts of objects are, of course, deployed in the context of a complex web of beliefs and theoretical principles and 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 an ordinary perceiver of Austinian “middle sized dry goods” necessarily has to view herself as a theorist. This is for four reasons that seem to me to be compelling objections to the “theoretical” proposal.

First, many properties are represented in theory that are not part of your perceptual experience and could not be, such as dispositional properties or unobservable properties. There is a clear distinction between your grasp in perceptual experience of the solubility of a white sugar cube and your grasp of its white interior. The latter is perceptually present in the way that the former is not, because the former could not be 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, namely, his “methodological” treatment of the theory/observation distinction. This is, for Sellars, not a principled distinction but one relative to technological limitations and is a distinction between what one can only

know by theory and what one can report on non-inferentially, or avow. If we follow that Sellarsian line then we can concede that the property of the white interior of the apple was theoretical, 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, so there is not a direct alignment between the perceptually present/not explicitly represented distinction and the non-inferential/inferential distinction. It is not enough to say that the perceptual presence of the white interior of the apple is explained by two things: its application via theory, combined with a training that allows one to report on its presence “directly” and without inference. The relevant sense of presence has simply been omitted and I believe Sellars was aware of that.

I think that 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. Schematisation has already been applied to those “shallow” outputs of the visual system which, tied together by an analogue of conceptual structure, are not beliefs. But top down theoretical influence could only influence 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. 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. I don’t see how the theoretician can draw any principled line between all our theoretical knowledge in which a particular concept of an object is embedded and *how much* of that object is presented to us in perception. We can certainly, as the phenomenalist urges, conceive of a perceptual pathway through an objective world. 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?

I think that, nevertheless, 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] Kant is concerned, precisely, to defend the objectivity of that conception. 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 appeal to the objectivity of perceptual experience as robust as one chooses, one still needs to appeal to the imagination – that is precisely Kant's point.

5 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. 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 we fill in singular perception of a particular object, for example, the claim that the white interior of the apple is phenomenologically present in the perception of the red apple. By adding that imagination further contributes the perception of the perspectival features of perception, Kant seems to be adding to these absent but phenomenologically present features, further features which 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 coloured 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, if Kant is not simply confused?

I do not believe that there is a confusion here. While perspectival features are present in visual experience, their being taken *as* perspectival, as being from a point of view, is not present in visual experience. The perspectivalness enters into how the features are taken, which is when they are conceptualized and a sensory model applied to them. 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 of 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.

Kant's discussion of the issue of concept identity is one of the most criticized views of his mature philosophy: 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 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.

This is not the place for a full discussion of Kant's views, but it is noticeable that a schema is both *produced by*, and *is a rule for*, the imagination and that finding a 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, both indicate such a distinctive explanatory role. The standard criticism misrepresents Kant's 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 but rather to solve a problem of perceptual presence for which, I have argued, we seem to have no other plausible explanations.

6 Representation, Transparency and “Manifest Presence to Mind”

What are the main lines of objection to a view of this general kind? The first, and most radical, is the kind of view that denies that perceptual experience involves intentionality *at all*. J.L. Austin and Charles Travis hold this radical style of view in which perceptual experience does not involve representation; 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 favourable cases, an instance of manifest presence to mind. The second main line of objection to this view arises from a philosopher who wants to endorse a disjunctive theory of perception in which one can appeal to the idea of manifest presence to mind yet remain within representationalism and treat perception as an intentional phenomenon. That philosopher is John McDowell. In the Woodbridge lectures in particular McDowell assesses what he takes to be an intentionalist theory of perception in Wilfred Sellars’s work, during which Sellars’s theory of the role of imagination in perception is implicitly criticized. It is criticized implicitly because McDowell simply asserts that he is not going to discuss Sellars’s account of imagination in perception; however, it certainly seems that the general

strictures that McDowell levels against Sellars's views in these lectures are going to apply to that theory by default. McDowell simply closes off the entire area in which a theory of this kind would operate. Sellars's theory of the role of the imagination in perception falls within the scope of the understanding and McDowell is insistent that the scope of the understanding is precisely that of the conceptual and *only* that the conceptual. Sellars is taken to task for ignoring his own insights, summarisable as his critique of the "myth of the given" in perception, and for tolerating the idea of protoconceptual episodes. For McDowell the critique of the myth of the given draws a sharp boundary between the exercise of concepts, that lie on one side of the boundary, and non-conceptual episodes, that lie on the other side. When the idea of the protoconceptual is mooted McDowell can only find a role for it, in his view confusedly, as properly belonging with the non-conceptual but erroneously applied within the understanding, the home of the conceptual. Thus, while he nowhere discusses Sellars's account of imagination in perception, but sets that topic aside, we can see from the outset that McDowell has to construe it as conceived in sin.

I want to argue that this is a mistake, and an important mistake, as it cuts McDowell off from an idea that he needs. The controversial part of McDowell's view, the one that succeeds, as it were, in pleasing no-one, is a combination of treating perception as involving intentionality and yet, in instances of perceptual knowledge, as involving manifest presence to mind. That combination seems unstable, located as it is between two rival views. On the one hand the anti-representationalist, such as Austin, Travis and Mike Martin claim that manifest presence to mind is incompatible with treating perception as intentional; on the other hand the first order representationalist,

such as Gilbert Harman, Michael Tye and Fred Dretske 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. We have truth in representation, not a manifest presence to mind in which experience does not fall short of the fact represented.

That latter claim expresses McDowell's view; he wants to place his position between both of these rivals. In his account perception involves both representation and yet, in a knowing encounter with reality, experience does not fall short of the facts. He attempts this reconciliation by shifting focus away from perceptual knowledge to the Kantian issue of objective validity. It is not that, in an account of perception, we can intelligibly set ourselves up as appraising a class of mental states, perceptual states, and ask whether or not they represent the world, the kind of exercise represented by metaphors of experience as a "tribunal". This would be a courtroom without witnesses; that is what Austin implied when he claimed 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, as McDowell puts it, 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. 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.

However, if this is the most general of McDowell's strategies, there is plenty of scope for questioning the tactics of his execution of it. In particular, there seems to be an equivocation in this treatment of one key aspect of this issue of objective validity, namely, the specific mode of intentionality proper to perception. John MacFarlane, in a well-known criticism of the arguments of *Mind and World*, asked why McDowell had restricted himself to empirical knowledge and set aside questions about the objective validity of mathematical knowledge, so central to Kant's own concerns? [MacFarlane, 2004] In the later Woodbridge lectures, in the course of his critique of Sellars, we get the outline of what McDowell's answer could be: perceptual intentionality simply has a distinctive phenomenology, that which licenses talk in this instance of perceptual "impressions".⁶ It is not simply that perceptual experience is concept involving, or

⁶ 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

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. (Taking one perceptual mode as paradigmatic.)

This point plays an important role in McDowell's critique of Sellars in the Woodbridge lectures, as he has two main 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. 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.

I think McDowell has to say something like this to ward off MacFarlane's objection that he has not, thus far, marked off the empirical. A mathematician going through a proof has her thought externally guided and exercises concepts in a way that is

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.

constrained and non-voluntary. (Yet also responsible and within a space of reasons.) We need to say something more about the external guidance of distinctively empirical thought. However, it is noteworthy that McDowell eventually concludes that, in the case of perceptual knowledge, what supplies the external guidance is the manifest presence to mind of objects and properties themselves: that is why we do not need any “below the line” characterization of what guides empirical thought. Objects conceived under a *de re* mode of presentation, and the properties that they instantiate, do so.

But – and this is where I think a problem begins to emerge - objects and properties are, *ex hypothesi*, 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 exposts (controversially) in Sellars and, with amendments, endorses. 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 sub-class: 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. McDowell states this explicitly in his third Woodbridge lecture.

It seems to me that 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. 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. In taking perception to be

intentional, it is interpreted as too much like thought in 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. 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 non-empirical knowledge to remain moot). This is where I believe the arguments I have set out in this paper can be of assistance.

First, 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 non-perspectival. The imagination is involved in the explanation of why our experience is not, indeed, simply of two-dimensional coloured 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: imagination operates in both cases. We have an explanation of why this feature attaches to perceptual intentionality as such.

If McDowell does not go down the route offered and rejects the role of imagination in perception, then it seems to me that his position is unstable. It would be a

mistake, analogous to the misunderstanding of his 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 mixes up necessary and sufficient conditions. Characterising perceptual intentionality does not deliver knowledge, but the latter presupposes an account of the former. However, the pressure from MacFarlane's criticism that we need to understand a distinctive *kind* of external constraint in the case of empirical knowledge leads McDowell to what one might call a disjunctive account of perceptual intentionality: in the case of veridical empirical judgements, 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 judgements. 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 puzzling fact that two quite disparate accounts can explain the very same feature of perceptual intentionality.

Here is a candidate explanation: 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. My proposal, then, is that if McDowell were not to foreclose on the option of a Sellarsian and Strawsonian account of the role of imagination in perception, he can do more to substantiate what he means by a distinctive kind of

perceptual intentionality than simply to stipulate that it is sui generis, and involves a notion of “impressions” over and above the non-committal idea of external constraint, such that this feature can be exhibited in the absence of facts known. We have, then, more than conceptual structure in the class of ostensible seeings of which veridical seeings are a sub-class: 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 a recognition of the role imagination 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. We have at least some explanation of why the kind of intentionality exhibited by perceptual consciousness, that of external constraint in the form of impressions on the perceiver, can be exhibited both in the case of manifest presence to mind by a fact and in non-veridical ostensible seeings. In the absence of such an explanation this disjunctive account of the intentionality of perception seems difficult to understand. However, without an account of the distinctive kind of intentionality involved in perceptual experience McDowell cannot demarcate empirical from non-empirical knowledge and is vulnerable to the Neo-Fregean charge that no intentionalist view, not even his, can explain what is meant by the manifest presence of mind of objects in visual experience if the latter is taken as a representational phenomenon.

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 focused, in particular, on whether John McDowell's critical strictures on Sellars's views on perception have to extend, as McDowell implies that they do, to this aspect of Sellars's view. I have suggested that not only ought they not to do so, but 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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