

McDowell on Animality, Mere and Rational: Motivating an Interest in the Method of Hegel's Logic

In *Mind and World*, John McDowell argues that we can make sense of both the *sui generis* character of rational thought and rational thought's receptive relation to the world only by affirming that rationality (or spontaneity) and receptivity make notionally inseparable contributions to the experience of a rational animal.¹ In this essay, I will draw two consequences from McDowell's claim. First, I will argue in section 2 that, on McDowell's account, to grasp the concept receptivity one must grasp the concept spontaneity, and one must also grasp the concept rational experience (the unity of receptivity with spontaneity in the experience of rational animals).² This conclusion may run somewhat counter to our intuitions, for we may be tempted to think that we can possess the concept receptivity as it applies to mere animals, or animals whose experience is not also spontaneous, without possessing the concept spontaneity or the concept rational experience. But in section 2 I will prove that to possess the concept receptivity as it applies to mere animals (on McDowell's conception of that concept and those animals) requires also understanding how that concept applies to rational animals, and so requires grasping the concepts spontaneity and rational experience. In other words, the concept

¹ John McDowell, *Mind and World* **ref.** Unmarked page references are to this text.

² McDowell does not employ the term "rational experience," because it would be pleonastic. Largely, I think, because of his desire to defend Evans (cf. 49), McDowell uses the term "experience" in such a way that mere animals (or non-rational animals) do not have experiences, but just perceptions (63-6; they also have emotions like pain and fear – see the next paragraph). In this essay, I will depart from his terminology and talk about mere animal experience and rational animal experience. This is only a terminological departure.

As McDowell employs the term "experience," it comes in two species – inner and outer (cf. 22, 119). The capacity to emote, for instance, is a capacity for inner experience, when that capacity is the capacity of a rational animal. (It is "merely" the capacity to emote for mere animals.) The capacity to see, for instance, is a capacity for outer experience, when that capacity is the capacity of a rational animal. (It is a capacity to perceive for mere animals.) In this essay, I will abstract from differences between the two species of experience. So, my term "experience" covers not only what mere and rational animals have when they see prey; it also covers what mere and rational animals have when they feel fear.

receptivity is constituted in part by its unity with the concept spontaneity in the concept rational experience. The concept receptivity is part of a “constitutive unity,” in that, to possess it, one must also understand the way in which it is a component concept of rational experience.³

Second, I will argue in section 3 that, on McDowell’s account, the possibility of mere receptivity, or of a receptivity which is not also spontaneous, is entailed by his famous claim. McDowell forcefully argues that the possibility of mere receptivity, like the possibility of non-veridical experience, is *consistent* with his famous claim that receptivity and spontaneity make a notionally inseparable contribution to rational experience. And about the possibility of non-veridical experience McDowell says no more than that it is consistent with his famous claim. But I will argue in section 3 that the possibility of mere receptivity is *entailed* by his famous claim. And so it follows that receptivity is constituted not only by its unity with spontaneity in rational experience but also by its separation from that unity in the experience of mere animals. The concept receptivity is constituted, in other words, in part by its multiplicity of uses in and outside of its unity with spontaneity in rational experience. The concept receptivity is thus a “constitutive multiplicity” in that, to possess it, one must also understand the way in which it can apply outside of its constitutive unity with spontaneity in rational experience.

In sections 2 and 3 I articulate two conditions on grasping the concept receptivity, conditions which follow from McDowell’s famous claim about that concept. In those sections I will presuppose a view of concepts which McDowell articulates in *Mind and World*, and in section 1 I outline both that view, and some of the limitations of this essay in presupposing it. In particular, I presuppose that to possess a concept is to have a general capacity which is

³ I borrow the term “constitutive unity” from Andrea Kern: cf. Andrea Kern, *Quellen des Wissens* (Suhrkamp Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 2006), 201-2.

individuated by the rational relations in which operations of that ability stand to other operations of the same ability and to other conceptual capacities. Because these general capacities are individuated by *rational* relations, and such rational relations are determined by which stances towards thoughts are *coherent*, I argue in section 1 for a version of the analytic-synthetic distinction on the basis of the abstract view of concepts articulated in *Mind and World*: a thought is analytically true just in case disbelieving it entails a contradiction regardless of the background beliefs in light of which one evaluates it, it is analytically false just in case believing it entails a contradiction regardless of the background beliefs in light of which one evaluates it, and it is synthetically true or false otherwise. The analytic-synthetic distinction is important because in section 4 I argue, on the basis of the conclusions established in sections 2 and 3, that the thought that

one kind of receptivity is spontaneous is neither analytic or synthetic (or, one will be equally tempted to say, is both analytic and synthetic). On my interpretation of the analytic-synthetic distinction, there is no room for a thought which is neither analytic nor synthetic. And so it appears that a contradiction emerges in McDowell's position.

One might respond to the contradiction in a variety of different ways: by rejecting the analytic-synthetic distinction as I draw it, for instance, or by modifying McDowell's famous claim about receptivity's notional inseparability from spontaneity in rational experience. Both of these ways entail modifying a part of McDowell's view – and that can seem inevitable (at least as long as the arguments of this essay are faithful to his view). But I want to suggest that one can preserve all of McDowell's view so long as one adds to it the thought that the sense of “rational relations” which individuates the concept receptivity on McDowell's view is different than the

sense of “rational relations” which individuates ordinary empirical concepts (concepts like crab, cell phone, deciduous, hole). And I contend, moreover, that Hegel saw that there must be another sense of “rational relations” and that the method of the *Science of Logic* is his proposed explication of that sense. So, we might be able to save McDowell’s position in *Mind and World* from contradiction by turning to examine the method of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*.

Section 1

In this essay, I will presuppose a highly abstract but nevertheless contentious view of concepts which I draw from *Mind and World*.⁴ I will note some limitations to my essay which come with presupposing this view at the end of this section. The highly abstract view of concepts I presuppose has two parts.

First: to possess a concept is to be able to exercise the capacity to employ that concept in a thought or judgment.

Second: Concepts are individuated in terms of their rational relations to each other and, more specifically, by the law of non-contradiction.

On the first part: To possess a concept is to be able to exercise the capacity to employ that concept in a thought or judgment.⁵ The capacity or, equivalently, ability to employ a concept has a certain sort of generality: in particular, any operations of a conceptual capacity must be rationally sensitive to other operations of that same conceptual capacity by the same subject and

⁴ My use of "concept" is, like McDowell's co-extensive with the rational, and is not restricted to the predicative: cf. McDowell, 106-7, and the first few paragraphs of section 2 of this essay.

⁵ McDowell stakes this position in several places in *Mind and World*. For instance, in his response to claims that the experience of rational animals must contain at least some non-conceptual content, McDowell describes his position that all experiential content is conceptual by noting that "experience has its content by virtue of the drawing into operation, in sensibility, of capacities that are genuinely elements in a faculty of spontaneity. The very same capacities must also be exercised in judgments, and that requires them to be rationally linked into a whole system of concepts and conceptions within which their possessor engages in a continuing activity of adjusting her thinking to experience" (46-7). **Gloss?**

also to operations of other conceptual capacities by the same subject. Moreover, to have a conceptual capacity, or to possess a concept, is to be able to employ that concept in different contexts.⁶ Because of the generality of conceptual capacities, possessing a concept enables one to employ that concept wherever it would be significant (given one's other conceptual capacities) to do so. This will be important to my argument in section 2 that to grasp the concept receptivity one must grasp the concept rational experience, for I will argue that one can only understand *of* something that it is receptive by possessing the concept spontaneity and understanding the unity of receptivity and spontaneity in that something, when that something is the experience of a rational animal. My argument will be that one only has the ability to employ the concept receptivity when one is able to apply it to the kind of receptivity which is also spontaneous, and one can only do that by understanding the unity of receptivity and spontaneity in rational experience.⁷

On the second part: concepts are individuated by their rational relations to each other.⁸

The second part fits with the first part in that the generality of conceptual capacities from the first part stems from the rational sensitivity of operations of a conceptual capacity to other operations of the same conceptual capacity and to the operations of other conceptual capacities. To flesh out

⁶ "We would not be able to suppose that the capacities that are in play in experience are conceptual if they were manifested only in experience, only in operations of receptivity. They would not be recognizable as conceptual capacities at all unless they could also be exercised in active thinking, that is, in ways that do provide a good fit for the idea of spontaneity. " (11). This is a less determinate version of Gareth Evans's Generality Constraint (**ref; Evans draws it from Strawson**), less determinate perhaps because the more specific features of the Generality Constraint are not relevant to the context of *Mind and World*.

⁷ This is unlike, for instance, the concept camera: one can understand of a cell phone that it is a camera without possessing the concept cell phone. The example I use in section 2 is the concept crustacean. [**Wittgensteinian family resemblance worries**]

⁸ "If failing to distinguish senses would leave us liable to have to attribute to a rational and unconfused subject, at the same time, rationally opposed stances with the same content, then we must distinguish senses, so as to make possible a description of the subject's total position that has different contents for the stances, and so does not raise a question about the position's rationality" (180). Again, this is a less determinate version of something found in Evans (who draws it from Frege): the Intuitive Criterion of Difference for senses (**ref**).

a non-metaphorical (“fits with”) account of the relation between the two parts of the abstract view of concepts presupposed in this essay would lengthen it beyond reasonability, however. So, instead, I will simply articulate the second part.

What some concept is, or (equivalently) what content some concept has, and whether, for instance, we have the employments of two concepts or one concept employed twice, is determined by the place of those concepts in "the space of reasons." To put this point slightly less metaphorically, concepts are individuated by the rational relations between their operations. To distinguish between concepts requires finding a context in which it is "coherent" to take different "rational stances" towards two thoughts which differ only in the substitution of the one concept for the other (180).

McDowell employs the concept coherence as an explication of the rationality of the rational relations in terms of which concepts are individuated. To explicate the concept rationality by the concept coherence does not mean that one can have the ability to employ the concept coherence without already having the ability to employ the concept rationality, as though one can build up to the concept rationality by using the concept coherence. (I strongly suspect McDowell would find that enterprise objectionable.) Rather, the concept coherence helps fix the sense of “rationality” relevant to individuating conceptual capacities.⁹ I want to further explicate the sense of “rational” by linking the concept coherence to the law of non-contradiction.

I contend that for a rational stance to be coherent is for that stance not to entail a contradiction. The thought towards which a rational stance is taken might itself be non-contradictory, while taking the stance of, for instance, holding to be true (or belief) towards it is

⁹ **Is there anything I can do that would make the concept explication more precise without requiring a great deal of philosophy?**

contradictory because the negation of that thought follows from other beliefs one has. My contention that for a rational stance to be coherent is for that stance not to entail a contradiction does not itself entail that the law of non-contradiction is by itself sufficient to determine whether some rational stance towards a thought is coherent. For instance, to determine whether my stance of believing that Hegel is the greatest philosopher is coherent, one must examine my beliefs about other philosophers. If I believe that Wittgenstein is the greatest German philosopher, and I believe that Hegel is German, then my putative stance of believing that Hegel is the greatest philosopher is incoherent. And to prove this requires much more than the law of non-contradiction: it requires attributing to me the possession of various other conceptual capacities (e.g. Wittgenstein, is greater than, German), attributing to me the operation of those capacities in various beliefs, and attributing to me the capacity to apply some law or laws of inference to those beliefs. Appeal to that law or those laws of inference is necessary to show that it is entailed by what I believe that I believe that Hegel is not the greatest philosopher. The point of singling out the law of non-contradiction over, for instance, other logical laws governing inference is not to claim that it is sufficient to determine coherence; rather, the point is that there is an intuitive sense in which that law and only that law is employed in every test of coherence. Again, I do not mean that we can imagine thinkers who only possessed that law, or even thinkers who did not possess all of the laws of logic. But, even if we assume that every thinker must possess some rule for disjunction elimination, there is an intuitive sense in which one can determine that my belief that Hegel is the greatest philosopher is incoherent without employing the rule for disjunction elimination. But there is no test for coherence that does not employ the law of non-contradiction.

Much more needs to be said about my contention that for a rational stance to be coherent is for that stance not to entail a contradiction to make it precise, and I will say a little bit more

about it at the end of this section. But first I want to show that my contention gives rise to a version of the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths. (It is for that purpose that I have contended it.) This version of the distinction: a thought is analytically true just in case disbelieving it (or holding it to be false) entails a contradiction regardless of what other background beliefs one evaluates that disbelief in the light of, a thought is analytically false in case believing it entails a contradiction, regardless of what other background beliefs one evaluates it in the light of, and a thought is synthetically true or false just in case it is not analytically true or false.¹⁰ The distinction between analytic and synthetic thoughts is exclusive and exhaustive, given that conceptual content is determined by rational relations in such a way as to single out the law of non-contradiction as explicating the sense of “rational” in that expression.

But, of course, it is precisely singling out the law of non-contradiction in that way which needs to be made precise. And many philosophers – including philosophers who accept, or, anyway, want to accept, the claim that conceptual content is determined by rational relations – have argued that the putative intuition that that law should be singled out cannot be made sense of.¹¹ To make this claim precise would require at least an account of what a law of logic is, how those laws relate to thoughts, how they relate to rational stances, and how they relate to one another. Producing any of those accounts would require well more than an essay. But I have

¹⁰ **This way of formulating the distinction presupposes that all thoughts are true or false. What should I say about this presupposition? Also, should I say something about the synthetic a priori?**

¹¹ Cf. Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *The Philosophical Review* vol. 60 (1953), 20-43. Nelson Goodman, writing in 1979 (almost thirty years after Quine's essay), could footnote the claim that "Although this remark is purely an aside, perhaps I should explain for the sake of some unusually sheltered reader that the notion of a necessary connection of ideas, or of an absolutely analytic statement, is no longer sacrosanct. Some, like Quine and White, have forthrightly attacked the notion; others, like myself, have simply discarded it; and still others have begun to feel acutely uncomfortable about it" (Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast: 4th Edition* (Harvard University Press, 1984, originally published in 1979), 61).

introduced my contention about the law of non-contradiction as explicating the sense of coherence and the consequent distinction between analytic and synthetic claims to make sense of one of McDowell's points, that on his view of concepts there emerges a distinction between analytic and synthetic claims.¹² And so we can have confidence that McDowell, at least, is committed to versions of those accounts which are consistent with my interpretation of coherence.

Eventually, in section 4, a threat will emerge to the distinction between analytic and synthetic claims as I have drawn it: it will seem that McDowell is committed to a claim which is neither analytic nor synthetic (and it will be equally tempting to say that the claim is both analytic and synthetic). One response to this apparent contradiction will be to insist that the distinction between analytic and synthetic is confused, and is confused in McDowell, and to dissolve the apparent contradiction in that way. Another response will be to try to save the distinction in a different way, perhaps a different way which is also consistent with the little that

¹² He makes this point in the *Afterward, Part I*, as part of a response to Quine:

An analytic statement should be a statement with no vulnerability to experience, and it is true that we cannot make sense of that if we cannot make sense of the idea that an individual statement might have its own vulnerability to experience. But here [contra Quine - AW] we must gloss "vulnerability to experience" in terms of rational answerability. ... And in fact, once we understand experience so that it really can be a tribunal [because it is glossed in terms of rational answerability - AW], we commit ourselves to conceiving it in such a way that rational answerability to it *can* be apportioned between statements. Consider an experience with a content partially capturable by "Here's a black swan." Such an experience poses a rational problem for the statement, or belief, that there are no black swans; there is a germaneness relation between them that is not restricted, as in Quine's picture, to the likelihood that the belief will be abandoned (160).

Note that McDowell's claim in this passage is that, in the context of Quine's polemic against analyticity, one can reject Quine's skepticism about analyticity just on the grounds that employments of conceptual capacities are rationally answerable to what they are about. And that is just an upshot of McDowell's overall position on rational experience - explored in section 2 and 3 - and his view of conceptual content as determined by rational relations, the second part of the abstract view of concepts which I am in the process of elaborating. Thus, though McDowell relegates a discussion of analyticity and syntheticity to the *Afterward*, it cannot be merely set aside as of relatively little import to the project of his book as a whole.

McDowell says about it in *Mind and World*. I will respond to these alternatives somewhat in section 4, but I want to note they will remain live options until one can give the accounts which cannot here be given.

Moreover, as noted at the outset of this section, I have simply presupposed the highly abstract view of concepts which is essentially employed in generating this contradiction. The view of concepts is McDowell's, but nothing I say in this essay will rule out that one can accept McDowell's famous claim that rational experience is constituted by the notionally inseparable cooperation of receptivity and spontaneity without also accepting his more general view of concepts. And so one might conclude from the contradiction that I establish in section 4 that that is the proper course of action: accept McDowell's famous claim while adopting a different view of concepts (as, perhaps, not individuated in terms of their rational relations), and nothing I will say in this essay rules out that response either.

One last caveat: the view of concepts as McDowell articulates it is primarily a view about empirical concepts.¹³ The concepts I will be discussing using this view of concepts (receptivity, spontaneity, rational experience) are not (or, anyway, not obviously) empirical concepts on McDowell's view. One way to put their status is to say that are "formal concepts" of experience, or they are concepts which give empirical concepts their "form," or perhaps they "articulate the form" of empirical concepts. One might favor the highly abstract view of concepts I articulate for empirical concepts, but reject its application to such formal concepts as receptivity, spontaneity,

¹³ From the *Preface*: "Now how should we elaborate the idea that our thinking is thus answerable to the world? In addressing this question, we might restrict our attention, at least tacitly, to thinking that is answerable to the *empirical* world; that is, answerable to how things are in so far as how things are is empirically accessible. Even if we take it that answerability to how things are includes more than answerability to the empirical world, it nevertheless seems right to say this: since our cognitive predicament is that we confront the world by way of sensible intuition (to put it in Kantian terms), our reflection on the very idea of thought's directedness at how things are must begin with answerability to the empirical world" (xii).

and rational experience. If one takes the view that receptivity, spontaneity, and rational experience are formal concepts, that might raise the question: in what sense are these concepts? One way to read this essay is as giving a certain kind of urgency to this question by arguing that the application of the highly abstract view of concepts to formal concepts (or three of them, anyway) entails a contradiction. The essay thus shows that we require a different way of understanding these formal concepts. So, if the appeal to formal concepts is taken as compatible with having a question about what a formal concept might be, then it is not inconsistent with the thesis of this essay. But one might use the term “formal concept” rather to ward off such apparent questions (about the “nature” of formal concepts) as only apparently intelligible, because (in some way or another) they illicitly presuppose that formal concepts are like or unlike empirical concepts, when really they are neither like nor unlike them but are just their form. Perhaps this is the most McDowellian response to my argument.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is not the approach I will take in this essay, though nothing I say in this essay vindicates that there is a genuine question to be asked about the concept-hood of formal concepts.

Before discussing the contradiction that emerges in McDowell’s thought, I will need to do some work interpreting McDowell to build up the premises I will use to introduce the claim that is apparently neither analytic nor synthetic (or both analytic and synthetic). That work will come in two stages: first, in section 2 I will examine McDowell’s claim that receptivity and spontaneity co-operate in the experience of rational animals in a notionally inseparable way. I will argue that this claim commits McDowell to the thesis that one cannot possess the concept receptivity without understanding its rational relation to the concept spontaneity in the concept rational experience, and so one cannot possess the concept receptivity without also possessing

¹⁴ **References?**

the concept spontaneity and the concept rational experience. Thus, the concept receptivity is part of a constitutive unity. And, second, in section 3 I will argue that it is essential to McDowell's position [**vague**] that the concept receptivity applies to mere animals, or animals the experience of which is not also spontaneous, and (trivially) that receptivity is not united with spontaneity in its application to mere animals. Thus, the concept receptivity is a constitutive multiplicity. Only then, in section 4, will I argue on the strength of these two theses that the claim that one kind of receptivity is spontaneous is neither analytic nor synthetic, or both analytic and synthetic.

Section 2

My claim in this section is that McDowell's concept receptivity is part of a constitutive unity: to grasp it, one must grasp it as a component concept of a more complex conceptual unity (rational experience). To set up the claim, I need to turn to McDowell's *Mind and World* view of rational experience and briefly rehearse the argument for that view.

McDowell talks about rational experience in terms of spontaneity and receptivity. The term "spontaneity" is McDowell's Kant-derived term for rationality (the "rationality" of rational experience).¹⁵ And the term "receptivity" is McDowell's Kant-derived term for the passivity in

¹⁵ "Now we should ask why it seems appropriate to describe the understanding, whose contribution to this co-operation is its command of concepts, in terms of spontaneity. A schematic but suggestive answer is that the topography of the conceptual sphere is constituted by rational relations. The space of concepts is at least part of what Wilfrid Sellars calls "the space of reasons"" (4-5; cf. also 9). McDowell goes on to argue that the space of concepts is the whole of the space of reasons (cf. Lecture 1, §3). So, as he employs the term, "spontaneity" means rationality. He uses the Kantian term because he wants to claim that rationality is freedom, and he reads Kant as employing the term "spontaneity" because it captures that thought: "When Kant describes the understanding as a faculty of spontaneity, that reflects his view of the relation between reason and freedom: rational necessitation is not just compatible with freedom but constitutive of it. In a slogan, the space of reasons is the realm of freedom" (5). We will not broach the topic of reason's relationship to freedom in this essay, although it is important for McDowell's overall account of what prevents philosophers from having a proper understanding of rational nature. For a good account of freedom's relationship to reason in McDowell's spirit, cf. **ref**

taking in the world, which can be more precisely glossed as the passivity at play in experiencing the world (the "experience" of rational experience).¹⁶ I will use the term "rational animal" in place of McDowell's frequent invocation of "us" as that which has rational experience.

The ground for thinking that the concept rational receptivity is part of a constitutive unity is McDowell's famous claim that "receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation" of receptivity and spontaneity in experience (9).¹⁷ The "notional inseparability" of the two operations amounts to the thesis that there is no element of an experience which one can isolate as the receptive element, and none which one can isolate as the spontaneous element either.

To explain McDowell's famous claim, I need to turn briefly to his reasons for claiming it. He takes it as common ground between himself and his interlocutors that the world is *available* to *thought* for rational animals. According to McDowell, to make sense of the world's *availability* to thought requires that the world affect the rational animal. Otherwise, McDowell contends, there would be no way for a rational animal to so much as direct its mind to the world

¹⁶ McDowell introduces "receptivity" as his term for the givenness required (on his view) to make sense of the ability for thought to be about the world. A major point of *Mind and World* is to get us to see that this kind of givenness can make the world available to rational animals in thought by being the passive drawing into operation of conceptual capacities, which capacities essentially have a non-passive operation (cf., for instance, 11).

¹⁷ This claim is repeated on page 51: "we must not suppose that receptivity makes an even notionally separable contribution to its co-operation with spontaneity." My restriction of this "notional inseparability" to experience is implicit in McDowell's claim, with his use of the term "co-operation". Here he does not merely mean to invoke harmony, as in a cooperative venture, but also the bringing into operation of both receptivity and spontaneity in one joint "state or occurrence" as he sometimes describes it (cf. 24, 103). And that, on McDowell's picture, happens in experience and not in the other exercises of spontaneity, which are active (and not receptive): "we could not recognize capacities operative in experience as conceptual at all were it not for the way they are integrated into a rationally organized network of capacities for active adjustment of one's thinking to the deliverances of experience" (29). Exactly how to work out the relation between the active exercises of spontaneity and the passive joint co-operations of spontaneity and receptivity in experience on McDowell's view is a difficult topic I do not fully understand, and whether that view is right has been the subject of much debate (in which McDowell seems to have changed his mind): **cf. references**

– to think about the world whether truly or falsely.¹⁸ And to make sense of the world's availability to *thought*, the world must be able to be taken up by the rational animal in the exercises of its conceptual capacities, the content of which is determined by rational relations which relations are *sui generis* with respect to states and events governed by the laws of natural science. (The *sui generis* nature of these relations will only become a subject for discussion in section 3.)

McDowell thinks that these two thoughts which make up the availability of the world to thought are difficult to hold together. Either one divorces the world's effect on the rational animal from its conceptual capacities in order to respect the demand that the world in view be conceptualizable by that animal (this untenable position can be called "coherentism" – cf. 14-5) or one effects the same divorce in order to secure the claim that it must genuinely be the world which affects the rational animal, as opposed to that animal's thoughts about the world (this untenable position can be called "the Myth of the Given" – cf. 16-8).

McDowell's famous claim maintains the marriage between receptivity and spontaneity. The point of it is that if there is even a conceptual distinction that can be drawn between the contribution of the world (receptivity) and the contribution of the rational animal (spontaneity) to rational experience, then the following question will be intelligible: how can the rational animal conceptualize this effect of the world? And, McDowell thinks, if this question is intelligible, then

¹⁸ It is important to McDowell that what needs to be made sense of is not how beliefs about the world could be true, but rather how beliefs can so much as be about the world. For instance, in his response to Davidson's argument that a body of beliefs must be mostly true, McDowell claims that "it starts too late" (17). It starts too late because it takes for granted that we already have in place a body of beliefs but, McDowell contends, that is precisely what we cannot make sense of given the fact that Davidson's conception of rationality does not make room for rational experience. For McDowell's argument, cf. 15-8.

the answer to it will be that it cannot, for a brute effect cannot provide the basis for even so much as the appearance that the world (or some bit of it) is such and such.¹⁹

The course of the first three lectures of *Mind and World* is primarily directed at motivating this position by revealing alternatives to it to be unable to make sense of the common ground between McDowell and his interlocutors: that rational animals can think about the world. I will not try to do justice to the various arguments he gives, all given with an eye towards showing that the intelligibility of the question from the above paragraph undermines that common ground. In the context of this essay, I will simply assume that McDowell's arguments for this conclusion are convincing, and draw consequences from the conclusion for the right way to understand his famous claim.

McDowell's famous claim does not amount to the thesis that there is no conceptual distinction between the *capacity* for receptivity and the *capacity* for spontaneity. If there were no distinction between the two capacities, then there would be no sense in which rational experience is constituted by a *co-operation* of spontaneity and receptivity. Rather, McDowell's famous claim is that there is no conceptual distinction between the operation of receptivity and the operation of spontaneity when those capacities are operative in rational experience.²⁰ McDowell's famous

¹⁹ One can infer that even the intelligibility of this question would cause the divorce between receptivity and spontaneity from a claim McDowell makes in the *Afterward (Part I)*, where he identifies as a version of the position he rejects any position on which something's being the "impression" (or effect on a rational animal) it is is not the ground for that thing's being "the appearing" (or contribution by the rational animal) it is (145). If something is the appearing that it is in virtue of being the impression it is, then there can be no question about what makes this impression the basis for that appearing. To think there is a question would just be not to have gotten in view what an impression is, and how it relates to appearing. **[Not confident about this argument]**

²⁰ In *All or Nothing*, Paul Franks helpfully elaborates not only between different kinds of distinctions, but also between the application of those kinds of distinction to capacities and the application of them to their acts (or, in McDowell's *Mind and World* parlance, operations): "we must distinguish between *distinctions between faculties* - that is, capacities - *and distinctions between exercises of faculties* - that is, actualizations" (Paul Franks, *All or Nothing* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2005), 55). Oddly, Franks claims that on McDowell's view there is

claim does amount to the thesis that understanding receptivity (as a capacity) requires understanding its unity (or co-operation) with spontaneity in rational experience, as I will now show. My argument for this claim will come in two steps. First, I will show that one cannot understand the application of receptivity to the experience of rational animals without also grasping the concept spontaneity and understanding its unity with spontaneity in rational experience. But that is not enough for my claim, since it leaves open the possibility that one could possess the concept receptivity without understanding how it applies to rational animals. Why can't one understand mere animal receptivity without also understanding rational animal receptivity? If one can, then the first step of my argument is no reason to think that to grasp the concept receptivity requires grasping the concept spontaneity and understanding their unity in rational experience. So, in a second step I will explain why one has not grasped the concept receptivity without grasping the concept spontaneity and understanding their unity in rational experience.

The first step: to understand what it is for the experience of a rational animal to be receptive, one must grasp the concept spontaneity and understand the unity of receptivity and spontaneity in that experience. Many claim that receptivity as it is for a rational animal is just like receptivity as it is for a mere animal. McDowell rejects that position as a form of the Myth of the Given.²¹ McDowell's rejection of that position is part of his claim that the contribution of receptivity is notionally inseparable from the contribution of spontaneity in the experience of rational animals. For, of course, the contribution of receptivity is notionally separable from the contribution of spontaneity to the experience of mere animals because the experience of mere

no conceptual distinction between the capacities for receptivity and for spontaneity (cf. Franks, 60). I do not see any grounds for this interpretation of *Mind and World*.

²¹ Cf. his rejection of Evans's invocation of non-conceptual content in experience: 48-51.

animals contains no contribution from spontaneity. Thus, the receptivity of a mere animal is not the receptivity of a rational animal. The difference is the unity of the receptivity of the latter with spontaneity. And, thus, to make sense of receptivity in the experience of rational animals requires making sense of its unity with spontaneity in rational experience. One cannot grasp the concept receptivity as it applies to rational animals without grasping the concept spontaneity and the unity of the operation of the capacities.²²

So goes the first step of the argument. But why might one think that to grasp the concept receptivity requires having the ability to apply that concept to the experience of rational animals? It seems at least *prima facie* plausible that one might be able to apply the concept to mere animals without being able to apply it to rational animals. Of course, no one learns what receptivity means in this way: one learns what it means by experiencing, one is a rational animal, and so one acquires the concept as it applies to rational animals. But that fact about how rational animals learn the concept is not relevant – what is relevant is whether, by McDowell's lights, one could give an account of the concept receptivity without invoking the concept rational experience. If so, then my claim that, as McDowell understands it, the concept rational experience is part of a constitutive unity is false.²³

²² To take the first step of this argument I have presupposed that to understand the concept of a capacity is to understand the operations of that capacity, or that the conceptual content of a concept for a capacity is individuated by reference to what the capacity is a capacity for. McDowell's invocation of this principle is largely implicit in *Mind and World*, but it *is* there: for instance, when he claims that receptivity in mere animals and receptivity in rational animals are different forms of the same capacity, he implicitly individuates the forms of that capacity by reference to the distinctive characterizations of their operations (as sensitive to rational relations or not) (cf. 64). But that also assumes that the content of the concept receptivity is individuated into different forms by appeal to the nature of the operations of that capacity. Michael Boyle is usefully explicit about this way of individuating capacities (and its Aristotelian and Thomistic roots): cf. Michael Boyle, "Additive Theories of Rationality," (<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:8641840>; accessed on November 21, 2012), 7.

²³ **What of self-consciousness? Doesn't it follow from being self-conscious (as McDowell understands it) that one possesses the concept spontaneity and understands its unity with receptivity? And one cannot possess the concept mere receptivity (or any other concept) without being self-conscious.**

I think there are two importantly different ways of making this objection, and I want to explore those two ways before responding to it. The first way of making this objection is what I will call "the conceptual holist way." Conceptual holism, as I will use that expression, is the denial of an exclusive distinction between analytic and synthetic truths. With the exclusive distinction between analytic and synthetic truths comes the possibility of distinguishing between those operations of a conceptual capacity which articulate the content of that capacity (those operations which "analyze" or define the capacity) and those operations of that capacity which do not articulate the content of that capacity (or which "synthesize" it with other capacities). A conceptual holist denies that the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths is exclusive. Denying this, there is at least room to doubt that some subset of operations of a conceptual capacity gives that capacity its content, and to contend instead that all operations of a conceptual capacity give that capacity its content.

If one is a conceptual holist, then one may think that to grasp the concept receptivity requires grasping every concept which is rationally linked to it in one way or another. Thus, to grasp the concept receptivity requires grasping the concept fox, crab, Andy Werner, mammal, etc. because each of these other concepts is rationally connected (in some way or other) to the concept receptivity. As a consequence, the conceptual holist may be inclined to think that there is nothing especially significant about grasping the concept receptivity as it applies to rational animals - that is just one more rational connection that's required for grasping the concept receptivity. And so my thesis that to grasp the concept receptivity requires grasping the concept

I don't need to appeal to self-consciousness to make my argument. What would be interesting is looking at the relation between my argument and an argument which does appeal to self-consciousness.

spontaneity and understanding their unity in rational experience is philosophically banal and uninteresting.

A conceptual holist might continue her objection by noting that, on my way of talking, the sheer extent of concepts grasp of which is required for grasping any concepts suggests that we should stop talking about grasping a concept as an all or nothing affair. One can grasp a concept more or less well, on this view, and there are no clear, principled requirements on grasping a concept which insert a bright line between not possessing a concept and possessing it. Thus, the conceptual holist might object to my argument that it attempts to impose a bright line between possessing the concept receptivity and not possessing it, and that drawing that line can rest on nothing more than stipulation.

So goes one way of objecting to my claim that to possess the concept receptivity as it applies to mere animals one must possess the concept spontaneity and understand the unity of receptivity and spontaneity in rational experience. Now for my response: it is certainly correct that possessing a concept comes in degrees, so that one can possess a concept more or less well. But, on my picture, one can speak of the perfect possession of a concept without that presupposing possession of every concept rationally linked to it. This is a straightforward consequence of advancing an exclusive version of the analytic-synthetic distinction: there are some operations of a conceptual capacity which constitute the content-articulating operations, and without being able to understand those operations one can at best imperfectly possess that capacity. Of course, as noted in section 1, I have not tried to prove that an exclusive version of the analytic-synthetic distinction is philosophically valuable. But I have noted that I will simply presuppose it for this essay. Presupposing it, there is no barrier to drawing a principled

distinction between operations of a conceptual capacity which are required to possess the capacity perfectly and those which are not.

To draw a principled distinction between operations of a concept, the grasp of which is required for possessing that concept perfectly, and other operations of that concept has, hopefully, some intuitive force. For instance, suppose that I am taking a class on the stock market, and the teacher has introduced me to the concept purchasing options by noting that to purchase an option is to purchase the right to buy (or sell) a stock at a certain price at a certain later date. And suppose that I can demonstrate my mastery of this concept by taking a list of stocks and articulating an option for each of them: I can purchase an option to buy oil at ten dollars a gallon in November of 2015, I can purchase an option to buy shares in Time Warner at sixty dollars a share throughout the year 2020, etc.

Suppose my teacher asks me to construct an example of purchasing an option for a stock in a producer of furniture. I go to the list of stocks, and I search for a company that produces furniture. But I am at a loss, for I do not know any corporation which produces furniture, and I cannot glean that information from the names of the stocks as listed. In this case, it would not be intuitive to say that I do not perfectly possess the concept purchasing an option. Rather, there is some other concept which I do not possess, the possession of which is required to fulfill my teacher's request. But now suppose that I was trying to give an example of purchasing an option to buy shares in Time Warner, and my example was to buy shares at sixty dollars a share in the year 1950. In this case, what I do should give someone pause in attributing to me the perfect possession of the concept purchasing an option. For to possess that concept requires understanding that one purchases an option for a future time, and not a time that is already past. I

have made a rather fundamental and peculiar mistake, and it is no longer clear that I possess the concept purchasing an option in anything like an adequate way.

It is open to a conceptual holist to contend that the distinction between my not knowing of any book producers and my not understanding that one purchases an option for a future (and not a past) date is not a principled distinction. My point is not to refute the holist, but just to spell out what kind of claim I am making. It might well be possible for someone to appear to be attributing the concept receptivity to a cat's relationship to the tree in front of it without possessing the concept spontaneity. But my contention is that this appearance is illusory, and that we should come to doubt this person's adequate grasp of the concept receptivity as applied to the cat if we came to doubt her grasp of the concept spontaneity. The case is, in other words, like thinking someone possesses the concept purchasing an option in an only imperfect way because that person does not know that one can only purchase an option for the future and not the past.

Of course, it is not immediately apparent that the cases are similar, and for this reason someone who is not a conceptual holist might object to the claim that we would or should doubt that someone has an adequate grasp of the concept receptivity when we doubt that that person possesses the concept spontaneity. This is the second way of making the objection that possession of the concept spontaneity and the concept rational experience are not requirements on possessing the concept receptivity. The grounds for this objection, I think, lie in the thought that mere animal receptivity and rational animal receptivity are just two different kinds of receptivity, and, in general, possessing some concept does not require grasping the concepts of its kinds.

In general, it is plausible that to possess some concept does not require possessing the concepts of its kinds. But I think that the concept receptivity is unusual in that possessing it does

require understanding the kind of receptivity present in rational experience. I want to show this by considering a normal case, one in which one can possess the more general concept without possessing the concept of its kinds.

Consider (quite rough approximations of) the concepts crustacean and crab:

Crustacean: an arthropod which has claws

Crab: a crustacean with a tough-to-penetrate shell

So defined, one can possess the concept crustacean without possessing the concept crab. That is, one can have the general ability to employ the concept crustacean in thought without having the general ability to employ the concept crab in thought. If one possesses the concept crustacean but not the concept crab, when confronted by a crab and asked whether it is a crustacean, one will be able to say “Yes, it has the body of an arthropod, and two claws – look there and there.” Being able to note *of* some crab that it is a crustacean does not require possessing the concept crab – it merely requires possessing the concept crustacean (and whatever else is required for demonstrative thought). I use the locution “to note *of* some crab” to signal that the object is not conceived to be a crab by the one who notes that it is a crustacean. (I am employing the extensional sense of “of,” in other words.) The person demonstrates to a crab by pointing (say), and perhaps the crab figures in her thought merely as a living thing. She then predicates the concept crustacean of the crab, though the crab merely figures in her thinking as that living thing. She is not aware that *that living thing* is a crab - indeed, she could not be, because she does not possess the concept crab. Her act of demonstrative thought depends for its possibility solely on her possession of the concept crustacean and her capacity for demonstrative thought (assuming, for the sake of simplicity, that one can demonstrate towards a living thing without possessing the concept life). If she was incapable of thinking that demonstrative thought, that would indicate

either that she does not perfectly possess the concept crustacean or that she is somehow defective in her capacity for demonstrative thought.

The relation between the concept crustacean and crab is not like the relation between the concept receptivity and rational experience: the concept crustacean makes a contribution to crabbiness which is notionally separable from the other component of the concept crab (having a tough-to-penetrate shell). I want to suppose for a moment that the concept crustacean and crab are like the concept receptivity and rational experience (on McDowell's view of those concepts) to bring out what effect that has on the example. Suppose, in other words, that the contribution which being a crustacean makes to being a crab is notionally inseparable from the contribution which having a tough-to-penetrate shell makes to being a crab. On this supposition, it would be impossible to, when confronted with a crab, judge *of* it that it is a crustacean without also possessing the concept tough-to-penetrate shell and without understanding the unity of being a crustacean with having a tough-to-penetrate shell. (The impossibility of this follows from the interpretation of McDowell's famous claim advanced in the course of the first step of my argument - cf. **page xxx**.) So, we are trying to imagine someone who has the concept crustacean, lacks the concept crab, and has the capacity for demonstrative thought. It follows from the supposition that being a crustacean and having a tough-to-penetrate shell make notionally inseparable contributions to being a crab that this person we are trying to imagine would not be able to (when confronted with a crab) judge *of* it that it is a crustacean, for she would not be able to understand what it is for that object to be a crustacean. That inability is no reason to suspect her of lacking the capacity for demonstrative thought (or being in any way a defective demonstrator). And so it follows that she at best imperfectly possesses the concept crustacean, and, consequently, at best imperfectly possesses the ability to apply the concept crustacean to

lobsters or shrimp. Moreover, it follows on this supposition that possessing the concept tough-to-penetrate shell and the concept crab are requirements on possessing the concept crustacean.

The supposition that being a crustacean and having a tough-to-penetrate shell make a notionally inseparable contribution to being a crab is, of course, a mere flight of fancy. One can, in fact, possess the concept crustacean without possessing the concept crab. However, the flight of fancy just consisted in thinking about the concept crustacean and the concept crab using McDowell's famous claim about the concept receptivity and the concept rational experience as a model. It is no mere fancy that one cannot understand what it is for rational experience to be receptive without possessing the concept spontaneity and understanding the unity of receptivity with spontaneity in rational experience. This is just one way of putting McDowell's famous claim. But now I have shown that that means that one can at best imperfectly possess the concept receptivity without possessing the concept spontaneity and the concept rational experience. And, in particular, one can only imperfectly have the ability to apply the concept receptivity to mere animals without being able to apply it to rational animals. Thus, possessing the concept spontaneity and the concept rational experience are requirements on possessing the concept receptivity.

About the relation between mere animal receptivity and rational animal receptivity, McDowell notes that on his view "we can say that we have what mere animals have, perceptual sensitivity to features of our environment, but we have it in a special form. Our perceptual sensitivity to our environment is taken up into the ambit of spontaneity, and this is what distinguishes us from them" (64). As far as I can see, he nowhere explicitly claims that to have the concept receptivity requires having the ability to employ that concept in thoughts concerning rational animals. My argument is that respecting the insight that mere animals and rational

animals share receptivity, though they have different forms of it, entails that to have the concept receptivity requires possessing the concept spontaneity and understanding their unity in the concept rational experience. Thus, the concept receptivity is part of a constitutive unity.

Two notes on my argument: first, it might well be that the core or focal use of the term "receptivity" consists in the application of the concept it expresses to the experience of mere animals, or, to put the point less technically, it might be that the paradigm of receptivity is mere animal receptivity. If the paradigm of receptivity is mere animal receptivity, then rational experience is receptive only by reference to the receptivity of mere animals: perhaps by analogy with the experience of mere animals, perhaps in a somehow derivative sense in relation to the sense in which the experience of mere animals is receptive, or perhaps in some other way. I hope, in future research, to examine which if any of these claims is true, or whether perhaps the reverse is the case and the paradigm of receptivity is the receptivity of rational experience, or whether perhaps an entirely different structure relates the two forms of receptivity. But in this essay I will take no stand on it. In particular, *nothing I claim is incompatible with the thought that the paradigm of receptivity, or the "primary" or "fundamental" or "focal" or "core" sense of receptivity, is mere animal receptivity.*

Second, nothing I have said explains how a concept can have two different applications in the way that I draw out from McDowell's account of the relation between mere animal receptivity and rational animal receptivity. I have merely drawn out an implication of his famous claim, an implication which (for all I have said) may be used in a reductio of his famous claim. For now, though, all that need be noted is that a consequence McDowell's famous claim that receptivity and spontaneity are co-operative in rational experience in a notionally inseparable way is that receptivity is part of a constitutive unity composed of receptivity and spontaneity.

Section 3

McDowell's claim that rational animals share receptivity with mere animals entails that receptivity applies outside of its constitutive unity with spontaneity. It follows that, on McDowell's view, the concept receptivity is a constitutive multiplicity. But why does McDowell contend that receptivity applies outside of the constitutive unity to mere animals? Is this a fundamental part of his view, or merely an optional addition to his famous claim? I contend that receptivity's application to mere animals is entailed by McDowell's famous claim. In McDowell's way of discussing mere animals, there is a barrier to seeing this. He often discusses the possibility of mere animals in a way which parallels his discussion of the possibility of error, or the possibility that rational animals sometimes take in the world non-veridically. And McDowell does not argue that the possibility of error is a consequence of his famous claim: rather, he argues that the possibility of error is consistent with his famous claim. His parallel treatment of mere animals and error suggests that McDowell's position with respect to the possibility of mere animals is that it is consistent with his famous claim, and that he offers no reason to think it is entailed by his famous claim.

Despite the fact that McDowell often treats the possibility of error and the possibility of mere animals in a parallel fashion in *Mind and World*, he also sometimes treats the possibility of mere animals as an essential consequence of his attempt to recover the concept rational nature, which is an essential part of the vindication of his famous claim. This strand in McDowell, I will argue in this section, is the one that best expresses his position. But first I will discuss McDowell's treatment of the possibility of error, move on to note the ways in which he treats the possibility of mere animals in a parallel fashion, and finally argue that this is inconsistent with

his attempt to recover the concept rational nature, as is implicit in some of his discussions of the possibility of mere animals.

At various places McDowell insists that the possibility of error in, for instance, non-veridical experience, does not tell against his famous claim that receptivity and spontaneity cooperate in a notionally inseparable way in rational experience. The thought that the possibility of error tells against McDowell's famous claim results from thinking of that possibility as justifying the claim that what constitutes veridical experience is just like what constitutes non-veridical experience insofar as the experience is for the rational animal. McDowell calls this view of experience a "highest-common factor" conception of experience: "the idea that even when things go well, cognitively speaking, our subjective position can only be something common between such cases and cases in which things do not go well" (113). Once one thinks that non-veridical experience and veridical experience give the rational animal (from her perspective) the same cognitive grounds for believing what is experienced, then, McDowell argues, one loses one's grip on how the rational animal can so much as have the world in view such that it can figure in her thoughts and beliefs.²⁴ McDowell's response to this objection to his famous claim is that "there is no good argument from fallibility," or from the possibility of error, "to what I call the "highest common factor conception of our subjective position"" (113). Moreover, since the highest common factor conception entails that one can no longer make sense of how a rational animal can have thoughts or beliefs about the world, and it is not entailed by the mere possibility of error, one should reject it.

²⁴ "This [the thought that "the genuinely subjective states of affairs involved in perception can never be more than what a perceiver has in a misleading case"] strains our hold on the very idea of a glimpse of reality. If we are confined to such materials when we build a conception of the best cognitive stance perception could yield, the most we can aspire to is something like this: an explicably veridical presentiment of some fact about the layout of the environment. We cannot have the fact itself impressing itself on a perceiver" (112-3). Cf. also 26, Lecture 1 §4, and his response to Davidson in *Afterward, Part I*, 142-3.

McDowell responds to the argument from error after having attempted his recovery of the concept rational nature. This suggests that the highest common factor conception is revealed as non-compulsory in the light of that project. I conjecture that McDowell thinks this because he thinks that one route to the highest common factor conception is via suspicion of the concept rational nature. For experience is a natural event, on McDowell's view. And to resist the highest common factor conception requires drawing a distinction between types of experience based solely on the rational goodness of those states. But that means that one must possess the concept rational nature to resist the highest common factor conception. To claim against the highest common factor conception that good cases (cases in which experience is veridical) are constituted differently than bad cases (cases in which experience is non-veridical) is to draw a metaphysical distinction solely on the basis of a rational distinction. McDowell's position, the one which makes the highest common factor conception non-compulsory, is that what it is to be an experience, which has the rational property of being veridical, is different from what it is to be an experience (or apparent experience), which has the rational property of being non-veridical. It is thus only in light of the recovery of the concept rational nature that the highest common factor conception is revealed as unwarranted.

McDowell's response to the objection from the possibility of error does not, thus, offer a reason for why error is possible on his view. All he attempts to prove is that the possibility of error is consistent with his view. It is certainly an obvious fact that rational animals sometimes err. But that fact is not explained by McDowell's view in the way that the obvious fact that rational animals sometimes get it right is, or the way that the obvious fact that rational animals

can form thoughts and beliefs about the world is.²⁵ And, sometimes, McDowell treats the possibility of mere animals in just the way that he treats the possibility of error: an obvious fact which might seem incompatible with his famous claim but is actually consistent with it. I want to turn to McDowell's parallel treatment of the possibility of mere animals.

McDowell first introduces the possibility of mere animals as a seeming ground for accepting the Myth of the Given (cf. 48-50). The motivation is this: mere animals are not spontaneous; nevertheless rational animals share a capacity for experience with them. At this point in the dialectic, McDowell has introduced his famous claim and argued that without accepting it, we cannot make sense of how rational animals have access to the world. His position may seem to threaten the thought that rational animals share experience with mere animals, since mere animal experience just involves receptivity, and not receptivity combined in a notionally inseparable way with spontaneity. And so it may seem like McDowell cannot accommodate the claim that rational animals and mere animals share experience.

In McDowell's initial discussion, then, the seeming truism (or, as McDowell puts it later, "the plain fact") that rational animals and mere animals share something appears to be threatened by his famous claim (114). Thus, the possibility of mere animals functions as a "discomfort" for

²⁵ In one place, McDowell perhaps suggests that the possibility of error is not entailed by his famous claim, which is a claim about the concept thought: "Of course thought can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance from the world implicit in the very idea of thought" (27). This claim is difficult for me to understand. It might mean that the distance that opens up between thought and world in the case of false thought is not a distance the possibility of which is grounded in the concept (or "very idea of") thought. If that's right, then this line supports my interpretation that the possibility of error is not entailed by his famous claim, which is a claim about the concept thought. (Cf. Kern, 157-8 for the error case, and its being no part of the concept as applied in the positive case; for a more worked out account on which the possibility of error is an empirical discovery, cf. Stephen Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*, 104-111. Both thinkers are relevant in this connection because they accept McDowell's famous claim.)

McDowell might rather mean that the distance that opens up between thought and world in the case of false thought is not a distance the actuality of which is grounded in the concept thought. If it means that, and if that is consistent with the possibility of that kind of distance being grounded in the concept thought, then this claim does not support my interpretation that the possibility of error is not entailed by the famous claim. [too compressed]

one sympathetic with McDowell's position (50). While McDowell does not describe the possibility of error as a discomfort for this theory, he might well have. And McDowell raises the possibility of error initially as a reason someone might object to his position in just the same way that he raises the possibility of mere animals. These two points suggest that he thinks that the possibility of error and the possibility of mere animals have the same status with respect to his position: objections from the plain fact that something is possible though the possibility of that thing is (allegedly) inconsistent with McDowell's famous claim.

This suggestion gains force when one turns to what McDowell says about the relation between mere animal experience and rational animal experience at the end of Lecture 3 (here I am returning to a passage I mentioned in section 2: cf. **footnote 24**):

If we share perception with mere animals, then of course we have something in common with them. Now there is a temptation to think it must be possible to isolate what we have in common with them by stripping off what is special about us, so as to arrive at a residue that we can recognize as what figures in the perceptual lives of mere animals. ... But it is not compulsory to attempt to accommodate the combination of something in common and a striking difference in this factorizing way: to suppose our perceptual lives include a core that we can also recognize in the perceptual life of a mere animal, and an extra ingredient in addition. And if we do take this line, there is no satisfactory way to understand the role of the supposed core in our perceptual lives. ... We do not need to say that we have what mere animals have, non-conceptual content, and we have something else as well, since we can conceptualize that content and they cannot (64; cf. also 69).

In this passage, McDowell does not quite say that those who think the possibility of mere animals constitutes an objection to his famous claim embrace a version of the highest common factor conception about the availability of the world to rational animals (where the factor is shared not between cases of veridical and non-veridical experience, but between cases of rational animal and mere animal experience), but he all but says it. And, as he goes on to note in Lecture VI, the temptation to factorize out the rationality of rational experience is grounded in the

conception of nature according to which the concept rational nature is unintelligible. McDowell diagnoses the grounds for this conception of nature as "reflect[ing] an intelligible distortion undergone by the Aristotelian idea that normal mature human beings are rational animals. Animals are, as such, natural beings, and a familiar modern conception of nature tends to extrude rationality from nature. The effect is that reason is separated from our animal nature, as if being rational placed us partly outside the animal kingdom" (108). By implication, the tendency to factorize out what about rational animal experience is merely animal (or natural, on "a familiar modern conception of nature") is grounded in a non-Aristotelian conception of nature on which there is no room for rational nature.²⁶ And, as this factorizing view makes unintelligible how rational animals can so much as have thoughts and beliefs about the world, and as it has no plausibility independent of the non-Aristotelian view of nature which it presupposes, it seems that the objection from the possibility of mere animals, like the objection from the possibility of error, is sufficiently dealt with by recovering the concept rational nature.²⁷

That the objection from the possibility of error and the objection from the possibility of mere animals both rest solely on the non-Aristotelian conception of nature does not entail that the possibility of mere animals is merely consistent with McDowell's famous claim. It would follow if the only claim McDowell wanted to make about mere animals is that their possibility

²⁶ The non-Aristotelian view of nature is sufficient to factorize rational animal experience when combined with two commitments which McDowell and his opponents share: the plain fact that rational animals share something with mere animals and the equally plain fact that there is something rational about the experience of rational animals (either intrinsically or perhaps merely relationally, in the way that the perception of rational animals is hooked up - causally or otherwise - to thinking and judging about the world).

²⁷ For a fairly clear statement that the possibility of mere animals only seems to be an objection to McDowell's view given the non-Aristotelian conception of nature, cf. 70: "The sentience of dumb animals is one way in which their animal being, their pure natural being, actualizes itself, and our sentience, as an aspect of our animal life, should equally be one way in which our natural being actualizes itself. ... But it can seem impossible to reconcile the fact that sentience belongs to nature with the thought that spontaneity might permeate our perceptual experience itself, the workings of our sensibility. How could the operations of a bit of mere nature be structured by spontaneity, the freedom that empowers us to take charge of our active thinking?"

does not constitute a threat to his position, as he says about the possibility of error. And at the end of this section I will quote a passage where McDowell appears to say just that. But McDowell does also make claims which go beyond noting that the possibility of mere animals is consistent with his famous claim.

One might begin by exploring the claims McDowell makes, drawing on Gadamer's work, about the difference between the environment of mere animals and the world of rational animals. But nothing he says in that rich description gives a reason for thinking that the possibility of mere animals is anything more than consistent with his famous claim. McDowell explicitly introduces that long description by noting that "For my purposes, the point of this is that it shows in some detail how we can acknowledge what is common between human beings and brutes, while preserving the difference that the Kantian thesis forces on us" (115).²⁸ That is, the description is just intended to indicate the kinds of resources McDowell's position allows him for describing the lives of mere animals (in relation to the lives of rational animals). He might well have included a parallel lengthy description about the kinds of resources his position allows him for describing the way in which non-veridical experience can look exactly like veridical experience (and, who knows, might have warded off some objections if he had included a robust account of the empirical results of the cognitive psychology of vision as consistent with his famous claim, results which do not draw a distinction between veridical and non-veridical cases, or between mere animal and rational animal vision).

So, the additional descriptions of mere animal environments do not offer any reason to suppose that the possibility of mere animals is anything more than consistent with McDowell's

²⁸ The Kantian thesis is a version of McDowell's famous claim that to have the world in view requires the operation of conceptual capacities in the experiencing of the world, a version which (irrelevantly for my purposes) makes explicit that McDowell's famous claim entails that rational animals are self-conscious.

famous claim. But consider this claim, which directly follows the long block quote above (**page 30**): "Instead we can say that we have what mere animals have, perceptual sensitivity of our environment, but we have it in a special form. Our perceptual sensitivity to our environment is taken up into the ambit of the faculty of spontaneity, which is what distinguishes us from them" (64). It is difficult to imagine McDowell wanting to say that veridical experiences have what non-veridical experiences have, but in a special form. It is also somewhat difficult to spell out why McDowell would not want to say that. I want to try to spell out why McDowell wants to say this about mere animal experience but not about non-veridical experience by looking at the relation between mere animal experience and McDowell's recovery of the concept rational nature.

The main obstacle which McDowell identifies to recovering the concept rational nature is the thought that nature just is that which is studied by the natural sciences (cf. 70-72). Against this equation, McDowell does not contend either that the natural sciences do not study nature or that they are bogus. Rather, he claims that there is space within the natural for that which is imbued with "meaning," or is rational, and so, as such, is not studied by the natural sciences.²⁹ This response is supposed to respect the importance of the progress in understanding nature made by the natural sciences, while undermining the temptation to think of the natural sciences as investigating nature in its entirety.³⁰ So, McDowell makes room for at least two natures:

²⁹ For the equation of the meaningful (as McDowell employs that term) and the rational, cf. 71: "The faculty of spontaneity is the understanding, our capacity to recognize and bring into being the kind of intelligibility that is proper to meaning."

³⁰ "[W]hat became available at the time of the modern scientific revolution is a clear-cut understanding of the realm of law, and we can refuse to equate that with a new clarity *about nature*. ... To see exercises of spontaneity as natural, we do not need to integrate spontaneity-related concepts into the structure of the realm of law; we need to stress their role in capturing patterns in a way of living. Of course there would be no contrast here if the idea of lives and their shapes belonged exclusively or primarily within the logical space of the realm of law, but there is no reason to suppose that that is so" (78).

nature as investigated by the natural sciences (what he sometimes calls “first nature”) and nature as rational (which is at least part of what he sometimes calls “second nature”). And the fact that these are both *natures* is just as important to McDowell’s position as is the fact that they are different. Hence, McDowell claims that when spontaneity is passively drawn into operation in the experience of a rational animal, that is an operation of a natural ability. Mere animals have the natural ability to be passively affected by the world. What the rational animal has is that same ability, but with a different form. McDowell must say this to make room for his famous claim: for, otherwise, spontaneity would be non-natural and so not coherently combinable with receptivity in the rational experience of rational animals.³¹ McDowell names the view that rationality is non-natural “rampant platonism” (77). Rampant platonism is inconsistent with McDowell’s famous claim because it makes nonsense of the very thought of a joint cooperation of receptivity and spontaneity. The rejection of rampant platonism is thus entailed by McDowell’s famous claim. But the rejection of rampant platonism is just the insistence that spontaneity is (or is in the case of rational animals, at least) a natural capacity. Its naturalness is its cooperation with receptivity. And so, if any of McDowell’s arguments are going to work, receptivity had better be a natural capacity. But no philosophical position in which McDowell is interested denies that it is, and so McDowell can simply take for granted that it is.³² But what it

³¹ This is the way in which Kant figures in McDowell’s dialectic: as one who advances the claim that the operations of receptivity and spontaneity in rational animal experience are notionally inseparable, but who denies that spontaneity is natural, and so is not able consistently to maintain the claim about notional inseparability: cf. 95-104, 110-111.

³² If it weren’t, then his project of securing “a foothold in nature” for the space of reasons would be idle, for it would just raise the possibility of skepticism about nature as not possibly actual (85). He is facing no such threat, and so can simply assume, with everyone else, that nature is actual, and so is possibly actual. The threat he does not face in *Mind and World* is the threat of nihilism which Paul Franks persuasively demonstrates so bothered the post-Kantian German Idealists: cf. Paul Franks, *All or Nothing*, **ref.** (If one is concerned about this threat, one might respond by insisting that non-rational nature is unintelligible, and that the only kind of nature which makes sense is rational nature. That position is, then, strictly consistent with McDowell’s famous claim. However, it would presuppose a

means for receptivity to be a natural capacity is for mere animals to be possible. If mere animals were not possible, then there would be nothing in the co-operation of receptivity and spontaneity in rational animal experience which secured its naturalness. So, McDowell's famous claim, articulated in a context in which nature can serve as an exemplar of what is actual, entails the rejection of rampant platonism and, for just that reason, it entails the possibility of mere animals. If the first reading I offer (cf. **footnote 25**) of McDowell's claim that the idea of a distance between world and thought is not contained in the very idea of thought is correct, then the concept error is not contained in the concept thought. My point in this part of the section is that the concept animal is contained in the concept thought (for McDowell). It follows that if mere animals are possible, that possibility must be in some sense contained in the concept thought, and so that possibility must be entailed by McDowell's famous claim. That the concept animal is contained in the concept thought explains why McDowell might say that rational animals have what mere animals have in a different form, but would not say that veridical experiences have what non-veridical experiences have in a different form.

Above I argued that one strand of *Mind and World* treats the possibility of mere animals like the possibility of error: both only seem to constitute objections to McDowell's famous claim by presupposing the view of nature as in general studied by natural science, both factor out the rational component of rational experience, and both provide no reason to factor out the rational component beyond the mere presupposition of the distorted view of nature. All of this is consistent with the claim that the possibility of mere animals differs from the possibility of error

different deployment of that claim and, more specifically, a different account of exercising worries about the actuality of rational nature, one which could obviously not appeal to the actuality of non-rational nature. As such, I discount that possibility, and will go on claiming that the possibility of mere animals is entailed by McDowell's famous claim.) [**too compressed**]

in that it is entailed by McDowell's famous claim while the possibility of error is merely consistent with it. And the argument I have just given about McDowell's project of recovering the concept rational nature shows that the possibility of mere animals is indeed entailed by his famous claim. But consider the following passage:

If someone wants to work out a conception of orientation towards the world that is detached from spontaneity in the Kantian sense, with a view to making the language of world-directedness available for talking about the mentality of brutes, that is, so far, perfectly all right by my lights. I have no wish, apart from this context, to say anything at all about mere animals, and certainly no wish to play down the respects in which their lives are like ours. It is part of what I want to insist on that we are animals too, not beings with a foothold outside the animal kingdom (183).

This paragraph is conflicted. On the one hand, McDowell notes that someone can enrich the mental lives of mere animals all she wants so long as she does not ascribe spontaneity to them, and that that is the *only* point he wants to make about mere animals. He has "no wish" "to say anything at all about mere animals" other than that they do not have "spontaneity in the Kantian sense." In other words, the possibility of mere animals is consistent with his view, and one can say anything one likes about them so long as one is not tempted to factor out what is special in rational animals. But in the very next sentence he notes that he wants to say about rational animals that "we are animals too." As McDowell appears to be thinking of this claim, it is a claim about rational animals. But, of course, in insisting on their animality, he is insisting on the importance of something shared between rational and mere animals. And so it is important to him not only that mere animals lack spontaneity but also that they have receptivity.³³

³³ In his response to Arthur Collins, McDowell acknowledges that the focus on the possibility of rational animality ought to be complemented by a focus on the possibility of mere animality: as a gloss of an explanation of the argument of pages 182-4 of *Mind and World*, he writes that "I said that the transcendental to-and-fro, the threat of mystery followed by its dissolution, is confined within reflection about possessors of conceptual capacities." He goes on to note:

In this section, I have argued that, on McDowell's view, the possibility of error is not entailed by McDowell's famous claim, but rather merely consistent with it, that one strand of McDowell's discussion of the possibility of mere animals suggests that it has the same status as the possibility of error, and that another, better strand of McDowell's discussion of the possibility of mere animals shows that it is entailed by McDowell's famous claim. My argument that McDowell's famous claim does not entail the possibility of error is relatively speculative. But the argument that I need is only that McDowell's famous claim does entail the possibility of mere animals. If it also turns out to entail the possibility of error, that would amount to the criticism that my exposition of the possibility of mere animals in this section is needlessly complex; it would not amount to a significant challenge to my thesis in this section that the concept rational experience is, as McDowell understands it, a constitutive multiplicity.

McDowell's considered position, I have argued, is that the possibility of mere animals is entailed by the claim that rational animal experience is constituted by the notionally inseparable co-operation of receptivity and spontaneity. And, for the remainder of this essay, I will write as though McDowell's considered position is his position.

Section 4

"That needs qualification. The fact that non-possessors of conceptual capacities can be perceptually sensitive to their environment is surely not irrelevant to this transcendental reflection. To avoid the threat of mystery in the way I recommend, we have to understand the acquisition of conceptual capacities as a matter of acquiring, together, capacities to build world views and capacities to have bits of the world perceptually manifest to one as material for world views. This would be merely another mystery if we could not take the second component of this package to be a transformation, in the presence of the first component, of a prior responsiveness to objective reality" (McDowell, "Reply to Commentators" **ref**, 412; cf. also 411).

He further notes that the transcendental relevance of the logical possibility of mere animals, and so the transformation of mere animal receptivity into rational animal receptivity, is "only indirect" because it is not itself responsible for the seeming unintelligibility of having the world in view (*ibid.*). That explains why he tends not to focus on the fact that the possibility of animals is entailed by his famous claim in *Mind and World*.

I have shown that two theses follow from McDowell's famous claim when conjoined with the highly abstract view of concepts as general abilities which are constituted by their rational relations to one another:

P1) To possess the concept receptivity, one must grasp its unity with spontaneity in the experience of rational animals, and so must possess the concepts spontaneity and rational experience.

P2) The concept receptivity applies to mere animals.

I want now to show that these two premises, plus, again, the highly abstract view of concepts articulated in section 1, entail a contradiction. I will do this by considering the thought:

T1) One kind of receptivity is spontaneous

T1 is a true specification of receptivity. Is it analytic or synthetic?

Consider, first, another specification of receptivity: one kind of receptivity is merely receptive. That is also a true specification of receptivity, and a specification which is opposed to the specification in T1: that is, the same kind of receptivity cannot be mere receptivity and spontaneous. (This follows from P1 and P2 once one makes explicit the nature of the receptivity as applied to mere animals.) As both are true, it follows that taking a stance rationally incompatible with believing T1 does not, by itself, entail a contradiction. T1 is true of one kind of receptivity; the specification of receptivity in T1 is incompatible with the kind of receptivity specified truly as mere receptivity, and so it is coherent to exercise the capacity to think of a kind of receptivity such that it is not spontaneous. Thus, T1 cannot be analytically true. Since T1 is true, truths are either analytic or synthetic, and T1 is not analytic, then it is synthetic.

But T1 cannot be synthetically true. To think that T1 is synthetically true is to think that one can understand the expression "one kind of receptivity," as it is employed in the sentence

expressing T1, without knowing that the kind of receptivity in question is mere receptivity. To think T1 is synthetically true is thus to think that one can understand what it is for something to be receptive without knowing whether that thing is spontaneously receptive. But that is precisely the wrong view of the concept receptivity, as section 2 showed: to understand what it is for something to be receptive, when that something is spontaneously receptive, requires already understanding the unity of the receptivity of that thing with the spontaneity of it. This thought is encapsulated in P1, and was made explicit in the argument for P1 in section 2: one cannot understand what it is to be receptive when receptivity is spontaneous without understanding its notional inseparability from spontaneity in that case. Thus, T1 cannot be synthetically true. As it is true, it must be analytically true.

So, I have deduced that T1 both must be and cannot be analytically true, or is both analytically true and synthetically true, or is neither analytically true nor synthetically true. These are just different ways of putting the same point, which is that a contradiction has apparently emerged from McDowell's position. How might one respond to this apparent contradiction?

How might one respond to this contradiction? One can respond by rejecting McDowell's famous claim that receptivity and spontaneity cooperate in a notionally inseparable way in rational experience. This would be to factorize out the contribution of receptivity in rational experience as that factor which is also present in mere animal experience. And if McDowell's argument in *Mind and World* is right, then factorizing receptivity out of rational experience entails that rational animals cannot so much as think about the world.

Perhaps McDowell's argument in *Mind and World* is somehow faulty, or perhaps one can accept the conclusion that the very idea of thinking about the world is illusory. I will not explore either of these responses. Another response to the contradiction is to reject the highly abstract

view of concepts outlined in section 1. One can dissent from it in any number of ways, but the way I want to focus on is the rejection of the exclusivity of the distinction between analytic truths and synthetic truths. In section 2 I called the rejection of the distinction between these kinds of truths “conceptual holism.” Various philosophers have subscribed to a version of conceptual holism. And if they're right, then the contradiction can be said to emerge by presupposing a distinction that is anyway suspect, and so its emergence is just one more piece of evidence that the suspect distinction should be rejected.

A philosopher who has often been associated with this kind of conceptual holism is Hegel.³⁴ And in at least one passage he seems to be pretty explicitly addressing the kind of contradiction which has emerged in this section by noting that truths can be both analytic and synthetic – and that means, apparently, noting that the distinction is suspect in the way that I have drawn it because as I have drawn it the distinction is exclusive. Hegel discusses analytic truths using the traditional terminology of conceptual containment, where a concept contains another just in case the judgment which predicates the contained concept of the concept in which it is contained is analytically true, and in the passage I am referring to he is talking about the method of his *Logic* (“absolute cognition”) in relation to analytic and synthetic truths. Nevertheless, the passage is explicitly dealing with the kind of contradiction which has here emerged:

To this extent the method of absolute cognition is *analytic*. That the method finds the further determinations of its initial universal simply and solely in this universal, constitutes the concept's absolute objectivity, of which the method is the certainty. - Equally so, however, is the method *synthetic*, for its subject matter, while immediately determined as the *simple universal*, through the determinateness which it has in its very immediacy and universality, proves to be an *other*. Yet this connection in diversity that the subject matter is thus in itself, is

³⁴ **References to Brandom**

no longer a synthesis as understood by finite cognition; the no less thoroughly analytic determination of the subject matter, the fact that the connection is within the *concept*, already distinguishes it fully from the latter synthesis.³⁵

This passage seems to say that the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths is not exclusive, and as saying that the method of the *Logic* is one demonstration of this lack of exclusivity by proceeding both analytically and synthetically in drawing connections between different concepts which, though different in some sense, are also identical in some sense with the concept to which they are connected. Thus, concepts connected by the method are, in some sense, contained in each other, and also, in some sense, not contained in each other – or the judgments which express the connections are both analytic and synthetic, revealing that the distinction is not exclusive, and thus expressing one version of conceptual holism.

I think that the quote does not advocate conceptual holism. Rather, it articulates the method for dealing with the subject matter of the *Logic*, and not something true of conceptual connections more generally. Hegel's point in saying that the method is both analytic and synthetic is not that that distinction between analytic judgments and synthetic judgments, where operative, is not exclusive. Rather, his point is that that distinction is not one which is operative when discussing the subject matter of the *Logic*. The conceptual connections made by the *Logic* cannot be understood if one antecedently brings to bear the distinction between analytic judgments and synthetic judgments, because those connections are connections between concepts which are identical to one another (“in some sense”) and different from one another (“in some sense”).³⁶ “Conceptual connections” is just another way of saying rational relations.

³⁵ cf. also 12.248-9: "But the method of truth that comprehends the subject matter, though analytic as we have seen, since it remains strictly within the concept, is however equally synthetic, for through the concept the subject matter is determined as dialectical and other."

³⁶ “In some sense” in quotation marks because identity and difference can no longer be explicated in their usual senses by referring to the law of non-contradiction and the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths (and identity and difference) that comes with it. Which is to say that until we have in view what kind of conceptual

And so it emerges that Hegel's point in this passage is that the sense of rational relations relevant to the subject matter of the *Logic* is not explicated by the concept coherence and its attendant distinction between analytic and synthetic truths. His point is *not* the conceptual holist point that there is no such sense of rational relations. Reading the passage from Hegel in this way opens up a way of responding to the contradiction which McDowell's position seems to entail without giving up on the highly abstract view of concepts outlined in section 1.

In section 1, I said that the sense of rational relations relevant to individuating conceptual capacities comes tied together with coherence. The contradiction that has since emerged reveals that what it is for the concepts employed in T1 to stand in rational relations is different from what it is for other concepts to stand in rational relations to one another: the sense of rational relations relevant to explicating the relation between "receptivity" and "spontaneity" is not explicated by the concept coherence. It is not yet clear what kind of method articulates (or investigates?) this other sense of rational relations. Or, put differently, it is not yet clear what it means for a thought to be (as one might put it) "above" or "beside" the distinction between analyticity and syntheticity, but reading Hegel's quote in relation to McDowell's project opens up a way of understanding it as articulating the kind of rational relations which hold between the concepts employed in T1 on McDowell's understanding of T1. It thereby holds out the hope of resolving the contradiction which has emerged in McDowell's project without abandoning either

connections the *Logic* investigates, we cannot understand what Hegel means by "identity" and "difference," and the "in some sense" masks this fact by suggesting that the concepts are identical in sharing some mark and different in not sharing some other mark. But that's just to miss that Hegel's point is that we are operating in a different logical space, where we think we understand what a mark is but in fact do not yet understand what a mark is in this context.

the famous claim, or the view of concepts which serves as the background against which McDowell articulates it.³⁷

McDowell's project of resuscitating the concept rational nature is motivated by a desire to respect the *sui generis* nature of reason relative to the forms of nature studied by the natural sciences. A resuscitated version of that concept will enable one to accept that metaphysical distinctions can be drawn on the basis of rational distinctions, and thus open up the space for accepting that the space of reasons is not like the realm of law.³⁸ But, if the argument of this section is compelling, then there is yet another obstacle to accepting that the space of nature is not identical to the realm of law: namely, an inability to make sense of a non-factorizing account of what is shared in mere animal receptivity and rational animal receptivity. Even if one grew up at a time when belief in the rational order and goodness of the universe was common sense, and

³⁷ My interpretation of Hegel's method as relevant to the problem of making sense of how a concept can be both part of a constitutive unity and be a constitutive multiplicity is shared by Peter Rohs (who relates Hegel not to McDowell but rather to Parmenides). In *Form und Grund*, Rohs notes that Hegel thought that the Parmenidean problem of thinking difference in relation to unity is the beginning of proper philosophy: cf. Rohs, *Form und Grund*, **ref.** 17-8. He goes on to note that the science of (absolute) form, which is one of Hegel's designations for his project in the *Logic*, is the science which explains difference in relation to unity (ibid.). Indeed, he claims that the entire tradition of German Idealism is to be seen as an elevation of the concept form to a concept designed to explain difference in relation to unity (cf. Rohs, 12-6). He finally notes that, according to Hegel, the only satisfactory way to explain difference in relation to unity is to account for form not only as the explanation of the possibility of the unity of a multiplicity, such that one cannot understand the different elements of the multiplicity without understanding their connection (in my terminology, constitutive unity), but also as the explanation of the possibility of the multiplicity of what is thereby united, such that one cannot understand the unity without understanding the multiplicity of what is united (in my terminology, constitutive multiplicity) (cf. Rohs, 77-9 and also 110). While I disagree with some of the ways in which Rohs spells out these claims, I agree with this general interpretation of Hegel. For another version of this interpretation, according to which *The Science of Logic* only properly articulates the conceptual relation of constitutive unity and constitutive multiplicity (to once again use my terminology) in *The Subjective Logic*, the final part of the *Logic*, cf. Beatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, **ref.** 34-5.

³⁸ "The threat," to which the Myth of the Given and coherentism are unsatisfying responses, "is that an animal endowed with reason would be metaphysically split, with disastrous consequences for our reflection about empirical thinking and action. I have claimed that we can avoid the threat even while we maintain, unlike bald naturalism, that the structure of the space of reasons is *sui generis*, in comparison with the organization of the realm of law. The spontaneity of the understanding cannot be captured in terms that are apt for describing nature on that conception, but even so it can permeate actualizations of our animal nature" (108-9).

so one was willing to draw metaphysical distinctions on the basis of rational distinctions, one would still have sufficient motivation to resist drawing non-factorizing distinctions on the basis that they make no sense (because they entail a contradiction). If one accepts the highly abstract view of concepts outlined in section 1, then one is forced into the factorizing conception unless one can explicate a sense of rational relations which is different than (yet, surely, somehow related to) that explicated by the concept coherence. McDowell has left that task unaddressed, and so there remains at least one bit of philosophy which the common sense thought that the space of reasons is differently organized than the realm of law has not yet been freed from.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have investigated the concepts receptivity, spontaneity, and rational experience as they are articulated by McDowell in *Mind and World*. These concepts, in particular receptivity, have been the subject of much recent philosophy, often inspired by McDowell's work, which has thereby contributed to a renewal of interest in naturalism.

Some of this new interest in Aristotelian naturalism has challenged McDowell in his avowal of Kantianism by articulating, on the one hand, a richer view of mere animals and insisting, on the other hand, that spontaneity is a natural concept by being a principle of one among many life-forms (such that spontaneity could also be a distinct principle of other forms of life).³⁹ Some of the new interest in nature has itself been challenged, and McDowell has been criticized on the Hegelian grounds that his argument that spontaneity is actual in human beings by being another form of natural actuality is insufficiently respectful of the distinctively original

³⁹ Michael Thompson is one of the most sophisticated proponents of this neo-Aristotelian and anti-Kantian philosophy: cf. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action* (ref).

(or *sui generis*) character of rationality. The point of this challenge is not to reject the claim that rational experience is receptive, in the way that McDowell urges, but rather to insist that the source or warrant for the actuality of rational experience lies in the historical and social forms of spontaneity (as opposed to being a natural actuality).⁴⁰ And, in response to both of these criticisms, McDowell has the ever-ready Wittgensteinian riposte that the need for philosophical explanations must come from some motivated confusion, that the need for philosophical reminders is not independent of those confusions, as a result of which there isn't really a sense in which reason acquires its actuality "by being natural," and so no sense to rejecting that thought, independent of the confusions motivated by the "scientific" conception of nature which McDowell takes on in *Mind and World* (or some other confusion which, McDowell might contend, his critics have failed to articulate).⁴¹

All of these debates are quite interesting and productive, but my point in engaging so extensively with McDowell's views has not been to set up a further engagement on any of these topics. My point is much more abstract: I wanted to get in view a conceptual structure which McDowell's account gives us merely one instance of. The instance is the relation between receptivity in mere animal experience and receptivity in rational experience. The conceptual structure is being part of a constitutive unity while nevertheless being a constitutive multiplicity.

I have argued that understanding this structure, and the sense in which it is a *conceptual*

⁴⁰ Robert Pippin has made this argument in three papers responding to McDowell's philosophy. McDowell's rejoinder that the only point he needs is the point about receptivity is not compelling, for he also takes the stand in *Mind and World* that we can reassure ourselves of the actuality of reason (as against rampant platonism) by noting that reason is actual in a natural way (cf. **footnote 32 and surrounding text**). Pippin's claim is rather that reason's actuality is not a natural kind of actuality, and that we must rather secure its actuality by way of an examination of the historical and social dimensions of *Geist*: cf. **references to all of the essays in this exchange** Indeed, some Hegelians have urged against McDowell that the proper way to understand the actuality of *nature* is as an inadequate expression of the actuality of *reason*: cf. Brady Bowman, **ref.**

⁴¹ **references to the huge number of response papers in which McDowell makes this move**

structure, requires more work, and that an examination of the *method* of Hegel's *Logic* might help with that work. How does this conceptual structure relate to those concepts which are individuated by the sense of "coherence" articulated in the law of non-contradiction? Is the law of non-contradiction valid for judgments which employ those concepts? Does it even apply to those judgments? In what sense are they judgments at all? Do the concepts which figure in this conceptual structure need to be concepts of capacities? Concepts of kinds of living things?⁴² Is there always a paradigm application of the concept which applies both in and outside of the constitutive unity? Are there in fact other instances of this conceptual structure? If so, how do they relate to this instance? Do instances of this conceptual structure have the same kind of objective purport as instances of concepts individuated according to the law of non-contradiction? If not, do all instances of this structure have the same kind of objective purport? Are our employments of these concepts all justified in the same way? If so, what way?

These are just a few of the questions which are opened up by properly registering the conceptual structure instanced by McDowell's account of the relation between mere animal receptivity and rational animal receptivity. In this essay, I merely hope to have given these questions some sense and some urgency.

⁴² In work which takes up and defends McDowell's famous claim and his account of the relation between mere receptivity and spontaneous receptivity, Matthew Boyle has associated that relation with the relation between the different kinds of "souls," or principles of life, which Aristotle articulates in *De Anima*: cf. Matthew Boyle, "Additive Theories of Rationality." Sebastian Rödl has made a somewhat similar association, though with an eye towards exhibiting the method of Hegel's *Logic*, in "Hegelian Dialectics and Aristotle's Stufenleiter of Life" (ms). I hope to pursue the thoughts which these authors present in future work.