

## *Diminished Rationality and the Space of Reasons*

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### **Introduction**

Some theories of language, thought, and experience require their adherents to say unpalatable things about human individuals whose capacities for rational activity are seriously diminished. Donald Davidson, for example, takes the interdependence of the concepts of thought and language to entail that thoughts may only be attributed to an individual who is an interpreter of others' speech.<sup>1</sup> And John McDowell's account of human experience as the involuntary exercise of conceptual capacities can be applied easily only to individuals who make some reasonable judgments, because conceptual capacities are paradigmatically exercised in judgments.<sup>2</sup> In both cases, we seem forced towards an error theory about any ordinary understanding of impaired human individuals as minded, or as undergoing human experience.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Donald Davidson, 'Thought and Talk,' reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (New York: Clarendon Press 1984)

2 John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1996 [1994]). Unless otherwise indicated, parenthetical page citations refer to this work.

3 Other philosophers whose approaches to either mindedness, language, or both,

Debates about making linguistic competence or conceptual capacities central to an account of experience often focus on the consequences for non-human animals or pre-linguistic infants. Defenses of the language-emphasizing views usually include statements about how much animals can still be allowed to have: for example, causal responses to their environment, or perceptual awareness of biologically relevant environmental features. These defenses may also include an acknowledgment that explaining how human infants get initiated into thinking, talking, and perceiving is a delicate task if no one of those activities is conceptually or developmentally prior to the others. But attention is rarely paid to human individuals who attain strictly biological maturity without achieving linguistic competence. Their situation requires separate treatment if these defenses are to be truly compelling.

I want to provide the beginning of such a treatment by focusing on McDowell's accounts of perceptual experience. McDowell's account depends heavily on the notion of social space, in the sense of distinctively human communal life. Because this notion of the social seems to include many of the interactions impaired and non-impaired humans share, it might look as if McDowell could grant human experience, or something close to it, to some impaired human individuals, even though he can't grant it to animals. I argue that this appearance is deceptive, and explain how we ought to understand the connections between rationality and human sociality in McDowell's work. In conclusion, I suggest which aspects of that understanding might generalize beyond McDowell's case.

## I

McDowell's aim in *Mind and World* is to relieve us of a traditional anxiety about the relation between the world and what we take to be our knowledge of it. More generally, he seeks to relieve an anxiety about the very possibility of objective content, whether it amounts to knowledge or not. The anxieties are to be relieved by a mixture of diagnosis and prescription. The diagnosis emerges from an examination of why

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appear to require similar revisionism about some ordinary claims we might make about impaired humans are Robert Brandom (see *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1994]); Richard Rorty (see *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [Princeton: Princeton University Press 1979]), and Wilfred Sellars (see *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* [1956; reprint, with an introduction by Richard Rorty and a study guide by Robert Brandom, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1997]).

philosophy keeps thinking it must choose from a narrow set of unpalatable options. In epistemology, for example, we can't seem to escape a forced choice between some form of the Myth of the Given, in which something utterly distinct from our rationality nevertheless provides a justificatory foundation for exercises of that rationality, and some type of coherentism, in which nothing constrains the activity of thinking except thinking's effort not to contradict itself.

The prescription is an account of perceptual experience that standard responses to the anxieties miss, because — and I'm gliding over a great deal of diagnosis — of assumptions they share about how reason and nature must relate. McDowell undercuts the assumptions with a view of nature on which the natural is not identified with the realm of law, with phenomena whose intelligibility science appropriately reveals. If nature is understood to include phenomena whose intelligibility is that of reason or meaning, McDowell can then develop the missed option, and claim that operations of human sensory receptivity, impressions of the world on our senses, belong in the logical space of reasons.<sup>4</sup> They are episodes (in our biographies) in which our conceptual capacities — and so our rationality — are brought into play (though involuntarily). And their content, what is delivered to us in them, is always already conceptual in structure. Human sensory episodes are operations of nature, and their descriptions place them in the space of reasons (xx, 34, 46).

This prescription enables us to avoid the forced choice between givenness and coherentism, because it shows how to achieve a genuine constraint on active thinking (mere coherence is not a genuine constraint), without construing constraint as operating from 'beyond an outer boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere' (34). Knowledge can be answerable to sensory experience, because the thinkable contents disclosed in experience constrain the activity of thinking. Constraint 'comes from outside *thinking*, but not from outside what is *thinkable*' (28; italics original).

Someone might accept that the prescribed view provides relief of the diagnosed condition, but fear it collapses into idealism, or is necessarily hostile to the enterprise of modern science.<sup>5</sup> Or one might think McDowell's view amounted to what he terms 'rampant platonism'. Rampant platonism shares with McDowell's view (which he terms 'naturalized

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4 McDowell takes up the 'space of reasons' metaphor from Wilfred Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.

5 I will not be addressing those who think the prescription isn't even a potential cure for the disease, or who don't think there is a disease of the kind McDowell diagnoses.

platonism') the claim that rationality is autonomous.<sup>6</sup> It differs in construing reason as alien to everything human. Rampant platonism takes reason to be akin to a supernatural force, and thus raises unanswerable questions about how humans ever manage to be rational, or to exercise a faculty worth calling reason (92). (For example, if reason is alien to the human, how can we be answerable to it, in the sense that implies responsibility for our failures?) Rampant platonism conceives reason as an escape from or transcendence of nature, but McDowell wants to construe our possession of rational freedom, of conceptual capacities, to be 'our own special way of living an animal life' (65).

To do so, he appeals to the Aristotelian notion of second nature. While the notion of second nature is not exhausted by this defensive role, it is largely defined by it. It is introduced to help us to see why McDowell's understanding of rationality, and in particular his conception of the interaction between rationality and sensory receptivity, isn't party to a platonism we should reject.

To accomplish this, McDowell only really needs to give us one plausible way to think of our rationality as fully human. He introduces the idea of a second nature acquired in the course of a normal human upbringing, centrally involving the learning of language. If it is plausible that the end stage of this upbringing is the acquisition of rationality — qualification as a full citizen of the space of reasons — then this appeal to upbringing and development should protect against the charge of rampant platonism. Human children do learn language, so clearly human first nature includes the capacity to do this. If learning language, in the broad sense given a central role in 'being well brought-up,' is a way to become sensitive to the demands of reason, then human first nature includes the capacity to develop human second nature. McDowell's view of language as a repository of tradition, as a 'prior embodiment of mindedness' that stands over against any individual initiated into that tradition, is a way to flesh out the suggestion that learning a language is coming to be at home in the space of reasons — coming to make that space one's second, but genuine, home.<sup>7</sup> Rationality isn't alien to

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6 On the page where this terminology is introduced, McDowell explains in a note that he uses 'the lower case to stress that I mean the label "platonism" in something like the sense that it bears in the philosophy of mathematics' rather than to signal a connection with Plato (77 n7).

7 The 'language into which a human being is first initiated stands over against her as a prior embodiment of mindedness, of the possibility of an orientation to the world' (125). Language 'serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what' (126).

humanity, not even to that humanity we have simply in virtue of being born to human parents.

Of course there are questions about how this first-nature capacity — to learn language — evolved, and questions about how an individual exercises it in learning her first language. But these questions are not the sort of irresolvable philosophical mysteries provoked by rampant platonism's conception of the arrival of reason, or of the possession of the faculty of reason by a human individual.

To refute the charge of rampant platonism, McDowell doesn't have to do more than sketch this picture of second nature.<sup>8</sup> In particular, he doesn't have to answer the questions about the evolution of the relevant first-nature capacities. In fact, it seems as if he shouldn't do anything more than provide the sketch. A desire for more detail about the emergence of second nature for humanity in general, or about the acquisition of it by one human individual, *could* stem from a recurrence of the traditional anxieties McDowell has been trying to dissolve. Pressing for detail might be a way of worrying whether we'd got the *right* second nature, which is an analogue to the incoherent worry as to whether we had the right conceptual scheme.<sup>9</sup> McDowell does remark in a footnote that questions about how rational animals ever evolved in the first place, 'come as close as good questions can to the philosophical questions I want to exorcise' (124 n12).<sup>10</sup> So there are good questions about the arrival in our species of the capacity to develop second nature — we just shouldn't confuse them with the philosophical questions McDowell wants to show us how to exorcise, nor should we think they are questions philosophy has to answer for itself.

8 Here is a formulation suggesting just this line: '[the] *bare idea* of *Bildung* ensures that the autonomy of meaning is not inhuman' (95; emphasis added).

9 When this expresses an attempt to line up our view of the world and the world from a 'sideways-on' perspective, McDowell shares Davidson's view that this concern makes no sense (137-8). See Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,' reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1984). A related worry is whether our concepts 'fit' with the bits of the world revealed to us in experience. This is another worry McDowell wants to exorcise. See his remark that we must give up wanting 'an account of how concepts and intuitions are brought into alignment' ('The Content of Perceptual Experience,' reprinted in *Mind, Value, and Reality* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998]).

10 The context for the note is a reminder that developing an evolutionary account is not the same as putting forward constructive philosophy (124) of the kind that wants to make normativity 'safe' by constructing it from materials available in the realm of law (95).

McDowell's caveat about good questions speaks only to the topic of the evolution of these capacities at the species-level. But there are surely questions about individual development that are good, non-philosophical questions — even if they could be mistaken for philosophical questions. For example, one can ask about the temporal order in which the typical child acquires the members of some set of concepts — provided one didn't take temporal succession in acquisition to be in and of itself proof of logical dependence-relations between the concepts themselves. And one could ask about the extent to which certain deficits in first-nature language-learning capacities could be compensated for by supplementary training — provided one didn't take a positive conclusion to show, absent further argument, that certain types of initiation were just social analogues of first-nature capacities, and were therefore understandable from within the realm of law.

Ideally, any positive philosophical story about individual initiation into the space of reasons should be formulated so as to minimize confusion with accounts given in answer to good non-philosophical questions. But it should also signal its difference from the sorts of accounts that might be offered in response to bad philosophical questions. For example, one wouldn't want, in fleshing out McDowell's line on initiation, to map out developmental stages (identified by concepts applicable to first nature), and then, in the manner of a child-rearing manual, identify the second nature capacities that emerge with the right sort of social prodding. Providing positive detail in this way flirts with a project McDowell explicitly rejects: showing how human rationality — human second nature — can be constructed out of materials available as such from within the realm of law. Second nature, and its being such as to emerge from first nature via socialization, plays the theoretical role of defeating rampant platonism. It does not play the theoretical role of mediating between first nature, understandable as belonging to the realm of law, and rationality, in an ultimately reductionist project.

So pressing for details *from philosophy* about the process of training (for individuals) could stem from confusions of scientific with philosophical questions, or from a refusal to allow the avoidance of rampant platonism to be anything other than an ultimately reductionist project. But it could also stem from a desire to clarify the relations between human social space and the autonomy of the space of reasons, particularly with respect to attributions of the capacity for experience.

## II

McDowell attributes experience only to humans, because on his view, it is the involuntary drawing into operation of conceptual capacities — and conceptual capacities have their home in the understanding, a faculty only rational animals have. McDowell is clear, responding to critics, that he has no interest in denying animals perceptual sensitivity to objects in their environment.<sup>11</sup> McDowell claims that by reserving to rational animals (humans) the capacity for *experience*, he is simply reserving to them the solution to a problem only they have. Only about the human mind does it make sense to ask troubling philosophical questions about the objectivity of its content, or its relation to knowledge and justification. Saying that animals do not enjoy experience is a way of saying that their perceptual sensitivity is not of a kind that can solve transcendental problems.<sup>12</sup> I will simply accept McDowell's claim that he is neither officially nor tacitly denying to animals anything they ought to be taken to have. This will enable me to focus on the question of what must be involved, according to McDowell's view, in attributing experience to an individual human being.

To this end, I want to distinguish three levels in a philosophical account of experience, and indicate where these distinctions lie in McDowell's work.<sup>13</sup> On the first level, a philosopher addresses herself to the very idea of experience, provides, at least in outline, a picture of

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11 'I would not dream of suggesting that a dog, say, does not see objects but only patterns of color...Of course objects — for instance predators or prey animals — can be among the features of its environment to which a brute is perceptually sensitive,' ('Reply to Commentators,' Book Symposium on *Mind and World* in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 [1998]: 403-31, 411). McDowell allows that non-rational animals have 'responsiveness to objective reality' ('Reply to Commentators,' 412). Normal human animals have this responsiveness transformed into a thoroughly conceptual affair — but we didn't need the theoretical apparatus of the space of reasons 'to secure for us the very idea of being on to things,' ('Knowledge and the Internal Revisited,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64 [2002]: 97-105, 104).

12 This is especially clear in his reply to Arthur Collins's 'Beastly Experience' (Book Symposium on *Mind and World*, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 [1998]: 375-80). The transcendental worry is (in one form) that a freely made-up mind could not be thinking about the world, as that seems to require some kind of constraint by the world. Since animals don't have the kind of freedom that makes it possible to raise that worry, we don't need to (and it would be inappropriate to) apply to them the account which seeks to reveal experience as providing a constraint that is compatible with freedom ('Reply to Commentators,' 411).

13 The distinctions are largely heuristic. The fact that we can distinguish these levels in a philosopher's view does not mean that she proceeds by first finding a good

what constitutes experience, and explains how this picture fits with other philosophical commitments she might have. (I will call this the 'Constitutive Level.')

McDowell's first-level view involves the claim that experience is the involuntary drawing-into-operation of conceptual capacities in receptivity, and an explanation of how experience so pictured fits into the relation between reason and nature. On the second level, a philosopher lays out what it would be for an individual to have experience as the Constitutive Level depicted it. This second level helps make clear how individuals could have episodes, events in their biographies, with the structure laid down by the first level for perception in general. (I will call it the 'Individual Possession Level.')

McDowell perhaps spends most time at this level in his Woodbridge Lectures, where he argues for a particular way of understanding Sellars's idea that experiences contain claims.<sup>14</sup> McDowell argues that the conceptual capacities involuntarily exercised in, for example, a seeing that a cat is on the mat, hang together in the same way they would if they were voluntarily exercised in the judgment that a cat is on the mat. Finally, the third level specifies what sort of cognitive capacities an individual needs in order to have experiential episodes, given everything that has been claimed about them at the first and second levels. (I will call this the 'Capacity Level.'<sup>15</sup>) Identifying the work McDowell does at this level is the task of the next few pages.

The task is complicated because the distinction between the Individual Possession and Capacity Levels is hardly cut and dried. Specifying which episodes in individuals' lives count as experiences already goes some distance towards indicating what capacities those individuals must possess in order to have such episodes. Keeping the distinction in play is less important than using the bare idea of a third level, the level

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account of experience-in-general and then struggles to show that, luckily enough, we humans are able to have experiences of the kind this account fits.

14 John McDowell, 'Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality,' The Woodbridge Lectures 1997, *Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998): 431-91. See especially Lecture II, 'The Logical Form of an Intuition' (451-70).

15 Construing someone as stringently anti-reductionist as McDowell as having any serious interest at all in this third level may require some defense. But just as naturalizing autonomous rationality is not, in McDowell's view, to treat it reductively, so discussing the actual structure of individual minds need not be a prelude to a reductive effort to construct norm-responsive cognitive equipment out of non-normative materials. That McDowell is interested in philosophical explorations of that structure is perhaps most clear when he is discussing or drawing on Gareth Evans's work (see § 6 of Lecture V of *Mind and World* and 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,' reprinted in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998]).

of requirements, to focus on questions, and available answers, about who is going to get to have experience. If one accepts the claims McDowell makes at the Constitutive Level, then one already knows that an individual with *no* capacity for rationality, and so with no genuinely conceptual capacities, will not be able to have experience in McDowell's sense. Hence McDowell's concern to explain what his account entails for non-rational — that is, non-human — animals.

But once we are trying to articulate how experiences could be episodes individuals have, and listing the requirements individuals must meet in order to have such episodes, even trickier questions emerge — questions about which human animals are going to come up to scratch. (I say 'trickier' not because the questions about animals aren't loaded or complex, but because the initial shape of the answer is so clear: if not even potentially a rational animal, then not a subject of experience [in the relevant sense].)

In *Mind and World*, McDowell indicates a number of particular requirements on the cognitive capacities of those individuals whose perceptual sensitivity will count as experience. Several are deliberate echoes of Sellars and Strawson. All follow from claims at the Constitutive Level — e.g. that experience is conceptually structured, and that experiences can be reasons for which a subject believes.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in order to be capable of experience, an individual must have conceptual capacities, which means she must be capable of the activities in which conceptual capacities are paradigmatically exercised, i.e. making up one's mind in judgment. But McDowell develops a number of more specific requirements for would-be subjects of experience. I will discuss two.

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16 When McDowell talks about 'reasons for belief,' he has in mind the reasons that figure in normative explanations of a subject's belief. For example, Jane's believing that she will need her umbrella can be explained by her seeing that it is raining. That it is (visibly) raining is Jane's reason for her belief. But the 'reasons for belief' locution does figure, in other contexts, in merely causal explanations of belief. For example, Bob's believing that he is being chased might be explained by us by reference to the fact that he has just been injected with a hallucinogenic drug. But the drug is not Bob's reason for his belief. When I speak of experiences as reasons for belief, I intend to follow McDowell's notion. Where this might be unclear, I will use the locution 'reason for which a subject believes'. I have borrowed this locution from Jonathan Dancy (see his *Practical Reality* [New York: Oxford University Press 2000]). I should note that Dancy himself thinks McDowell's account of experiences ultimately cannot sustain the claim that they are reasons for which a subject believes. (See his 'Acting in the Light of Appearances,' in *McDowell and His Critics*, Cynthia Macdonald and Graham Macdonald, eds. [Oxford: Basil Blackwell 2006.]) Adjudicating this dispute would take me far beyond the scope of this paper.

First, what experience discloses must be transparently available to a subject, as a possible reason for belief.<sup>17</sup> This demand reinforces the Constitutive Level claim that the content of experience must be always already conceptual. It also entails a requirement at the Capacity Level: since experiences in this sense would be expressible by subjects, a subject of experience must be able to express her experiences, to articulate them as reasons. (This could be as simple as saying, ‘Because it looks that way’ in response to a question about why one held a particular belief.)

Secondly, there is a linked suite of requirements in which McDowell’s endorsements of points from Sellars and Strawson is especially obvious. They all concern the way a subject of experience must implicitly conceive of herself. A subject of experience must understand that what she takes in in experience are elements in a possible world-view, and she must (at least implicitly) recognize that she is a developer of world-views.<sup>18</sup> She must also have a conception of herself as moving regularly through the world and having a particular view on it.<sup>19</sup>

Individuals acquire these capacities in the process of *Bildung*, of initiation into the space of reasons, which McDowell also glosses as coming to human maturity, as coming to live in the world — as opposed to responding to biological imperatives in an environment as a structured set of problems and opportunities. Growing up is, in the normal case, enough to ensure possession of the relevant capacities. (Of course the ways these capacities are understood, in being imparted, and the way their presence figures in the consciousness of the mature individual, could be at some generous distance from the way they appear in this theoretical account.) And there is a holistic structure to this set of cognitive capacities analogous to the holism of the conceptual realm in general: someone doesn’t count as fully in possession of one capacity except insofar as she is also (more or less) possessed of the others.

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17 McDowell makes this point frequently; see e.g. 62 and 162-4.

18 See 11-12. A key Sellars passage is from *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* §36 (on pages 75-6 in the new edition [Harvard University Press 1997]). McDowell discusses the interdependence Sellars finds between experience and world views in his Woodbridge Lectures (see especially Lecture II, pp. 465ff.). He criticizes Sellars (focusing on this section of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*) for being unable to allow that what a subject takes in in experience, and what gives authority to the experiential reports that can support world views, just is ‘the fact that things are manifestly so’ (‘Knowledge and the Internal,’ in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, 410 n24).

19 See 54-5, and Lecture V (87-107, especially 99-104), where McDowell notes he is exploiting P.F. Strawson’s reading of Kant, and Evans’s reading of Strawson.

Though being capable of experience is only part of what being at home in the space of reasons involves, we could ask whether someone was in fact at home in the space of reasons — whether she had completed a successful training in second nature — by asking whether she had the full complement of capacities necessary for enjoying experience.<sup>20</sup> The second question can go proxy for the first because, while someone can be at home in the space of reasons without being an *expert* player of the game of giving and asking for reasons, no one possessed of the full complement of (what I'm going to call) Strawsonian capacities for experience needs any more cognitive ability in order to count as a *competent* player.<sup>21</sup> Because experiences are essentially able to serve as reasons for belief, any genuine experiencer must be able to use at least some of her experiences as reasons. And anyone who possesses those Strawsonian capacities dependent on self-awareness (as a reporter, as having a point of view) will be a practitioner and appreciator of reasoned justification. How else could she see an experiential report as *contributing* to a world view, or appreciate her own point of view as distinct, providing reasons others can't (yet) appreciate? So whether someone was at home in the space of reasons could in some sense be checked by an investigation into the firmness of her possession of Strawsonian capacities.

But the work McDowell needs the idea of second nature to do places some constraints on how we ought to construe the claim that individuals only count as at home in the space of reasons, and as subjects of experience, when they fully possess these capacities. It has to remain plausible that Strawsonian capacities are acquired by ordinary humans, coming to maturity in the variety of contexts in which ordinary humans are raised. And it has to remain plausible that linguistic competence is a guide to the relevant level of maturity. So we need to be cautious in specifying the requirements for possessing Strawsonian capacities.

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20 Someone could lack the capacities for a number of kinds of experience (because of damage to the systems supporting some sensory modalities) and still have the Strawsonian capacities in question. And it would require both conceptual reflection and empirical investigation to discover how much experiential impoverishment — whether due to environmentally imposed sensory deprivation, or to physiological deficiencies — would be compatible with the possession of the Strawsonian capacities.

21 I will use 'Strawsonian capacities' as shorthand for all the relevant capacities, not just those most resonant with themes from Strawson's own work.

## III

Consider what is involved in judgments that an individual has or doesn't have the Strawsonian capacities, and what it would be to make a mistake about that. Does it make sense to say that someone was incorrectly taken to have the Strawsonian capacities? If so, it presumably makes sense to say that she was misplaced in the space of reasons. But it isn't clear how such a claim fits with the use Sellars originally made of the metaphors 'space of reasons' and 'placing in the space of reasons'. When he introduces them, he is contrasting giving an empirical description of an episode with placing it in the space of reasons in calling it a *knowing*. To place an episode in the place of reasons is to display its current place in, or fitness for, the game of giving and asking for reasons.<sup>22</sup> McDowell has questioned whether we ought to cede the very idea of empirical description to those activities whose sole aim is to reveal the law-like intelligibility which contrasts with the type of intelligibility appropriate to the space of reasons.<sup>23</sup> This seems right to me. Nevertheless, we will get clearer about what sorts of misplacings might be possible, and so how we could talk about failures to meet the requirements for possessing Strawsonian capacities, by considering some differences between placing and describing.

As a first pass at articulating the contrast, one might say that correct descriptions are made correct by empirical facts beyond the control of the describer, while placings are not so much correct or incorrect as successful or unsuccessful.<sup>24</sup> The implication might be that if a placing is unsuccessful, that would be because we hadn't managed to bring it off on that occasion — not because it was utterly beyond our capaci-

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22 *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, § 36

23 See his criticism of Richard Rorty's appropriation of Davidson (*Mind and World*, Afterword Part I, §§ 6-7 [146-55]). See also his comment that Sellars's treatment of placings in the space of reasons (in § 36 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*) echoes an early warning of Sellars's, about epistemologists' making 'a mistake of a piece with the so-called "naturalistic fallacy" in ethics' (§ 5), and that linking the idea of placings to this warning is more helpful than contrasting them with empirical descriptions (Woodbridge Lectures, Lecture I, 'Sellars on Perceptual Experience,' 433 n5). This is why McDowell himself speaks of the descriptions of human sensory episodes as placing those episodes in the space of reasons (see footnote 4 above).

24 Any time we produce claims up for assessment as correct or true, their being correct or true is, as this is often put, not 'up to us.' Asserting this is not to assert a correspondence theory of truth, nor is it to rule out the so-called 'identity theory' of truth implicitly endorsed by McDowell in *Mind and World* (e.g. on page 27: 'When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case').

ties, for reasons beyond our control. That is, if we give an episode a role in the reasons game, then it is in the space of reasons. Assuming we have rational agents on the scene, then whatever they use in the game of giving and asking for reasons is in the space of reasons. Furthermore, whatever they *could* use in the game is 'in.'<sup>25</sup> (This is another way of glossing McDowell's point that the space of reasons is the space of thinkable content.) All possible intentional episodes and all facts are 'in.' And it obviously doesn't make sense to worry whether something — some episode, some state of the world — that didn't belong might have slipped in nevertheless.

But what if we are talking about individuals rather than the states of affairs they place in the game? What if we are deliberately refraining from assuming that the individuals in question are rational agents? In answering these questions, the metaphor of placing becomes more complicated. There will still be real truth in the idea that placing is up to us, in the sense of being something we simply do. We place individuals in the space of reasons — that is, we count them as knowers or observers — because we place them there in the sense of training them to be at home there. Once they have been trained, they really do belong there, in the way that citizens belong. They have acquired human second nature. And McDowell is clear that this is a change in the nature of the trained individuals; they are intrinsically different. It is not that adults find it convenient, after a time, to describe children as if they were rational agents; they really are. As a result of social processes, individual properties and capacities have changed.

The truth about an individual can always come apart from what others are inclined to say about her. So there must be some sense to be made of the idea of an individual's being mistaken for a rational agent, or of a rational agent being mistaken for an individual who lacked that status. I want to consider the first kind of mistaking, and to suggest that only a narrowly circumscribed kind of mistake is possible here. In thinking about mistaking an individual for a rational agent, we have to be careful not to fall into a conception of such mistakes that will make the problem of other minds seem both genuine and intractable.

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25 Thus, even here where I'm claiming there is a real sense in which everything is 'up to us,' we have to be careful. These points about what is in our control are about what a rational agent could or should do, or make use of — not about what at any given moment the human community happens to notice. (That would restrict the space of reasons to the realm of content-actually-entertained, rather than the thinkable.) Facts of which no one is aware, though they aren't currently being used in the reasons game, belong in the space of reasons.

A thought from Wittgenstein can help at this point. Wittgenstein asks whether it makes sense to accept that some individuals behave just as we do, and yet wonder whether they have souls. Wittgenstein suggests it doesn't by putting pressure on the idea that one could combine two attitudes: considering an individual to be wholly and genuinely participating in all the key areas of human life, while harboring serious skeptical doubts about whether she really has a mind.<sup>26</sup> In putting pressure on the combination, Wittgenstein does not deny that someone might only appear to be genuinely participating in some aspect of human life. Someone can appear, for example, to be speaking intelligently but in fact be merely parroting. And so one could doubt whether someone is really speaking. The difference between this type of doubt and the doubt that stems from the illegitimate combination is important but subtle.

The difference is rooted in Wittgenstein's insight that mindedness is fundamentally expressible. (This insight can be misconstrued as the endorsement of verificationism.) In a context where there is a localized reason to worry about the genuineness of someone's performance, such worries are not symptoms of philosophical confusion. But a worry that won't be assuaged by any localized reassurance, or that extends to include the worry that genuine performance wasn't expressive of mindedness, is such a symptom. The problem with the worry that some individual whose normalcy was evident (by ordinary standards) might really be (say) a zombie rather than a rational agent is not that we might never find out whether she was or wasn't. Rather, the problem is that we wouldn't really be worrying about whether this individual was *minded*, if we were supposing it possible to so worry in the presence of everything — meaningful speech, subtle behavior — we take to be expressive of mind.

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26 Wittgenstein develops a complicated thought experiment in which one group of people enslaves another, and puts out propaganda to the effect that the enslaved individuals 'have no souls; so they can be used for any arbitrary purpose' (*Zettel*, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, eds.; G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press 1970, § 528)). The experiment is explicitly developed in *Zettel* §§ 528-30 and *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. I* (G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, eds.; G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980, §§ 96-7, 101)). Wittgenstein is not here directly engaging with and refuting other-minds skepticism. The only way, after all, to indicate what is philosophically odd (as opposed to morally wrong) with the slaveholders' attitudes is to include modifiers like 'genuine' in the descriptions of the behaviors they attribute to the individuals they've enslaved. The skeptic will obviously find that question-begging. Wittgenstein was, rather, forcing us to reflect on what we understand by the idea of some action being genuinely the type of action it is.

If we follow this model, in addressing our question about placing, we could say: someone who is playing the reasons game with her fellows, who is sharing in the life of rational agents with her fellows, is correctly placed in the space of reasons as at home there. And 'placing' here can have a sense that is closer to description: the truth is told about her when she is so placed. And furthermore, we can say that she possesses all the capacities required for being at home in that space. But someone might only appear to be playing the game, and it is not incoherent to wonder about that. Nor is it incoherent, in connection with this, to wonder whether she really possesses all the capacities required for playing the game. The reverse order is also coherent: we might have some reason to wonder whether someone really did have all the relevant capacities, and so wonder whether she were really playing the game. Of course, in any actual case, the seeds of both sort of questioning would likely arise at the same time.

There are at least two ways in which questions about capacities can be imagined to arise. We might be dealing with an individual whose behavior was quite sophisticated, such that we attribute to her capacities on which we expect her to be able to draw in certain types of situations. For example, we might expect her to be able to appreciate that only she, from her location in varied terrain, was in a position to see that a barn was on fire, so that anyone else would need to be informed of this fact by her. But after one or more occasions on which she doesn't perform as expected, we might wonder whether she was (for example) aware that her own point of view on the environment is one among others.

If, on the other hand, we were dealing with someone whose behavior was much less sophisticated, we might not yet have formed even tacit expectations for her behavior in situations that adults respond to with moves in the reasons game. Nevertheless, especially if the individual in question were very young, we might be looking (tacitly or not) for certain first-nature capacities that are connected to the possible success of initiation into the space of reasons — capacities like an awareness of object permanence, or the ability to track the gaze of another.<sup>27</sup> If we don't find evidence of them, we might wonder whether the individual was capable of being initiated into the space of reasons at all; or, less broadly, we might wonder whether the apparently successful progress made towards initiation had in fact been genuine.

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27 These really are first-nature capacities — some animals have them, and human infants have them long before even rudimentary linguistic competence. But we pick them out as interesting because of our knowledge of where we expect humans to end up — with a fully developed second nature — and we are looking for the conditions that will (causally) enable that to be brought about.

These are questions one can imagine arising even for someone who had been interacting with an individual for some time. Some new situational element provokes questions about capacity-possession (compare the way questions about hearing impairment could be provoked by a child's failure to cry the first time she is exposed to a siren). But general questions that start with worries about the apparent genuineness of performance are, I think, easier to imagine arising when the individual whose performance will be questioned is unfamiliar to the questioner.<sup>28</sup> For example, suppose you enter a family context, and something strikes you as odd about the behavior of one member of the family. Conceivably, depending on how others interact with this person, you might wonder if they overestimate the reciprocity of their interactions with her. That is, they more or less seem to assume they have successfully initiated this member of their family into the space of reasons (not that they will put it that way). But you, unfamiliar with and therefore attentive to all the myriad ways in which they accommodate her, might wonder how successful initiation has been. You might wonder, for example, whether her speech might not be in fact mere parroting, skillfully responded to by others in ways that (while this needn't be their intention) confer the appearance of expressive speech. And finally you could wonder whether this individual does in fact have the Strawsonian capacities that initiation would have conferred, had it been successful.

All these questions are compatible with a proper understanding of second nature and socialization. But what sort of answers to them are equally compatible? What, if anything, can we say from within philosophy of mind about the situation of individuals whose initiation into the space of reasons, whose acquisition of second nature, is never complete?<sup>29</sup> I'm taking it that 'She isn't really at home in the space of reasons,' is an acceptable answer. The question couldn't have the sense I've represented it as having, if it didn't allow for any sort of negative

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28 There is the phenomenon of noticing someone as if for the first time, or of feeling oneself observing her as if one were an outsider rather than an intimate. It isn't that intimates can't raise these questions about one another — only that these questions don't fit well into ordinary committed interaction with others, so that seriously entertaining them seems to require either that one not be intimate with the individual concerned, or that one temporarily abstract from that intimacy. See the discussion of 'sharing a life' below.

29 It must be emphasized that the following discussion is firmly within the philosophy of mind. In particular, nothing I myself say, or claim McDowell must say, about such individuals should be taken (absent further argument) as a claim about their moral status, or as an attempt to limit the scope of moral obligations owed to them.

answer at all. I want to explore whether any more detailed answers are acceptable.

Before proceeding, I need to clarify my position in asking these questions. I have argued that in order to show that not all ways of granting autonomy to rationality and meaning involve rampant platonism, McDowell doesn't need to say anything about the actual stages of development through which an individual passes in coming to maturity. With respect to rampant platonism, nothing internal to McDowell's project requires him to say more. But the question of how the distinctive shape of human life and human social space fit with citizenship in the space of reasons is not external to McDowell's project. And thinking about individuals whose maturation and training remains stuck at some level below the achievement of citizenship is a way of focusing on this question. There is a simple reason for this: when we talk about normal immature individuals, we can talk about their status and situation with reference to the citizenship they will eventually obtain. We can talk about them with counterfactuals and in the future tense. But this won't seem appropriate for individuals who won't complete normal maturation.<sup>30</sup> Thinking about what we want to say about them helps bring the relation between human life and the space of reasons into clearer focus.

#### IV

So what determinate account can be given, from within philosophy of mind, of how it is with individuals who never reach maturity? If we still want to apply McDowell's account to normal mature humans, we can't adopt a 'highest common factor' view of perceptual experience, not even for not-fully-socialized individuals. McDowell rejects the idea that our sensory receptivity is just like that of animals, but with rationality tacked on top.<sup>31</sup> He can't, therefore, deal with the awareness of

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30 The difference isn't total. We can try to talk about all non-citizens in terms appropriate for trainees, by increasing the number of counterfactuals involved. (Instead of just referring to 'the situation she would have been in had she finished her training' we must add 'and had she been the sort of individual able to benefit from training.') Some of the questions I raise could have been raised by reflecting on the position of normal trainees. But some of my questions are begged by the assumption that the model of the trainer-trainee relationship can be stretched to cover all cases.

31 McDowell rejects 'highest common factor' views while discussing Gareth Evans's desire for an account of human perception that will have some sort of continuity with accounts of animal perception (64).

the not-fully-socialized by saying that they have what animals have (with perhaps a bit of rationality added on). More generally, in talking about individuals ‘stuck’ at *intermediate* stages, we don’t want to suggest that they possess what figure in other theories as epistemic *intermediaries* between states of the world and rational states of mind — such as sense-data, for example. To be some specific distance short of full citizenship in the space of reasons is not the same as being a paid-up participant in some alternative epistemological theory. I think there is a temptation to assume otherwise, when we are talking about individuals who, while not obviously unfit for full citizenship in the space of reasons, nevertheless won’t ever possess it, despite moving some distance towards it. (By *obviously* unfit I mean, for example, an adult’s or child’s being in a coma, or a child’s lacking so many relevant first-nature capacities that no one would ever have expected her to respond normally to socialization, nor would anyone have attempted explicit initiation.) Let me explain.

In holding to his view of human experience, McDowell avoids having to say obviously insane things about animals — such as that they see only blurs of color, or don’t feel pain — in part by keeping separate the stories about animal and mature human perceptual sensitivity. Animal perceptual sensitivity is responsiveness to environmental problems and opportunities; human (second nature) perceptual sensitivity is reason-giving experience of the world. These are two different sagas, not one overlapping narrative. (That there can be overlap in accounts given from within disciplines other than philosophy of mind is beside the point, so long as McDowell construes the first-nature elements we share with non-rational animals as a proper part of the conditions that causally enable our development of second nature.)

By ‘overlapping narrative’ I mean a type of account of which the highest-common-factor approach is one (bad) version. This type of account compares two types of individuals and notes that one is capable of more than the other. It then asserts that in some conditions, individuals of the more capable type can perform in ways appropriately captured by an account applicable to individuals of the less capable type. When individuals of the two types share aspects of their lives together, an overlapping-narrative account of the behaviors and underlying capacities relevant to the shared aspects can seem compelling.<sup>32</sup>

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32 Some humans will surely insist that they share lives with non-human animals in just this way. I’m here developing the notion of a ‘shared life’ in a way that has immediate and straight-forward application only to human individuals. (See note 48 below for a complication.)

Consider intentional ascription. McDowell makes room for three types. The first involves merely 'as if' intentionality, and can be applied to thermometers as well as proper parts of complex organisms.<sup>33</sup> The second involves genuine intentionality, but the ascriptions are not transparent: they do not capture what the object of the ascribed intentional state is *for* the one to whom it is ascribed. Genuine but non-transparent intentional ascriptions figure in accounts of animal life, and involve genuine intentionality because animals live environmentally oriented purposeful lives.<sup>34</sup> Transparent intentional ascriptions capture what content is for an individual, in a way that directly supports attributed intentional states being understood as reasons *for which* an individual believes or acts (and not as simply reasons *why* she does).<sup>35</sup> Transparent intentional ascriptions (of e.g. experiential content) are only appropriate for individuals who can have reasons for which they act — individuals who are at home in the space of reasons and possess all the Strawsonian capacities.

This means that the only story McDowell can tell about the perceptual sensitivity of human individuals who never achieve normal maturity will be the story he tells about animals.<sup>36</sup> If someone cannot be a citizen of the space of reasons, in the sense that requires possession of Strawsonian capacities, she cannot be ascribed experience. Just as with

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33 See the discussion of Dennett in 'On the Content of Perceptual Experience.'

34 This is my statement of what I take to be McDowell's view. I should point out that while I don't think it is incompatible with anything stated in *Mind and World*, I'm not sure this is completely clear from the text of *Mind and World* itself. If only as a matter of tone, that text sometimes suggests to me that only transparent ascriptions of intentionality (of the kind paradigmatically appropriate to rational individuals) are genuine. But work after *Mind and World* makes clear that is not so. In particular, McDowell's account of animal perceptual sensitivity is self-standing. It is not the result of loosely applying to animals (because we find it useful or charitable to do so) the account he wants to give of us (see 'Knowledge and the Internal Revisited,' 104).

35 McDowell emphasizes that 'non-demanding,' i.e. non-transparent, content-attributions can only support discussions of reasons why ('Reply to Commentators,' 417).

36 The story he tells about animals depends on their living species-specific purposeful lives. (A particularly clear statement comes in 'Knowledge and the Internal Revisited', where McDowell explains that we can attribute genuine awareness, rather than mere reliable responsive discriminatory dispositions, to an animal when we have in view a purposive life appropriate to that of kind animal [103-4]). And some human individuals will be so impaired that they won't meet this condition. But those individuals would not, I think, even have begun the process of *Bildung*, and so are not the individuals I mean to be thinking about.

animals, however, this doesn't mean that the intentional awareness we do ascribe to her is only 'as if', only instrumentally useful to us while in no serious way true of her. But the intentional ascriptions in question will not be capturing intentional content as it is *for* her; her mind is not rendered transparent in these descriptions. There can't really be a resonance between any attribution we make to her and any of the self-attributions we make to ourselves, and which sometimes fully express our mental states.

To some extent, this puts pressure on the very idea that we are attributing mindedness to her. McDowell suggested that a creature that cannot freely make up its mind doesn't have a mind at all, in the sense relevant to transcendental questions about the very possibility of representational content.<sup>37</sup> The concept of mind — or, at least, this concept of mind — is paradigmatically applied to creatures possessed of rational freedom; some extended applications of the concept are compelling, and some are not. The human individuals whose *Bildung* is never complete do behave in ways that warrant intentional ascriptions to them — even ascriptions that, were they made of a normal mature adult, would involve (transparent) ascriptions of judgment. (As in, 'She believes her brother has left the room,' 'She wants to tell her mother he's gone out,' and so on.)

When normal mature humans share a life with such individuals — as in a family — there is pressure for the mature individuals to construe these ascriptions transparently.<sup>38</sup> That is, there is pressure to take the ascriptions to capture transparently how things are for the individual in question, and to be obviously equivalent to ascriptions made to other family members in the same context — equivalent to those ascriptions that can be self-ascribed, or used expressively. Another way of putting this is that non-impaired individuals will surely feel as if they are sharing a view of the world with their impaired relative — in, for example, enjoying her excitement at having 'tattled' on her brother. Getting a sibling in trouble is one of the distinctive pleasures of family life — being able to share in it requires more from an individual than does, say, sharing pleasure in eating the same dish. It requires the ability to resonate to distinctive features of human social space. (It also requires some of the abilities that ordinarily develop into Strawsonian capacities. Someone

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37 'Reply to Commentators,' 412

38 Again, not that they will put things that way. But they will sometimes think about their impaired family member in a way that we could capture, from the theoretical perspective, as their wanting to apply that portion of the theory that (on McDowell's view) strictly applies only to ascriptions made to mature individuals.

who, for example, drags her mother into the room where her brother is up to no good is displaying an awareness of what-can-be-viewed-from-where. I'm simply stipulating, for the sake of the discussion, that her facility in this and other areas never rises to levels that would warrant taking her to be a full-fledged citizen of the space of reasons.)

When genuine intentional ascription is applied within the rich context provided by human relationships, the type of understanding these ascriptions provide is frequently going to *feel*, to the mature individuals making the ascriptions, like the type of understanding that the metaphor of 'fusion of horizons' picks out. McDowell appeals to this image in explaining what happens when we begin to understand someone whom we had previously found opaque: we come to 'share with her a standpoint...from which we can join her in directing a shared attention at the world.'<sup>39</sup> But if McDowell is right about experience and paradigmatic mindedness, then that type of understanding is only possible between individuals both of whom are citizens of the space of reasons. Only they have the type of transparently expressible mindedness that makes the metaphor more than phenomenologically appropriate to our emotional lives.

Of course, there will also be times when the use of the metaphor won't even feel emotionally compelling to the non-impaired individual. Such occasions will have only some similarities with the experience of finding another individual opaque when that individual is in fact a citizen of the space of reasons. Any experience of initial opacity involves the possibility that the individual confronting one is not really a thinking subject. But experiences of opacity with an impaired intimate involve the awareness that however much one might wish it otherwise, and might sometimes be able oneself to compensate for this fact, the problem is with her. The non-understanding for which opacity is a metaphor has its source in her limitations. There is no hope that the source of the problem is a previously undetected limitation in one's own sense of the rational possibilities.<sup>40</sup>

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39 McDowell's complete gloss on Gadamer's image makes very clear that 'fusion' only happens when both parties are citizens of the space of reasons, because only citizens have genuinely conceptual capacities: 'we are not filling in blanks in a pre-existing sideways-on picture of how her thought bears on the world, but coming to share with her a standpoint *within* a system of concepts, a standpoint from which we can join her in directing a shared attention at the world, without needing to break out through a boundary that encloses the system of concepts' (35-6; italics original).

40 McDowell discusses the occasional need to expand one's sense of rational possibility in his discussion of the relation between tradition and innovation (186-7).

McDowell can't afford to say anything about impaired individuals other than what he says about animals (though some adjustment might be necessary, as the 'environment' to which these individuals are sensitive includes distinctly human problems and opportunities). He can't admit another kind of genuine intentional ascription, or let his two accounts of perception (animal-environmental and human-worldly) mesh. For McDowell, the philosophical story about the cognitive and perceptual lives of such individuals is the one we tell about animals. The reality of life with them will push those who care for them to talk in ways that look like the ways we talk about citizens of the space of reasons — but that talk isn't supported by legitimate attributions of Strawsonian capacities to these individuals. (This seems appropriately to capture something about the difficult situation of these individuals: they reside permanently at, live a whole life in, what is normally only a temporary dwelling.)

It seems clear that individuals with this type of impairment are in human social space. They have genuinely human relationships. I would suggest that simply living a human life with someone puts her *in* the space of reasons in some of the ways in which humans are in that space. She is a human node in a network whose distinctive intelligibility is not that of the realm of law. But this doesn't suffice for her being *at home in* the space of reasons, in the sense of full citizenship. The requirements for citizenship are essentially such that they can be met through socialization; and in the normal case, they are. But not every case is the normal case.

Is there any problem with asserting that genuinely human relationships, though holding within the space of reasons, can hold across a boundary separating individuals by their status — full citizen or not — in the space of reasons? Such an assertion might seem to be in tension with McDowell's claim that citizens of the space of reasons are intrinsically different from all individuals (human and non-human) who are not. But if we are clear about what calling something 'distinctively human' involves, any apparent tension can be resolved.

In setting up his appropriation of an Aristotelian notion of second nature (and of Wittgenstein's view of our natural history as infused with meaning), McDowell emphasizes the notion of *patterns in a way of living*. He explains that seeing rational freedom as our way of being animal

does not require that we blur the contrast between the space of reasons and the realm of law. 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)

In fact, the patterns are only perceptible via exercises of concepts appropriate to the space of reasons.<sup>41</sup> But human life is always already shaped by these patterns, and someone could be participating in that life to a significant extent even if she lacked the capacities that make full responsiveness to reason and meaning (and so to our pattern of life) possible. In fact, it would seem that socialization depends on individuals being capable of responding to patterns of distinctively human life before they possess the conceptual capacities necessary for perceiving them.

This specific point is connected to a general one: no learning, no development, whether including conceptual capacities or not, could go on unless those learning had some differential responses to aspects of the learning environment that their instructors could selectively reinforce or transform. Only because children (for example) express preferences for blocks of certain colors is it possible for them to acquire color vocabulary and eventually use it appropriately. In this case, the fact that the acquisition of conceptual capacities depends on a type of responsiveness that can precede their acquisition doesn't immediately seem troubling, because the responsiveness in question is directed at environmental features, colors, that are in no way created by those initiating the children into proper use of color vocabulary. (Even someone like McDowell, who holds that upon maturity all awareness of basic properties like colors is a thoroughly conceptual affair, can agree with this.<sup>42</sup>) But the features of human social space and human communal life to which I have said non-mature individuals must be responsive are at once the creation of mature humans, and features of the mature second nature at which human development aims. An individual's capacity to resonate to these features can, however, predate the maturity that (in others) makes them possible, if we distinguish between the production and consumption of features

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41 To reassure ourselves that our responsiveness to reasons is not supernatural, we should dwell on the thought that it is our lives that are shaped by spontaneity, patterned in ways that come into view only within an inquiry framed by what Davidson calls "the constitutive ideal of rationality" (78).

42 If we were talking about a very young child, McDowell would insist that our report of her as having a preference for red and yellow blocks over green ones is not a report in which mental content is transparently attributed to her. I should also note more generally that nothing in this discussion should be construed as giving aid and comfort to an abstractionist account of empirical concept formation.

of distinctively human life. Mature individuals not only resonate to these features, they self-consciously act so as to maintain or improve them. Increasing maturity involves an increasing balance between consumption and production. At the early stages of development, an individual is almost exclusively a consumer — but she is consuming aspects of human life a mature individual also consumes, though not as he does so.

Someone who, like McDowell, pictures the human community (and human traditions and languages) as standing over against individuals will find it easy to emphasize the way human social space always stands ready to receive new individuals. One enters the structure of that space simply by being born, in advance of anyone acting towards you, specifically. And I have drawn on the complexity and stability of this structure in order to find room for a distinction between being genuinely in this structure and being genuinely in it *by* being at home in it. But when the distinction between individual and community is foregrounded in this way, other distinctions can slide into the background. Individuals differ in their capacity for full community membership, and in the types of relationships they enter. I have suggested that the intimate relations found specifically (though by no means exclusively) in families give us reasons to want to count impaired individuals as inside distinctively human social space, and give us the materials to justify counting them as inside. Nothing in McDowell's view of sociality prohibits him from paying attention, when necessary, to these differences that are usually backgrounded for him.<sup>43</sup>

This is because the distinctiveness of citizenship in the space of reasons is not threatened by the admission that someone could resonate to features of human social space without being able to perceive them. Once someone is a citizen, all of her responses have conceptual structure. (The rationality of a citizen can be revealed in her most ordinary behaviors without it being the case that participating in any humble-but-human behaviors requires one to be a citizen.) Required-for-citizenship capacities are conferred (in the normal case) by socialization, but this does not entitle us to attribute them, or even some portion of them, to individuals in non-normal cases, no matter how deeply embedded in human social relationships they are. That would miscon-

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43 In another idiom: McDowell's *I-We* model of the social can embrace whatever is correct in the *I-Thou* model Brandom and Davidson prefer. McDowell differentiates his model from theirs in the concluding discussion of 'Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism,' in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnsfeldt, and Jens Kertscher, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2002).

strue the way our first nature allows ordinary socialization to suffice for achieving citizenship. This is true at the level of human first nature in general, but not every human individual has that first nature, undamaged.

The fact that required-for-citizenship capacities are socially conferred when they are conferred at all does entail that the relations in which incompletely socialized individuals are embedded are human. It also entails that they are participating in some patterns of distinctively human life (even if they couldn't recognize or sustain them on their own.) This suggests more generally that second nature includes much more than the full maturity at which its development aims.

McDowell wants to naturalize his platonism by linking rationality to human first nature by means of the notion of second nature. But he is also aiming to *domesticate* his platonism, by which I mean: to help us to recognize rationality and the normativity of meaning as *ours*.<sup>44</sup> This is not a reductionist project, as any recognition we achieve is only possible because we have already been socialized in a way partly constituted by the relevant norms. But it is supposed to make us relinquish the fear that all platonism is rampant platonism, and so abandon reductive projects that seek to construct rational normativity out of some other materials. The bare idea of second nature is enough to justify the claim that norms could be natural rather than supernatural, and so enough to justify the claim that some natural creatures could be responsive to norms. But it may not be enough for persuasive justification. McDowell's picture will be more persuasive if we can say in response to it not only, 'Yes, I see how that pattern of life could generate norms, and creatures re-

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44 The context is very different, but I started thinking of domestication as a necessary part of the project of *Mind and World* in part because I was struck by something McDowell writes in his Woodbridge Lectures, distinguishing his view from the kind of transcendental realism Rorty criticizes: 'objects come into view for us only in actualizations of conceptual capacities that are ours. To entitle ourselves to this, we must acknowledge whatever we need to acknowledge for the conceptual capacities to be *intelligibly ours*' (Lecture II, p. 470; emphasis mine). McDowell here seems especially sensitive to the kind of interlocutor who says, 'I think it must be the case that we respond to norms. But I do keep worrying that those norms, and our responsive capacities, must be spooky, not quite human. That's because when I try to represent myself explicitly as a responder-to-norms, the represented individual doesn't feel like *me*.' 'Domestication' seemed an apt word for what such an interlocutor needed for any platonism she could accept. (McDowell himself uses 'domesticate' at one point in *Mind and World*, but as a slightly pejorative synonym for 'naturalize': 'bald naturalism...aims to domesticate conceptual capacities within nature conceived as the realm of law...the idea is that if there is any truth in talk of spontaneity, it must be capturable in terms whose fundamental role lies in displaying the position of things in nature so conceived' [73].)

sponsible to and for them,' but also, 'Yes, I recognize here *my* pattern of life.' The way human life, and human social space, are depicted in efforts to show the naturalness of norms affects the persuasiveness of those efforts. And being persuasive is central to McDowell's substantive project, because he is explicitly concerned with the philosophical ideologies that put helpful self-depictions and self-understandings beyond our reach.<sup>45</sup>

The depictions of human life that emerge in the naturalizing project can seem a bit flat. Some of the flat feeling is due to McDowell using perceptual experience, and not some other aspect of mature human life, as his 'object lesson' in order to discuss how we have, and how we could better, picture ourselves (85).<sup>46</sup> To work out the perceptual object lesson, McDowell doesn't need to appeal explicitly to a very wide swath of the patterns in our way of living. That hardly means McDowell takes those bits of the pattern that are essential to his philosophical purpose to be especially important for other purposes as well. Nor does it mean he supposes them to be more absolutely valuable than other bits of the pattern. But the fear that McDowell's account of perceptual experience is too intellectualist, too bloodless, may get some of its power from just such a construal of McDowell's focus on the aspects of human life philosophically necessary to his account of perception.<sup>47</sup> Domesticating attention to detail, especially detail about

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45 Of course any philosopher wants to be persuasive as well as right. But when the topics one wants to be right about include the proper way for humans to conceive themselves, a concern with persuasive power is especially appropriate. In the Introduction written for the paperback edition of *Mind and World* (1996), McDowell clarifies his project by contrasting it with another one. McDowell's project is to root out the assumptions that make us fear the very existence of norms, and creatures responsive to them, is impossible. What McDowell calls 'engineering projects' assume first that norms, and creatures responsive to them, *are* possible, and then seek to explain how to produce such creatures. If someone insisted that an engineering project was an adequate response to the 'How possible?' worry, McDowell remarks that this would be like 'responding to Zeno by walking across a room' (xxi). McDowell wants a new ideology, a narrative we can tell ourselves about ourselves, when we feel re-gripped by the 'How possible?' question. We need commentary on the engineering, at least. Otherwise, however fabulous the engineered results, we'll find it impossible to believe they are indeed normatively laden.

46 I do not mean to imply that McDowell didn't have good reasons for selecting perceptual experience as his object lesson.

47 See, for example, the concerns expressed by John Haldane in 'Rational and Other Animals,' *Verstehen and Humane Understanding*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement (41), Anthony O'Hear, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996).

portions of our lives whose value and persistence doesn't require full maturity from all participants, can help. These details help the picture of social life on which McDowell draws feel appropriate to us. They help us recognize the patterns he appeals to as ours, as patterns we value for many reasons other than their capacity to render reason natural.

Domesticating appeals to 'the human' (in the broadest sense) will need to distinguish between those aspects of human life that depend on citizenship in the space of reasons (for them to exist at all, or for individuals to share in them), and those that do not. Domestication is supposed to make naturalizing more persuasive, not make reduction newly appealing. Domestication will slide into reduction if rationality is thought to be primarily grounded in those aspects of human life which can persist and even sometimes flourish at some distance from those capacities that only full human development confers. The aspects of human life domestication emphasizes are important in the order of persuasion, not foundations for a baldly naturalistic, constructive account of reason. Human life, and the distinctive patterns of human social space, exist only if there are citizens of the space of reasons. But we may — and should, to be fully persuasive natural platonists — affirm that the patterns are strong enough to pull into that meaningful space even those individuals who are not citizens but only permanent resident aliens.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

Language-emphasizing approaches to thought or experience are sometimes criticized for leaving out too much — too much of the phenomenological richness of experience, or too much of the variety of mental activity. They are also criticized for leaving out too many individuals — for denying to human infants and some non-human animals capacities (for experience, or for mental representation) we tacitly take

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48 To be entitled to this, I need to bite a bullet. I have claimed that distinctively human patterns of life require citizens of the space of reasons to produce and maintain them. But I have also attributed real power to those up-and-running patterns, not only to the individuals who are, through their citizenship, able to maintain them. That means that *any* individual, whether biologically human or not, who counts as living a human life with citizens of the space of reasons counts as being in the space of reasons, despite not being at home in it. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to address the conceptual and empirical issues implicated in the questions 'When, if ever, does a member of a species other than *Homo sapiens* count as living a human communal life?' and 'How would we tell?'

them to have. Some of these criticisms pull in different directions. Only someone who found the causal accounts of sensory episodes provided by Brandom and Davidson inadequate, and was therefore attracted to McDowell's account of experience as conceptually structured, would worry specifically about the experience of the individuals with whom I've been concerned.

But considering the position of impaired humans suggests a need for caution about appeals to language and social structure in accounts of mindedness, a caution applicable even to those who reject McDowell's account of experience. The intentionality of language may be a good model for intentionality in general, and the structure of linguistically expressed judgments may be a good model for the structure of all objective content. And in theorizing about language in a way that will let it serve as a model, we certainly ought to attend to social space and human society. But there are significant, distinctively human features of our lives that are not needed to account for our ability to have intentionally contentful beliefs. One could get any of Brandom, Davidson, or McDowell's projects up and running without ever referring to many aspects of our lives, some of which have great moral, emotional, or aesthetic significance. But this commonplace observation about the richness and diversity of our lives is also a caution about the methodology of language-emphasizing accounts. What matters is that the proper account of (for example) experience or thought-attribution is achieved. (What counts as proper will vary from theory to theory.) Emphasizing language, or the social character of our initiation into responsiveness to reasons, helps make those achievements possible. They are not the achievements themselves.

If certain ways of attending to language, or our social nature, seem problematic, it may be possible to modify them without loss. The argument of this paper was that McDowell could afford to classify certain relations and activities as distinctively human, because doing so didn't compromise his use of the distinctively human to naturalize our rational capacities. In fact, paying attention to those kinds of relations and activities helps ensure that the patterns of life that support normativity will be recognized by us as ours. Sometimes getting clearer about the motivation behind a restriction enables us to construe the restriction a little less restrictively.<sup>49</sup> Language-emphasizing approaches to meaning and mindedness would be more persuasive if they were more

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49 To take another example, I think Davidson could afford to talk about propositional content in a way he forbade himself without compromising his main commitments (see my 'Davidson's Fear of the Subjective,' *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 44 [2006]: 509-32).

willing to pay close theoretical attention to the less-than-fully-linguistic moments in human lives.<sup>50</sup>

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