Amendments to the Theory of Recognition

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Abstract

Since a long time, with several peaks determining history, recognition and the essential capabilities of the human mind were linked to the assumption and resulting dichotomy, that the performances of sensation were pure or self-effective, whereas those of the intellect provide the counter-side on a similar condition related to a proper and contrary source. The dichotomy has seen a revival in connection with the writings of McDowell and several recipients and the question for non-cognitional against cognitional content. It is also more or less closely related to the philosophy of the mature, critical Kant.

The proposal for amendment is following three aspects: (i) the definite separation of the faculties against their performances, (ii) the issue of adhibition of one faculty upon the other according to Kant. Instead of the rational one-way application (in connection with the categories), the solution depends from the convertibility of the faculty relation, i.e. sensation is also able to determinate the mind; (iii) the relation of sensation against the intellect is seen as real differentiation or the outcome of a polar relationship which, by reason of necessary limitation, contains some narrowing to the position of McDowell. Finally, convertibility of the determining faculty relation is demonstrated by a sample, where the classificatory power of sensation is shown.

Key words:

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C'est l'expérience pure qui nous avertit, avant toute réflexion, que les objets se répartissent en certains groupes, qu'ils ont certaines qualités; c'est la conscience qui nous donne la valeur immédiate des objets; il y a 'des valeurs empiriques de la vie non réfléchie.'

Au contraire, la vérité est l'œuvre de la pensée réfléchie, laquelle n'intervient, comme on sait, que lorsque le système des valeurs est troublé. A ce niveau, ce n'est plus la nature même du monde qui nous dicte notre conduite : c'est la pensée réfléchie (John Dewey, referred by Emile Durkheim).

Pure existence as the differential limit against reflected thought is not a transcendental claim. Depending from differentiation, it is also not completely within pragmatism who took pure experience as a parallel and real access condition. Otherwise, pure intuition belongs cardinally to the philosophy of Kant. In first rank, it means imagination capable of being related to mathematical thought and geometrical as well as empirical sensation. So the issue is divisive because consciousness and recognition appear on a counter-stride of sources as their correct level of foundation. In addition, it makes no wonder that the philosophy of Kant is well suited to incorporate novel branches of interpretation. This seems a significant evidence, at least latently, that contemporary philosophy – on the whole – is still settling on a field, a margin and mountain-like area as well, which Kant has delineated and bequeathed. Where mountains, in particular extraordinary heights are waiting, there might be encountered an abyss, and the visitor required for its contemplation which is depending from the point of view, so far the consequential against the principal issue, will at once point to the metaphysical obligation: The non-accessibility of the real, the so-called ›thing in itself‹, and its proper composition and constitution.

This other problem, the abyss or 'hiaus' as Fichte has called it in his later self-interpretation of the Wissenschaftslehre), is fueling skepticism on a so to speak second level of mind, to the extent that Kant himself with his critical attitude has founded the first level concerning the natural, inherited means of human reason. It still motivates a couple of novel theories and solutions in the more or less background, whereby it is not necessary that the theory concerned

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announces itself as being an interpretation of Kant. They are tackling with a problem, properly the reconciliation of sensation with the mind, which is worth to be acknowledged as the core issue of Modern Age philosophy and the entire endeavor of science. The differential problem is also closely related to the introductory consequential issue, the metaphysical obligation, because normally, by standard, the senses are responsible for the accountability of reality, whereas the mind is responsible for the counter-part, the so-called space of reasons. (Sellars vs. McDowell). This term has become rather famous in connection with a theory segmentation, fragmentation and finally splitting that has been termed the opposition between non-conceptual and conceptual [re]cognition. Without any acknowledgement that this opposition might belong to the polar one, several authors from John McDowell, who is the main target and leading figure, against Robert Hanna, Lucy Allais to Jessica Williams take position for or against the possibility to conceive the world in terms of intuition, i.e. without the assistance or salient influence of concepts, in particular the categories. The target, conceptualism, is also the medium of recent interpretation against skepticism and coherentism. This makes no wonder because both share the issue of reliability of perception as the most comfortable source of true beliefs, otherwise of coming to terms with the intricate problem of reconciling the transition from sensation to the mind. McDowell himself has succinctly founded his position on not only the precincts, but a core area of critical philosophy, the relationship of concepts (Begriffe) against intuition (Anschauung). So one has good reason to test and/or rest with this standpoint because, according to one’s perspective, it predeterminates or overshadows the others.

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Sensation is already concept-laden. This is the orientation McDowell is pursuing and there can be no doubt that his eclectic methodical reasoning is responsible for a large amount of critical reception. Settling mainly with Kant, one can also find a primordial introduction of Wittgenstein and an explanation

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1 According to the true or Aristotelean tradition, thus as independent primordial relation within negation, not in the sense of dual causation or simple disjunction; but in the sense of reciprocal concepts with a common sphere (see fn 20).
4 McDowell 1994, 41-45.
of his standpoint according to Hegel. Because one cannot understand these affiliations without a clear description of his main approach and target, this shall have the first place. This description has two parts – one concerns the terminology, the other the arguments. There is also a region in-between which provides the main orientation his dispute incorporates. The terms one should have a close look at are ‘spontaneity’, ‘receptivity’, ‘thought’, ‘intuition’, ‘sensation’ and ‘experience’. There is a second group stemming from contemporary philosophy (in particular Sellars) like the ‘space of reasons’, the ‘space of concepts’, ‘conceptual content’ which implies a direct negative, the ‘non-conceptual content’, and finally and in particular ‘the Myth of the Given’. From the historical background, and even if McDowell exploits this concept against a branch of philosophy which is trying to get rid of any reliance on reality, i.e. Davidson’s theory of coherentism, this ‘Myth of the Given’ which has to signify the utmost problem since critical philosophy of Kant, the non-accessibility of reality by means of human ratio, remains somewhat vague, even dummy-like. Overall, one should not forget that already Kant was well aware of the problem, when talking of the given object, an empirical object or a given intuition, and there has been a lot of divergent reception afterwards concerning the accessibility, reliability and even acuteness of the transcendent realm (where also natural science and mathematics, Helmholtz or Weyl, should be reflected).

Now, before coming to grips with the terms and the arguments, it seems helpful to cite samples from the mentioned inter-region. These are: (i) ‘judgments of experience grounded in a way that relates them to a reality external to thought’ (5) or ‘the bearing of empirical judgments on reality’ (5); (ii) ‘the external constraint on our freedom to deploy our empirical concepts’ (6); (iii) ‘empirical substance infused into concepts’ (7); (iv) ‘impingements by’ or ‘impacts of the world on our sensibility’ (10-11) both near to ‘impingements on spontaneity by the so-called conceptual deliverances of sensibility’ (13); finally there is (v) the interpolation of ‘rational constraint’ against ‘only causal influence from outside’ (14, 17) and one should include the ‘fear [that thinking is getting] out of touch with the world outside us’ (17).\(^1\)

Beginning with this last strand of concepts it should be evident that McDowell is looking for a position that enables the philosopher and anyone else with a concise reliance upon his experience, otherwise a position which does not evaluate as realism. In several writings McDowell has followed the lines of empiricism against the intrinsic impact of the philosophy of mind, where one should understand that, even if he sometimes indulges to a monistic Hegelianism, he is asserting the impact of reality on the mind or that any valuable theory concerning philosophy has to guarantee, within experience, the impact of reality on the ‘space of concepts’ or, to put it once more in his own terms, ‘to acknowledge an external constraint on the exercise of spontaneity in empirical thinking.’\(^2\) His following solution is not very comfortable because he

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\(^1\)Any cit. McDowell 1994.

\(^2\)McDowell 1994, 50-51
does not immediately subscribe to dualism, as Kant did, instead of teaching that (i) the ‘space of concepts’ is not smaller than the ‘space of reasons;’ and (ii) that the extension of this conceptual sphere is, in philosophical terms, non-negated or never negative: It reaches up to the very limitation of experience, where representations are formed, and accordingly he sees himself justified to conclude that sensation is always concept-laden, or ‘in experience one finds oneself saddled with content.’ This solution is in accordance with his later paper ‘The Logical Form of an Intuition,’ where he holds that, against the possibility of ‘sheer sensation’ (which Sellars demands according to the sources of Kant), there must be a peculiar ‘togetherness’ of the conceptual capabilities within an ostensive act of judgment; and ‘an ostensive seeing[1] that there is a red cube in front of one would be an actualization of the same conceptual capacities that would be exercised in judging that there is a red cube in front of one, with the same togetherness.’ This togetherness has to be kept in mind for the amendment because it also stressed as a ‘counterpart to the logical togetherness of the “red” and “cube” in the linguistic expression of the judgment. “There is a red cube in front of me”.[2] What has to be separated from this issue of logical togetherness of sensual versus conceptual capabilities, is the question for sheer sensation, which even on the limit(ing value) McDowell denies. Nevertheless, these ‘same’ [capabilities] are still the main problem to the extent that circularity has to be avoided. So far, the togetherness seems only an analogical clue on descriptive grounds[4] or a simple reminder of Kant’s formulation in the transcendental analytics (from which would follow that this sameness is the result of categorical impact or the impact of the pure categories).[5] Finally, one should also keep in mind that the limitation is not properly expressed as a token of differentiation, even more polarity which otherwise, and especially in accordance with the ‘togetherness’, seems very fit to capture the opposition of parallel capabilities, in particular when they are exhibited in a context of overt focalization (ostension): it would remain the question of negation, according to its real source and the stemma of objectivization.

3

After this first explanation one may address to the terminology. His manner of writing is such that he normally does not cite the historical issues, especially concerning Kant. In order to be able to follow his argumentation,

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1McDowell 1994, 10
2McDowell 2009, 30-31 (emphasized here)
3McDowell 2009, 30
4Once more in the following repeated passage: “This seeing that ..., in describing what we explicitly place an expression for the concept in question in a predicative position, is the very same conceptual occurrence – an actualization of the same conceptual capacities with the same ‘logical’ togetherness – as the intuition.” (2009, 34).
5Per exception, McDowell 2009, 30, and see below.
one therefore has to contrive or immediately subscribe to the meaning of terms he provides in the context of the mature, critical Kant. Of the highest importance are his use of spontaneity and receptivity. As should have become clear, he does not define them. Spontaneity, however, serves as the main instance of rationality, to the extent that it represents the faculty of a human being to deploy its conceptual capabilities. It is the pivotal axis where consciousness is able to make a classified and contrary decision to either follow its perceptions and non-reflected thoughts or to deploy its conceptual means: The first means a prevailing receptivity, the second a spontaneous consciousness which, largely, is on the lines of Kant and tradition. Nevertheless, McDowell throughout avoids any formulation or conception, where concepts or conceptual means are properly *applied* on perceptions and sensual deliveries: this should be the first instance to look for amendment, not only by reason of the historical background, where perception and apperception, according to Kant, include the adhibition of pure and/or empirical concepts as instances of the faculty of mind to sensation, but also due to the possibility that differentiation between faculties is as real and therefore theoretically required as the mentioned ‘interpolation of the rational constraint.’

According to this pivotal axis or ‘faculty of spontaneity,’ McDowell’s ubiquitous composite term, one has to presuppose that a human being, especially when being erudite or well-suited to engage this faculty, is able (i) to achieve the very limit of consciousness where concepts are necessary in order to register any experience; (ii) is without proper constraint (or limitation) free to do this, that is it is spontaneity in particular, which guarantees that the consciousness has always the specific power to insert and activate its conceptual capabilities. Concerning the amendment in the next part, one should re-assure that both sensation and the intellect are genuine faculties, but that McDowell constantly also calls spontaneity a faculty. Because this has another ranking against the other faculties or capabilities, the whole matter should be transferred to logic, whereby McDowell does not investigate (i) into transcendental against formal logic, (ii) the commitment of imagination or *Einbildungskraft* in connection with consciousness forming schemes or schematic content, and in particular not (iii) into the constant use or impact of the categories (in ‘The logical Form of Inuition’ he calls them a difficult matter, at least something that must be separable from the main issue how to deal with immediate perception and if this bears a conceptual impact or not).\(^1\)

Even if one might hold that they are either obsolete due to historical development, especially in analytical philosophy and logic since Frege, or not exempt from internal/external fusion, hence finite ambiguity concerning other concepts or the real stemma, this abstaining from proper investigation into the categories seems, on the whole, inconsistent. Taking into account his conviction that experience, even on the very limit of sensual input or interference, is bearing conceptual content, one should investigate into the

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\(^1\)McDowell 2009, 38
possibility – or, according to Kant, necessity – that this bearing has to do with categorical impact from the beginning, i.e. in each and every case. Or, to use Kant’s teaching, that pure concepts have to be applied to perceptions and sensual deliveries in order to become recognition.

Quite on the contrary, McDowell always concentrates, in discussion with and counterposition to his colleagues’ positions, on the realm of empirical concepts. No doubt, this will make the difference against the animals and other fictitious beings as these are not able to provide evidence for settling spontaneity as a so-called ‘faculty of conceptual understanding.’ Further, McDowell uses receptivity in parallel to sensation as the passive foundation of consciousness. His construction is such that experience as a passive power invokes sensations but that this passive power has already equalized and, due to a so to speak assigned or borrowed transcendental necessity, is steadily assimilating with conceptual capabilities. Even if he does not speak of a transcendental necessity, this is the reason why he does not acknowledge a margin or differentially external realm of mere sensations or pure emotions, comparable to the other axial direction according to which (like Sellars) he does not acknowledge a very realm of pure concepts.

4

Conclusion. Part 1. To come to a conclusion, the categorical issue is not the main difficulty his conception implies. The achievement of the utmost level and eventual limit of consciousness, where concepts might show their genuine stemma within a contrary broken, interrupted or continuous network of other concepts, is opposite to the other limit, which is his constant focus: the most concrete, the very sensual input where also language is challenged concerning its expressive powers. Nevertheless, several times the main issue is connected with logical problems. The first one is that his solution does not provide the means to have full insight into the orientation, the directional or proper perspectivity issue: Insofar one presupposes the passive power or the constraint from the external ground(s), he simply and permanently equates it with the conceptual impact. This, however, is representing the contrary orientation because it is driven and powered by the internal (re)source, the power or ‘faculty of spontaneity’. Hence to be fully rational or completely understandable, one should know how the contradiction, necessarily external versus necessarily internal, really is resolved. In any instance where a judgment like ‘this red cube in front of one’ is formed,¹ both directions must coincide, even fuse within a shared focus, which fusion has systematically to be set apart from any confusion. And overall it is therefore better to speak of a polar relationship and pursuant opposition instead of a contradiction, as also McDowell has constant access to differential language. Second, because he does not systematically distinguish any logical order between spontaneity, each

¹As mentioned, the principal token of paper II in McDowell 2009.
of the faculties, further their performances or renderings, i.e. conceptual items against items of sensation and/or perception, one should for a moment return to the conception of Kant. Contrary to McDowell, Kant always postulates that concepts are adhibited or applied to intuitions or phenomena belonging to the sensational realm.¹ Consequently, when isolating or properly differentiating spontaneity against receptivity, both as overruling determinations of human consciousness against their peculiar performances, one should reserve the overall possibility

\[ \text{that sensation or experience as the realm, where initial perceptions come into the mind, is determining the counterpart, the conceptual capabilities.} \]

Accordingly, determination goes on a par with spontaneity; however spontaneity is not restricted to solely be activated, i.e. engaged in connection with conceptual capabilities. Quite to the contrary, and complying with the fact that the relation between sensation and the intellect is due to a polar opposition, human consciousness is spontaneously distinctive when it feels or perceives something and applies its impact on the mind or conceptual capabilities in order (i) to select, (ii) to purify and inform or (iii) to simply find the correct concept (according to the token or base of memory); or, to term it otherwise, to determine the intellect by sensation.

This, of course, is also contrary to the decision Kant made. He only taught that by reason of subordination of intuition or phenomena under the mind via application of the categories a determinate recognition will follow.² But he did not fully investigate or otherwise require the immediate, converse counterdirection that sensual deliveries determine the mind so that consciousness in this case is following the other (polar) orientation. Concerning the logics of this approach, human consciousness, as regards recognition, is principally clear and, even more, distinct in its orientation. It is not forced to first acknowledge a necessary input from outside and to immediately fuse or equate it with the counterdirection, postulating that the same impact is equivalent with conceptual content or capabilities, respectively. Quite to the contrary, the ordering of the faculties has to be separated from any ordering of their performances, i.e. concepts, proper imaginations and sensations, so that determination has steadily two main fields of manifestation: their transcendental (or necessary) peripheries (or ‘sphere’ according to Logic, §12, where Kant teaches that ‘concepts belonging to the same sphere are called reciprocal concepts’ (Wechselbegriffe; conceptus reciproci):³ by reason of

¹P e. Critique of Pure Reason. In: AA IV, 100 ‘[…] endlich daß reine Begriffe a priori außer der Funktion des Verstandes in der reinen Kategorie noch formale Bedingungen der Sinnlichkeit (namentlich des inneren Sinnes) a priori enthalten müssen, welche die allgemeine Bedingung enthalten, unter der die Kategorie allein auf irgend einen Gegenstand angewandt werden kann.’
²P.e. within transcendental schematism, see: AA IV, 99-100.
ambiguity, it seems necessary to make the distinction with polarity, hence the common sphere may be the periphery of each, and of course it is not necessary to separate it from the possibility to join sensation and intellect. Presupposing the determinative impact, and when it is correct that the mind implies, or ‘subordinates’ according to Kant, intuition as a faculty, then it is equally correct that also intuition is able to imply – or subordinate – the conceptual capabilities before any of these capabilities within a concrete realization are instantiated: this should be the principal distinctive ordering of consciousness. Thus determination has a general settlement or seat within the faculties and their relations, and spontaneity on the highest level is not prevented to make the mind, uncrooked, subordinate to sensation, in particular in connection with any novel formation of unused concepts or in any instance of memory associated with proper re-cognition, a field which the most examples of McDowell exhibit.

**Part 2, Demonstration.** There are several further arguments which should not be overlooked, when it has become clear that human consciousness underlies convertibility concerning the determinative relationship between its faculties. From this relationship, however, the evaluation of recognition itself is depending.

1. Concerning the internal structure of consciousness, a structure which is often used synonymous with architecture even if both are different, any instance of primordial memory or otherwise projection into the future is distinct against any form of present attention. This fits well with modern psychology. The case, however, for philosophy is that the formation of consciousness by reason of ordering its faculties is as distinct as its several forms of performances like concepts and/or peculiar well-formed sensations and imaginations so that the, at the minimum, two-fold determination implied must be reckoned upon. The structure of consciousness, in first instance, must include convertibility of faculties and their succinct ordering.

2. The so called ‘Myth of the Given’ has a lot to do with projection. Any author mentioned, including Goodman who has traced a connection between inductive argumentation and projection, has exhibited the problem of visual recognition without proper investigation into the projective issue or perspectivity as an outcome of real projection. Notwithstanding, projection is the condition of visual perception, as audition relies upon the diffusion of the sound wave within reverberation. Therefore any problem of ostension and how it might explain recognitional impact on the mind has to be mapped onto this relation and explained within. It will follow that the distinct bifold orientation or directedness, grounded in the real versus grounded in consciousness, immediately is congruent with the projective relation; even more, both form a mutual implication, regularly to equate with equivalence. When any object has to be recognized, in first rank it should be acknowledged according to the law of projection, and its Euclidian shape or proper

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knowledge, and empirical intuition in general, must therefore necessarily interfere with the projective claim.

3. The ostensive issue in addition. In Modern Age on the whole and in particular during the last century the instrumentation of natural science, mechanics and architecture have developed up to unforeseen distinctivity and accurateness. This fact should have a proper reflex within philosophy regarding the capabilities of sensation, the imagination as well as sign creation and understanding. Instead of relying upon the ‘brute’ cases of (true/non-error) color recognition or simple deixis (ostension), which (i) should always be explained as instances of determination of the mind through sensation and, (ii) in both compliance and interference with the laws of projection, highly qualified sensual discrimination is required in order to judge or decide a theoretically well elaborated setting. Accordingly, the discriminative power of sensation has to be oriented towards cases of natural science and mechanics, where proper, succinct observation has to be fulfilled in order to decide if an empirical case is given or not. It should be clear that, by reason of avoiding circularity, in such circumstances observation has logically the upper hand: it must be the case that sensation determines the mind and is responsible for deciding the case.

4. The ‘illustrative’ issue: diagrams, schemes, illustration, drawing. This series describes another realm of evidence for the principal presupposition that sensation has the power to determinate the mind, and not only the reverse (in the conditional sense of Kant). It has developed in the last century, further in connection with IT to the utmost levels: apart of geometry within the whole historical realm, diagrams, drawings, circuits, figuration have seen an output of scrutiny and evolutive power that the conclusion should be that they immediately stand on a par with conceptual capabilities. The following example (figure 1) will also demonstrate what all the time has been implied, when presupposing that sensation as a faculty is capable of determining the mind:

Proper logical classification by imaginative and not (only) conceptual means is regularly possible and within the scope of the power human spontaneity implies; of course, it is also highly compatible with the assumption that the faculty relation, from which the first determination of one or the other depends, is convertible.

Exemplification. The diagram is the distinct illustration of a double flow and return circuit. In first instance, it should be interpreted in such a way that the human mind classifies the units by reason of sensation, implying constructive (productive) imagination: (i) the full line versus dotted line, (ii) the small double-inverted triangles versus the unique large one, (iii) the three rows of squares apportioned each forming a group or subset of the overall square set. Even if the function of the sign (diagram) is still not clear and distinct, it should very well be clear that recognition relying upon this first understanding is classifying the items according to their similarity, and this is
performed by reason of sensation in the antecedens having determinative power.

Second, the function has to be understood which relies upon a circuit. Thus one has to understand that each triangle signifies a valve, each square symbolizes a radiator, and finally the full line is the flow part, and the dotted line signifies the return part of the overall circuit. The permanent dot, of course, must signify the tubing joint, which is the same for any element. Now it is impossible that any of the items have the same logical order when the diagram has to be understood according to its function. However, this function is distinctly illustrated and drawn so that it must rely upon this recognitional input. Correspondingly, the classification above has to be subjected to a hierarchy representing the function. This hierarchy belongs to polarity, hence the large valve must represent the centre valve which controls the whole circuit. Each part of the valve represents a three-way flow possibility and the full line means forward direction versus dotted line necessarily the reverse. The overall symmetrical situation signifies that the powers are immediately balanced, and the classification is therefore subject to focalization or centrification. In conclusion, the overall ordering should be: (i) centre valve implies (⇒) the bifold circuit, which (ii) implies (⇒) the set of three equivalent classes of radiators. In summary, a centered hierarchy has to be set apart and logically above a non-polar classification (normal set), and the classification itself does imply (⇒) the ordering of elements according to groups or sets. Hence, what has to be shown, sensation implies and is capable of logical ordering, on the one part, and logical ordering implies the determination of the mind through sensation (distinctive imaginative illustration), on the other part.
Figure 1. Diagram of a Heating Circuit

Triangle = (i) three-way-valve(s),
(ii) large = centre valve.

Dotted line = return circuit.

Full line = advance circuit.

Apportioned square = radiator.

Source: Conception et dimensionnement des installations de chauffage central. Revision du Rapport CSTC No.1. In: CSTC-Contact 2012/4, 15