1. In this paper we are going to discuss John McDowell’s claim, made in his “Woodbridge Lectures,” that there is a deep structural feature within Wilfrid Sellars’ philosophical outlook that makes him incapable of correctly theorizing perceptual intentionality. The structural feature at issue concerns Sellars’ claim that a correct account of perceptual experience requires the postulation, on transcendental grounds, of non-conceptual sense-impressions. McDowell, in contrast, argues that a theory of perception need not ascribe to sensibility “the transcendental role that Sellars credits to it” (McDowell 1998: 457). In the “Woodbridge Lectures” McDowell does not argue for this thesis in a direct way, rather he tries to show that the transcendental role Sellars ascribes to sensation is not necessary for elaborating Sellars’ own theory of perceptual intentionality. Sellars can drop this theory of sensation—so McDowell thinks—because he already has the resources in Epistemology and the Philosophy of Mind to deliver a satisfying theory of perceptual experience that does not depend upon his theory of sensation. As McDowell puts it:

Much of the point of Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind is to explain a conception of experiences—not what Sellars calls ‘sense-impressions’—according to which they ‘contain claims’. I think this conception is very much like the one I propose in Mind and World. There I thought I had to defend the conception against Sellars, misreading him . . . but I try to set things straight in my Woodbridge Lectures. (Smith 2002: 279)

In the “Woodbridge Lectures” McDowell details this theory of perceptual experience through examining Sellars’ reading of Kant’s theory of receptivity. Here, Sellars comes to recognize that Kant’s theory of receptivity includes not only manifolds of non-conceptual sensations but also manifolds of conceptually saturated intuitions. While Sellars follows Kant in accepting the propriety of this distinction, i.e., takes it that both are necessary to fully account for the structure of perceptual experience, he criticizes Kant for not maintaining a distinction between these two strata of sensibility. By not maintaining the autonomy of non-conceptual sensation, Kant’s thinking falls prey to a dialectic that leads to Idealism.
McDowell, in contrast, thinks that Kant is right to vitiate the autonomy of sensation; that assimilating sensation to conceptually informed intuition is precisely what is needed for a satisfying theory of perceptual intentionality.

Positing a strata of non-conceptual sensation is problematic for two reasons: 1) sensation is explanatorily idle, i.e., that even on Sellars’ own terms intuition can do the explanatory work designated to sensation, and 2) sensation’s transcendental role stands in the way of a directly realistic theory of perception, a theory to which Sellars is himself committed. Unlike some recent work concerning McDowell’s engagement with Sellars, I shall focus mostly on the second claim. This second claim can be hard to make out because the “Woodbridge Lectures” don’t seem to have Sellars’ direct realism in its sights. However, in the second lecture, McDowell’s critique of Sellars, which takes the form of offering a different reading of Kant than Sellars’ own, is concerned with vindicating the notion that perceptual content is object dependent. And this, in turn, is part of a justification for a direct realism in which perceivers are directly ‘open to the layout of reality’. What we want to do in this paper is to supply, on McDowell’s behalf, an argument that Sellars’ theory of sensation undermines his ability to provide a directly realistic theory of perception and hence prevents him from correctly theorizing perceptual intentionality.

2. To introduce the issues at stake we shall in this section and the next examine McDowell’s engagement with Sellars in *Mind and World*. In this work, Sellars is the avatar of a philosophical position that no longer tolerates the myth of the given. However, it is claimed that Sellars’ position is ultimately unsatisfactory because he incorrectly theorizes the place of sensation within empirical experience. Let us briefly review Sellars’ theory. Sellars’ theory of sense-impressions is determined above all, McDowell claims, by its attempt to “distinguish impression from bits of the Given, and Sellars effects this by carefully refusing to attribute any
direct epistemological significance to impressions” (McDowell 1996: 141). For our purposes, the myth of the given is the myth that non-conceptual sensory episodes can play a role in the intentional order without antecedently being governed, or at least potentially governed, by the formal and material rules of inference that make up the space of reasons. In other words, while the content of an episode of the given is specified pre-conceptually—i.e., without reference to its place within a normative or inferential structure—it is still able to play an intentional role in the mental life of a person. This desideratum that the given play an intentional role in the mental life of a person is important insofar as Sellars recognizes that if we examine an intentional episode from a pre-personal point of view it will have non-intentional features. This refinement, in fact, is what allows Sellars to distinguish impressions from the given: While sensory episodes do not play a role in the mental life of a person (and so are not episodes of the given), they are from the pre-personal point of view necessary to secure perceptual intentionality. As Sellars puts it, “[t]he direct perception of physical objects is mediated by the occurrence of sense-impressions, which . . . are, in themselves, thoroughly non-cognitive. . . . Sense impressions do not mediate in virtue of being known” (Sellars 1991: 90-91). Perceiving agents have sensations without knowing that they are having them. By claiming that sense-impressions mediate our perception, yet are not apperceived by the perceiving agent, Sellars neutralizes the direct epistemic significance of sense-impressions and thereby avoids the myth of the given.

For Sellars, this neutralization has two complimentary functions. First, it allows him to claim that his theory of perception is a type of direct realism. For “[o]nce sensations and images have been purged of epistemic aboutness” (Sellars 1997: 64) the basis for saying that our perception of physical objects is an inference from an epistemically significant inner sensory item of which we are immediately aware is fatally undermined. While sensation provides perceptual experience with its intrinsic character, it is not through sensation that the perceptual
experience refers beyond itself to a physical object. As Sellars puts it, although Jones’ “perceptual experience’ is founded on, guided, and controlled by his sensations, there is nothing in the nature of aboutness or reference which requires us to say that his ‘experience’ is primarily about the sensations . . . His perception is ‘mediated by’ the sensations, but his perception is not about the sensations” (Sellars 1997: 14). In contrast, perceptual reference is achieved through the activation of concepts in a perceptual taking that while passive still stands within the space of reasons. Because this taking is not achieved through sensation and thereby not through an epistemic intermediary we can say that “physical objects are really and directly perceived, and that there is no more basic form of (visual) knowledge than seeing physical objects and seeing that they are, for example, red and triangular on this side” (Sellars 1991: 87).

Second, the epistemic neutralization of sensation allows Sellars to claim that his direct theory of perception is a type of realism; that it can uphold the principle “that things are, in standard conditions, what they seem to be” (Sellars 1991: 95). It can do so because the mediation that the manifold of sensation provides to our direct perception of physical objects “is causal rather than epistemic” (Sellars 1991: 91). If, counterfactually, the manifold of sense were “construed as belonging to the conceptual order” (Sellars 1968: 16), then the nature of the objects given through this manifold would be determined by the shape of an already acquired conceptual system. Here our thought would be a ‘frictionless spinning in a void’ as McDowell likes to put it. To avoid this idealist position and account for how our perception tracks objects whose existence is independent of our perceiving one must posit that the manifold of sensation causally constrains and guides our perceptual experience from the outside. Since this causally-given manifold guides pre-personally, it can provide constraint while at the same time avoiding the myth of the given.
What is the problem with this theory of sensation? The basic problem, McDowell thinks, is that the epistemic neutralization of sensation makes it seem as if “receptivity itself cannot rationally interact with spontaneity” (MW: 141). In rendering sensations ‘opaque’, i.e., not directly relevant within the experience of the perceiving agent, Sellars generates two parallel theoretical stories—a causal story about pre-personal episodes and transactions and a normative story about the conceptual episodes of a perceiving and thinking person—without demonstrating how they go together. But if these two stories are not brought together it is unclear how Sellars can explain how the external world and its features can play a rational role in the formation of our beliefs. For now there is no explanation of how the sensory episodes that are causally impressed upon us by the world enter into the space of reasons. From a pre-theoretical point of view, sensations are not only the pre-personal vehicles of our perceptual episodes, they are also rationally involved in the personal level contents that we experience. Indeed, the sensory aspect of perception—the aspect that distinguishes the content of perceptual episodes from those of thought episodes—provides us directly with reasons to think things in the environment are one way rather than another. Sellars, at least within the terms of the theory presented above, cannot explain this simple common-sense fact. Instead of dispelling theoretical ‘mystery’, which by McDowell’s Wittgensteinian lights should be the goal of philosophy, Sellars’ lacuna increases it.

3. McDowell dispels mystery by giving a theory of sensation in which they are transparent, i.e., in which they are directly relevant within the intentional order of the perceiving agent yet not states of the given. (See McDowell 1996: 145). In Mind and World, McDowell elaborates his position not through a direct confrontation with Sellars but by engaging a view that he takes to be directly parallel with Sellars’, i.e., Davidson’s coherentism. Davidson, McDowell thinks, arrives at his coherentism through an interpretation of what is
theoretically required of him to avoid the myth of the given. This, in turn, rests upon an interpretation of the notion of \textit{experience}. "Davidson thinks experience can be nothing but an extra-conceptual impact on sensibility. So he concludes that experience must be outside the space of reasons" (McDowell 1996: 14). Experience must be outside the space of reasons because “if we conceive experience in terms of impacts on sensibility that occur outside the space of concepts we must not think that we can appeal to experience to justify judgments or beliefs. That would be to fall into the Myth of the Given” (McDowell 1996: 14). Although we cannot appeal to experience to justify our beliefs, we can say that “experience is causally relevant to a subject’s beliefs and judgments” (McDowell 1996: 14). But the epistemic neutralization of experience, which is here interpreted as the deliverance of extra-conceptual states, i.e., sensations, leads to the problem with which we began, namely, the question of how these states rationally play a role within the space of reasons. Instead of answering this question Davidson takes recourse to a coherentism in which the only \textit{rational} constraint on our conceptual deployment is internal to the system of concepts that we already possess. But this leads to a picture in which thought is conceived of as a ‘frictionless spinning in a void’. This conclusion is obviously unsatisfying because it cannot answer the question of how thought is rationally constrained by factors outside our thinking. As such, this conclusion paves the way for an ‘oscillation’ to a position that accepts the myth of the given. If coherentism can’t deal with the problem of constraint, so the thought goes, perhaps the myth of the given can. But the myth of the given is for McDowell hopeless.

As we said above, this unsatisfying result is a product of Davidson’s interpretation of what is theoretically required to avoid the myth of the given. “Davidson recoils from the Myth of the Given all the way to denying experience any justification role, and the coherentist upshot is a version of the conception of spontaneity as frictionless, the very thing that makes the idea of the Given attractive” (McDowell 1996: 14). McDowell’s goal is to show that what
Davidson takes to be compulsory, i.e., that experience has no epistemic purport, is in fact only necessary if one accepts a field of intellectual possibilities which is itself non-compulsory. This demonstration begins by rethinking the notion of experience as the deliverance of non-conceptual sense-impressions. What McDowell wants is a position that can take in stride the idea that sense-impressions rationally interact with our conceptual capacities, without that interaction giving rise to the myth of the given.

For McDowell, the key to carrying this project through is his notion of ‘receptivity in operation’. Receptivity, of course, is one half of a Kantian dualism, the other half being spontaneity. For now, we shall gloss receptivity as the involuntary operation of our sensibility that is evoked by the impact of physical objects, and spontaneity as the ability to freely employ concepts in a judgment. McDowell takes it that we can rethink the notion of sense-impressions correctly (and hence prevent the oscillation to the myth of the given) only by keeping “a firm grip on this thought: receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation [between receptivity and spontaneity]” (McDowell 1996: 9). One should notice that McDowell does not say that receptivity fails to make a contribution to the co-operation that leads to empirical cognition. To say this would be to deny that there is such a thing as receptivity, which is the farthest thing from McDowell’s mind. What he says is that receptivity does not make a separable contribution to the co-operation that leads to empirical cognition. It does not make a separable contribution, because “conceptual capacities are drawn on in receptivity,” and not “on an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity” (McDowell 1996: 9). This means that we “should understand what Kant calls ‘intuition’—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of the extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content” (McDowell 1996: 9). While there is a difference between an active exercise of our conceptual capacities and an intuitive episode that is brought about in response to the impact of the environment, McDowell insists that this
difference does not hinge, respectively, on the one being conceptual and the other not. Instead, the difference is between episodes in which conceptual capacities are freely and explicitly exercised in judgments, and episodes in which conceptual capacities are actualized passively in response to the perceived environment. Here we have a distinction between judgments and perceptual experiences. Both of these episodes draw upon conceptual capacities, differing “only in the way in which the relevant conceptual capacities are actualized. In the judgment, there would be a free responsible exercise of the conceptual capacities,” while in a perceptual experience “they would be involuntarily drawn into operation” by the impact of the environment and its objects (McDowell 1998: 458).

With this theory of experience as receptivity in operation we have achieved half of our goal of showing how sensation can be directly relevant within the intentional order of the perceiving agent. The second half of that goal entails demonstrating that this new conception of sensation does not lead to the myth of the given. McDowell avoids the myth of the given by providing an alternative account of constraint. If this alternative account can avoid the dissatisfactions that coherentism brings about it will also avoid the oscillation to the myth of the given. As McDowell puts it:

[E]xperience is passive. In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One’s conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the content’s being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter. . . . In fact, it is precisely because experience is passive, a case of receptivity in operation, that the conception of experience I am recommending can satisfy the craving for a limit to freedom that underlies the Myth of the Given. (McDowell 1996: 10)

While this conception provides the constraint of the myth of the given, it is not itself a version of it. For when we “trace the ground for an empirical judgment, the last step takes us to experiences. Experiences already have conceptual content, so this last step does not take us outside the space of concepts” (MW: 10). The myth of the given depends upon there being something brutally alien to the conceptual sphere that constrains it from the outside. In this sense, the myth depends upon a metaphor in which there is a boundary or limit that separates the mind from the world. In saying that the last step towards the ‘world’ does not take us
outside the space of concepts McDowell is challenging this metaphor. The conceptual, as McDowell puts it, is ‘unbounded’; there is no outer boundary to enclose or cut off the conceptual sphere from the world. While our psychological acts of thinking are bounded, i.e., finite, that which is thought (thinkable content) by our thinking has no outer boundary insofar as it is always already within the space of reasons. In this sense, our “relatedness to the real order” is itself “within the conceptual order” (WL: 489). While this thesis secures the basis of McDowell’s direct realism it also gives rise to the charge that McDowell can only secure his view at the cost of a rampant idealism that undermines the independent reality of the empirical world. But as we shall see when we examine McDowell’s reading of object-dependent thought later on, this complaint has much less substance than meets the eye.

4. In his “Woodbridge Lectures” McDowell provides a very different interpretation of Sellars. What McDowell recognizes is that besides having a theory of non-conceptual sensation, Sellars also has a notion in which our sensory consciousness is already shaped by concepts. In McDowell’s helpful terminology, besides having a ‘below-the-line’ conception of sensation, Sellars also has an ‘above-the-line’ conception of intuition. “In Mind and World . . . I focused on the below-the-line role that Sellars credits to sensibility, and missed the fact that he has an above-the-line conception of perceptual impressions that matches the conception that I was recommending” (McDowell 1998: 441n). Of course, this sympathetic reading is accompanied by an internal critique. For while Sellars offers an above-the-line conception of intuition, he also thinks that positing what he calls a manifold of sensation or ‘sheer receptivity’ is necessary to secure the proper structure of perceptual intentionality. McDowell, in contrast, wants to suggest that

so far from helping to make us comfortable with the intentionality of perception, and thereby contributing toward making us comfortable with intentionality in general, the below-the-line element in Sellars’ picture actually stands in the way of a useful conception of how perception and thought are directed toward objects. (McDowell 1998: 452)
Before reviewing how the below-the-line notion of sensation stands in the way of a satisfying theory of perceptual intentionality, let us first examine the above-the-line conception that McDowell claims to find in Sellars.

Although McDowell mostly depends upon *Science and Metaphysics* for his reading of Sellars’ theory of intuition, he initially came to it by noting that *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* has a conception of perceptual experience as containing ‘propositional claims’. While perceptual experience involves a descriptive content that distinguishes it from freestanding thought episodes, perception, like thought, has conceptual content. Sellars puts this by saying that perceptual experience contains “propositional claims” (Sellars 1997: 39) that while not overly linguistic, are “analogous to linguistic episodes” (Sellars 2002: 378). Because perceptual episodes contain propositional claims, they, like thought episodes, are subject to semantic assessment in the space of reasons. What is key, however, is the fact that perceptual experiences makes claims in a special manner insofar as they are sensitive to the environment in a way that overt thinkings are not. In perceptual experiences, propositional claims are, as Sellars puts it, “evoked or wrung from the perceiver by the object perceived. Here nature—to turn Kant’s simile . . . on its head—puts us to the question” (Sellars 1997: 40). What are evoked or wrung from the perceiver are not pre-personal elements like sensations (although these are also activated), but a personal-level type of conceptual responsiveness that is essentially *intuitive*. How should we understand this?

McDowell attempts to answer this question by examining Sellars’ long engagement with Kant’s notion of receptivity. The first question that one must ask about receptivity is “what it is, exactly, that is brought about when our ‘receptivity’ (inner or outer) is ‘affected’” (Sellars 2002: 271). One interpretation of Kant, the ‘vulgar’ interpretation, takes it that empirical intuitions understood as *non-conceptual states* are brought about by the affection of our sensibility. Sellars claims, rightly, that this is not Kant’s considered position. Instead,
Kant makes a distinction *within receptivity* between intuitions (intuitions proper) in which one's sensory consciousness is already shaped by concepts, and intuitions (sensations or sense-impressions) that don’t involve concepts at all. Kant thus makes “a distinction between intuitions which do and intuitions which do not involve something over and above sheer receptivity” (Sellars 1968: 4). Intuitive representations “are conceptual representings of individuals” (Sellars 2002: 272). Intuitive representations thus deliver a type of demonstrative content that is pre-predicative. To understand the logic of an intuition, we thus need to mark the “difference between general conceptual representations (sortal and attributive), on the one hand, and, on the other, intuition as a special class of nongeneral conceptual representings” (Sellars 2002: 272). An intuition does not relate to an object ‘mediately by means of a feature which several things have in common’ as general concepts do, but rather directly or immediately. As such, they are part of our receptivity, not in the sense that they are non-conceptual states of consciousness but in the sense that they are brought about *involuntarily* through the immediate impact of an object.

Sellars takes it that ‘immediate relation’ between intuition and object “can best be constructed on the mode of the demonstrative ‘this’. On this model . . . intuitions would be representations of *thises* and would be conceptual in that peculiar way in which to represent something as a *this* is conceptual” (Sellars 1968: 3). How should we understand this immediate relation? On the one hand, a ‘this’ representing is not a representing of a ‘sheer this’, i.e., one devoid of all categorical distinction. Rather, it is conceptually specified in two ways. First, the ability to use ‘this’ requires that one is not only conversant with a system of spatio-temporal terms, but also that one can locate oneself within this system. “To be an intuitive representing is to represent something as located in space or time, as being *here* and *now* with *me* as contrasted with *there* and *then*. But, by the same token, it is to represent it as on
the way to being there and then and no longer with me now” (Sellars 2002: 277). Second, the full-structure of an intuitional taking is not merely a ‘this’ but a ‘this-such’. For

just as nothing is represented as a mere ‘this’, for the conceptual framework of space, time, and of myself as confronted by this (here now) object. To make the obvious point, object is an epistemic concept, and we experience objects in terms of empirical concepts. Thus, in giving an example of an intuition, we should offer not ‘this object’ but, say, ‘this cube’. (Sellars 2002: 278)

When ‘this-cube’ is offered as a response to an object, it achieves reference neither through the implicit involvement of a definite description nor through being the product of an explicit predication involving the predicate ‘cube’. Rather, the empirical concept involved in the intuition achieves reference and provides a subject for our thinking by being the product of a pre-predicative synthesis that gives it a type of pre-predicative content. Perception not only requires a ‘horizontal’ synthesis of concepts and sensations, but also a ‘vertical’ synthesis where the ‘this-suchs’ that are the potential subjects of our perceptual judgments are pre-constituted as having content. In Kant’s terms, the ‘this-suchs’ which are potentially subsumed under a general concept in a judgment already have a conceptual shape by virtue of being the object of a imaginative synthesis that, although spontaneous, takes place in our receptivity.

In receptivity, we do the same sort of things we do in the ‘spontaneity’ of imagination, but we do it as receptive to guidance by the objects we come to represent. Kant claims, in other words, that the very same rule-governed conceptual activity that occurs in the free-play of the imagination constitutes perceptual experience, when it is guided by independent reality. According to this interpretation, the ‘productive imagination’ (which is Kant’s term for the faculty that generates intuitive representings of the form ‘this cube’) provides the subject-terms of perceptual judgments. (Sellars 2002: 273)

Sellars follows Kant in accepting the idea that intuitions are necessary for a satisfactory theory of perceptual intentionality because their introduction allows one to avoid the incoherence of a judgmental or inferential theory of perception. A judgmental view of perception, i.e., one that assimilates intuitive experiences to judgments, takes it that perceptual experiences are the result of non-conceptual sense-impressions being subsumed under predicate concepts. Through the judgment, essentially meaningless sensations are given sense by being interpreted as something by the activation of a concept. Through this process an
object is given. For Sellars, in contrast, “mental acts which are intuitings are not . . . judgings” (Sellars 2002: 405) because we already have a perceptual grasp on an object before we make judgments about it. While we make judgments based upon what we perceive, the perceived subject of this judging is already given in an intuitive state. If this were not so, then misjudgments—for example, judgments that correctly identify an object in spatio-temporal terms yet incorrectly ascribe a predicate to the object—would not be possible.  

5. Because Sellars follows Kant in positing this notion of intuition, McDowell can plausibly claim that Sellars’ view anticipates his own. Just as Sellars distinguishes intuition from judgment yet still holds both to be within the conceptual order, McDowell distinguishes judgment from experience. For McDowell, this is the end of the matter in the sense that the introduction of a level of intuitive experience as a type of ‘receptivity in operation’ is enough to provide the constraint necessary to avoid idealism (and the concomitant oscillation to the myth of the given). For Sellars, however, this is not enough; there must be in addition a non-conceptual manifold of sheer receptivity beyond the manifold of intuition. Why, for Sellars, is this so?

In section two we mentioned that Sellars has two worries that are addressed by his theory of sensation: a worry about the directness of his theory of perception and a worry about whether his theory can avoid idealism. In the “Woodbridge Lectures” McDowell’s explicit focus is on the second worry. What Sellars is interested in, especially in the first chapter of Science and Metaphysics, is the question of how perception in general, whether veridical or not, could so much as be directed at or intelligibly guided “from without” by an independent world (Sellars 1968: 16). In other words, he is interested in explaining “the correlation of the conceptual representations in [perceptual activity] with those features of the object of perception, which, on occasion, both make them true and are responsible for
If one explained this correlation and guidance by claiming that our conceptual activity is guided by intuitions that are already conceptual, as McDowell does, then one would, by Sellars’ lights, be espousing a form of idealism in which there is no external constraint on our thinking. This is also Sellars' basic complaint about Kant: While Kant’s thought contains a distinction between sensation and intuition, the logic of his position leads to the assimilation of the former to the latter. In a passage about Kant that could equally apply to McDowell, Sellars claims:

> [I]t is only if Kant distinguishes the radically non-conceptual character of sense from the conceptual character of the synthesis of apprehension in intuition . . . and accordingly, the receptivity of sense from the guidedness of intuition that he can avoid the dialectic which leads from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* to nineteenth-century idealism. (Sellars 1968: 16)

The motivation for positing a manifold of sheer receptivity is provided by the threat of this dialectic. According to Sellars, at least in *Science and Metaphysics*, this motivation is not one that is raised by perceiving agents to account for their experience but one that is raised ‘outside’ of perceptual experience by a theorist reflecting upon perceptual experience. Instead of finding sensation by carefully attending to what manifests itself within experience, the concept of sensation is postulated by a theorist or philosopher who, from the third person point of view, theorizes about what is necessary for persons to have their conceptual goings on be guided by an independent reality. As Sellars puts it, the existence of an manifold of sense

> is postulated on general epistemological or, as Kant would say, transcendental grounds, after reflection on the concept of human knowledge as based on, though not constituted by, the impact of independent reality. It is postulated rather than ‘found’ by careful and discriminating attention. The concept of such a manifold, is, in contemporary terms, a theoretical construct. (Sellars 1968: 9)

The introduction of this notion of the transcendental is meant to solve a problem that Sellars’ picture of guidance raises. To fulfill its function of guiding perception ‘from without’ the manifold of sheer receptivity must have “a strong voice in the outcome” of our perceiving while also remaining “an independent factor” (Sellars 1968: 16), i.e., while not itself belonging to the conceptual sphere. But how can a non-conceptual manifold have a strong voice in the
outcome of our perceiving, a voice which presumably has a rational influence on our perceiving, without it playing a role in the intentional order. McDowell solves this problem by transforming the ‘opaque’ manifold of sensation into a ‘transparent’ manifold of intuition. Sellars, in contrast, solves this problem by taking recourse to the distinction between personal-level mediation and pre-personal mediation. While the voice with which the manifold of sheer receptivity speaks cannot, as it were, speak to the agent whose perceptual experience is being guided, it can speak to their pre-personal perceptual system by providing it with non-conceptual cues. We can say that these cues have a rational influence upon the flow of conceptual activity within perceptual experience without providing personal level reasons for our thinking that things are one way or another because they are not simply causal cues connected with colored and shaped physical objects. For over and above this causal connection, these cues are systematically and analogically instituted to correspond to the flow of concepts within perceptual experience that they are guiding. This analogical institution occurred when our Rylean ancestors learned how to transfer a system of predicates used to describe the colors and shapes of physical objects to characterizing their own inner experience. For Sellars, this analogical transference of predicates is not simply causal because it required language possession which itself requires having learned certain complex S/R connections, etc.\(^8\) The details of this theory are not important here; what is important is that there is a level of pre-personal guidance which is not brutally causal but which is also not apperceivable at the personal level. The identification of this level allows Sellars to claim that guidance is rational without relating the pre-personal level of sensation to the personal level of concepts, something that is necessary to avoid the myth of the given.

6. Kant, Sellars argues, is unable to maintain the distinctions enumerated above because of an implicit commitment to the myth of the given, specifically to a non-standard form of
abstractionism. We must review this diagnosis of Kant because the nature of McDowell’s direct realism emerges from his providing a very different reading of Kant on this issue.

To understand Sellars’ reading of Kant as espousing a form of the given we must again examine the relationship between intuition and the judgment. As we know, intuitive episodes can be entertained without one making judgments. However, as the product of the productive imagination working on behalf of the understanding, intuitions have a logical structure that is tailor-made to enter into judgments. They are tailor-made for judgment because their pre-predicative logical structure is informed by the very same elements that are synthesized explicitly in a judgment of the understanding. Kant expresses this thought in a famous passage from ‘The Clue to the Discovery to All Pure Concepts of the Understanding’, a passage that Sellars often quotes.

The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition; and this unity in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concepts of the understanding. The same understanding through the same operations by which in concepts, by means of analytical unity, it produces the logical form of judgment, also introduces a transcendental content into its representations, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general. (B 104-105)

Sellars rightly interprets this passage to mean that intuitions “contain the very same categories which can be found in the general concepts which we apply to these intuitions” (Sellars 2002: 406). Because of this, the categories that are implicitly found in the general concepts of the judgment “can be true of the subject of judgment, i.e., the object intuited” (Sellars 2002: 406). But Sellars interprets this Kantian notion in a peculiar way: general concepts can be applied to intuitions only because they have been derived, through a prior form of analytic thinking, from these self-same intuitions. In other words, Sellars interprets Kant to espouse a special form of abstractionism in which general concepts are formed, not by an abstraction from sheer sensibility (as it is for classical abstractionism), but from intuitions that are already conceptually shaped. On this interpretation, “the basic general concepts which we apply to the objects of experience are derived (by the analytic activity of the understanding) from the
intuitions synthesized by the productive imagination” (Sellars 1968: 5). This interpretation of Kant makes sense, so Sellars thinks, “because the latter [intuitions] already have a conceptual and categorical character” (Sellars 2002: 279) and so can pass on their content to general concepts without falling into classical abstractionism. But this special form of abstractionism is little better than the classical type because it makes it seem as if the content of a cube in the intuition ‘this-cube’ “expresses a representation of something as a cube in a way which is conceptually prior to cube as a general or universal representation; that is, in a way which is conceptually prior to predication or judgment” (Sellars 1968: 7).

Sellars calls this idea ‘puzzling’ (Sellars 1968: 5). It is puzzling because it is committed to the notion that intuitions and their content can be entertained intelligibly without one possessing the corresponding general concept or predicate. And this means that one could marshal these elements meaningfully without being able to use them in a judgment or a proposition. This view is for Sellars a form of the myth of the given because the conceptuality that informs intuition and which is ‘passed up’ to general concepts is now itself thought to be innate or absolute and not learned through acquiring a language. For if it were learned through acquiring a language it would necessarily be bound up with the general concepts that are articulated by the inferential game of giving and asking for reasons. On Sellars view, while an episode with a singular content like ‘this-cube’ does not need to be part of a judgmental episode—intuitions are not themselves judgments—it would not have content unless it could be used as a predicate to complete a representation like ‘this die is a cube’. For Sellars, we can thus entertain intuitional episodes with singular contents only if those episodes are able to be part of a full-fledged perceptual judgment. This shows that the intuitive episodes that constitute perceptual experience are tied into the space of reasons and so can become part of a propositional claim strictly speaking.
7. McDowell’s defense of object-dependant intuitional content and his version of direct realism is based upon a very different reading of Kant’s passage from the ‘Clue’. To make out this reading we must remind ourselves that for McDowell perceptual experiences, or ostensible perceptual experiences as he will say, insofar as they ‘contain claims’, actualize “the same conceptual capacities . . . actualized with the same mode of togetherness” (McDowell 1998: 439-40) as those that are exercised in the corresponding judgment. The difference is that in an ostensible seeing conceptual capacities are not activated spontaneously but are “involuntarily drawn into operation under ostensible necessitation by an ostensibly seen object” (McDowell 1998: 458). The parallel between judgments and ostensible perceptual experiences (ostensible seeings in this case) gives McDowell license to recast the passage from the ‘Clue’ to say: “the function that gives unity to the various representations in an ostensible seeing is the same as the function that gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition” (McDowell 1998: 459). This passage might make it seem as if McDowell is purveying a three-level model in which the function that provides unity for the various representations in a judgment also provides unity for the representations of an ostensible seeing and for the representations of an intuition. Here we would have three parallel syntheses: a synthesis of predicate concepts, a synthesis of perceptual experiences (ostensible seeings), and a synthesis of intuitions. But this picture is wrong because McDowell really means it when he says, in his updated ‘Clue’, that the function which gives unity to the various representations in an ostensible seeing is the same as the function which gives unity to the synthesis of representations in an intuition. They are, he says, the same function “looked at, as it were, from different angles” (McDowell 1998: 460). What does this mean?

An ostensible seeing is one that would be a seeing if the experience were veridical. An ostensible seeing is not a seeing proper, however, because there is no object that is seen. The seeing is only ostensible. When a seeing actually is a seeing, however, when an object is
immediately present to sense, an ostensible seeing is called an intuition. As McDowell puts it, “if an ostensible seeing is a seeing, then the conceptual shaping of visual consciousness that constitutes it, those very conceptual capacities actualized in visual consciousness with that very ‘logical’ togetherness, constitute—looked at, as it were, from a different angle—an intuition: an immediate presentness of an object to sense” (McDowell 1998: 460). The very same conceptual capacities are actualized in both cases, yet in one case an object is immediately given in intuition whereas in the other it is not.

In the latter case, when an object is only ostensibly given, there also arises an ostensibly constituted intuition. An actual intuition, unlike an ostensible one, is only informed if there is an object to which the intuition is related. “The idea is that for a conceptual episode to possess intuitional content just is for it to stand in a certain relation to an object” (McDowell 1998: 477). When there is not an actual object immediately present to sense, the same conceptual capacities are activated that are activated when there is an object, but in this case there is no intuition delivered, only an illusion of an intuition. “If one is under the illusion of being perceptually confronted by an object, the one is liable to a counterpart illusion that there is available to one, for employment in conceptual activity, content expressible by a perceptual demonstrative reference to the supposed object” (McDowell 1998: 475). To put this in another way, an illusion concerning whether an object is given immediately to one’s conceptually shaped sensory consciousness is at the same time “an illusion about the contents of one’s conceptually shaped consciousness” (McDowell 1998: 476).

McDowell is here drawing upon his previous work on de re or object-dependent thought. The idea is that there are certain kinds of thoughts so dependant upon their object for their content that if the object does not exist it is not possible to entertain a thought about it. Here, one’s thought is not a thought proper, but as Gareth Evans puts it, a ‘mock thought’. This notion, as McDowell notes, is often taken to be ‘counter-intuitive’. It is counter-intuitive
because it seems to lead to the idea that in cases where an illusion of content arises due to an object’s not being given that there is literally nothing before one’s mind. One thinks there is something before ones mind, but because one is only entertaining a mock thought there is in fact nothing to be thought. In the “Woodbridge Lectures,” McDowell, utilizing his updated ‘Clue’, softens this notion of a mock thought. In the case where one is entertaining an illusion of content due to an object’s not being given, not all of the content, and so not all of the thought, is illusory.

In a merely ostensible seeing that there is, say, a red cube at a position one can mean by a use of ‘there’, there are actualized in one’s visual consciousness conceptual capacities corresponding to the presence of the words ‘red’, ‘cube’, and ‘there’... in a verbal expression of the experience’s content. None of that conceptual content is an illusion. In the language of the remark from the ‘Clue’, there is a function that does indeed give unity to the various representations in the content of the ostensible seeing, or rather this part of its content... The content in question is the same as the content of a judgment that subject might express by saying ‘There is a red cube there’. What is illusory is just the appearance that the same function also gives unity to a synthesis of the representations in an intuition. (McDowell 1998: 476)

This softening of the notion of a mock-thought does not however completely undermine its counter-intuitiveness. For the notion of object-dependent thought undermines many of the Cartesian assumptions that still govern much work in the philosophy of mind. To bring this out, let us take it, counterfactually, that one cannot be under an illusion about intuitional content. Then, let us run the argument from illusion. Since the content delivered by a perceptual deception is indistinguishable from the content delivered by a non-deceptive perception (what makes the deceptive case a deception), there would be a single experience in both cases. Because we cannot be under an illusion about intuitional content, we cannot be under an illusion about this single experience, an experience that is the ‘highest common factor’ of both cases. Since what is experienced in deceptive cases is a mere appearance that ‘falls short of the facts themselves’ what is experienced in a non-deceptive case is also a mere appearance. “The upshot is that even in the non-deceptive cases we have to picture something that falls short of the fact ascertained, at best defeasibly connected with it, as interposing itself between the experiencing subject and the fact itself”(Mcdowell 1998a: 386). Now we have a
state or episode that is ‘inside’ the mind of the experiencing agent which falls short of the fact to which it is purportedly directed. And with this, it seems as if there is a boundary at the edge of our subjectivity that somehow must be traversed if our perceptual takings are to have empirical content.

In response to this, McDowell offers a disjunctive view of perceptual taking. It claims that an intuitive taking can be “either a mere appearance or the fact that such-and-such is the case itself making itself perceptually manifest to someone” (McDowell 1998a: 386-7) This disarms the phenomenological argument that there must be a single episode in both veridical and non-veridical cases. Just because in a deceptive case we experience a mere appearance that falls short of the facts themselves, this does not mean that the same is true in non-deceptive cases. This inference can only be made if one has already posited a highest common factor, which in turn, is the result of not countenancing the fact that we can be under an illusion concerning intuitional content. And this denial is, of course, paradigmatically Cartesian. For the Cartesian the notion that we can be under this type of illusion is absurd. Mistakes do not come from the mere possession of contents—which are indubitable within the sphere of our own minds—but from our judgments about whether these contents match their purported objects. One way of looking at McDowell’s proposal is that instead of locating error at the level of judgment—i.e., at the level where we try to transgress the boundary that separates the content of our minds from that which this content represents in the world—we should locate it at the level of intuitional content itself. In other words, we should locate it at the level of experience and not that of judgment. At this level, we are saddled with intuitional content that “already involves . . . referential directedness at the world” (McDowell 1998c: 286). Sometimes we can be mistaken about possessing this content in the way we think we possess it. But this mistake does not just concern the structure of our ‘interior realm’ because the content that makes up this realm already involves world directedness. Our being mistaken
about intuitional contents thus concerns both how things stand with ourselves and how things stand with the world. Now our being under an illusion of standing in relation to an object is not based upon an ontological split between ‘our’ experience and its object, but upon there being no such object to which our experience thinks it is related.

8. This result forms the basis of McDowell’s direct realism, which claims that when we are not under an illusion concerning the constitution of an intuition we are actually ‘taking in how things are’.

In a particular experience in which one is not mislead, what one takes in is that things are thus and so. That things are thus and so is the content of the experience, and it can be the content of a judgment: it becomes the content of a judgment if the subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content. But that things are thus and so is also, if one is not mislead, an aspect of the layout of the world: how thing are. Thus the idea of conceptually saturated operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks. (McDowell 1996: 26)

In having conceptually saturated operations of receptivity, i.e., intuitions, we are open to the layout of reality because for a perceptual episode to have intuitional content is simply for it to stand in a certain relation to an object. As such, our being in direct touch with the layout of reality is not in the first instance judgmental. When an object is immediately present to sense, we don’t necessarily (although we could) perform the judgment: ‘there is a red cube there’ or ‘that is a red cube’; rather, we have a conceptually informed intuition of ‘this red cube or’ ‘that red cube’. However, as McDowell points out, the conceptuality of this intuitive experience is the same as that of these judgments.

Here the fact that, say, ‘cube’ figures in a specification of the content of an intuition—the intuition represents its object as that red cube—reflects the fact that for one to be the subject of such an intuition is in part for there to be actualized in one’s sensory consciousness the very same conceptual capacity—possession of the concept of a cube—whose exercise would partly determine the predicative element in the content of a judgment whose content we could specify, with that imagined occupancy of the subject’s viewpoint, in the form ‘That is a red cube’. In fact, the actualization of the relevant conceptual capacity in the intuition is an actualization of it in a conceptual occurrence whose content is, so to speak, judgmentally shaped. (McDowell 1998: 661)
Although our being in direct touch with the layout of reality is not in the first instance judgmental, if one did not have the ability to make judgments, to inferentially work one’s way around the space of reasons, one would not be able to have world-directed thoughts at all. McDowell is thus in full agreement with Sellars that “the ability to have objects come into view for one is essentially dependent on the ability to make judgments” (McDowell 1998: 463). However, McDowell takes it that the passage above goes beyond this conclusion to yield something more ‘radical’, namely that “an actualization of the capacity to have objects come into one’s view is itself already an actualization of the capacity to have occur in one’s life occurrences with the sort of content that judgments have, not just an element in such an actualization” (McDowell 1998: 463). In other words, the ability to have an object come into view through an intuition is not just an element of the capacity to possess episodes with judgmental content, rather, it is that capacity itself ‘viewed from another angle’. This is just a ramification of McDowell’s updated ‘clue’ in which the content of an intuition is the result of the very same actualization of the very same conceptual capacities that leads to an ostensible seeing and therefore (because of their analogical similarity) to an episode whose content is judgmentally shaped. From this emerges McDowell’s ‘radical’ result, namely, that one cannot separate the ability to judge in general from the fact that the concepts that we use to make judgments immediately bear on objects that are intuitively present to a subject. Intuitions do not just depend on our ability to make judgments; judgments themselves depend upon there being concepts that in intuition are in immediate relation to objects. In other words, the concepts that inform experience “can intelligibly be what they are . . . only because we can see how there can be conceptual occurrences in which objects are manifestly there for thinkers, immediately present to their conceptually shaped sensory consciousness” (McDowell 1998: 465).
McDowell takes this thesis to be ‘transcendental’, i.e., a requirement for it being intelligible that our thought is directed at ‘objective reality at all’. The transcendental requirement expressed here is not in the first instance epistemological, i.e., a response to the question of how “judgments . . . can be grounded in experience” (McDowell 1998: 464). The question about how our knowledge acquires justification comes, as it were, too late. The ‘transcendental requirement’ in which McDowell is interested “is that it must be intelligible that conceptual activity has a subject matter” (McDowell 1998: 464). Here we have a requirement that concerns the original bearing that the content of our concepts have with respect to the world. The point is that if objects were not manifestly present through conceptually shaped sensory consciousness then our conceptual activity would not have intuitional content and so would not be about anything. Instead, we would have a picture in which “the objective world is set over a conceptual scheme that has withdrawn into a kind of self-sufficiency” (McDowell 1998b: 408). This view is self-undermining, however, for when we set the system of concepts off “so radically from the objective world, we lose our right to think of moves within the space we are picturing as content involving” and so “stop being able to picture it as the space of concepts” (McDowell 1998b: 409). In the Davidsonian terms that McDowell sometimes uses, there can be no absolute scheme/content dualism because a scheme that did not already involve content would not be a conceptual scheme at all. Of course, one can (and does) possess a repertoire of concepts that float free from this ground level as when we direct our thought to objects that are not available to ordinary sense experience (micro-physical particles, numbers, capitalism, etc.). But even so the “ultimate credentials of theory lie in experience” (McDowell 1998: 464) in the sense that if we could not bring objects immediately into view by activating a ground level of intuitive experiences then we could not get cognitive purchase on anything.
In section two, we listed two reasons why, over and above the manifold of intuition, Sellars transcendentally interposes an epistemically neutralized stratum of non-conceptual sense-impressions between perception and its object. The first reason concerned the possibility of upholding a *direct* realism; i.e., one in which we perceive objects directly rather than indirectly through an epistemic intermediary. Sense-impressions are not epistemic intermediaries because although sensations mediate our perception they do so at the pre-personal level. The second reason concerned the possibility of upholding a direct realism; i.e., one where our perceiving is of objects whose existence is independent of our cognition. To meet this latter requirement Sellars takes it that the pre-personal mediation that sensations provides must causally constrain and guide our perceiving from outside the sphere of our own thinking.

With McDowell’s view in mind, how do these two requirements look? Let us first focus on the latter requirement. McDowell takes it that meeting *his* transcendental thesis concerning intuitional content is not irrelevant to meeting Sellars’ transcendental demand that our thinking be guided from without. In other words, McDowell thinks his view entitles us to the notion that our perceiving is being guided from outside our thinking without positing a manifold of sheer receptivity. For, “we are now equipped to understand, given the conception of intuitions adumbrated in the passage from the clue, the guidance is supplied by objects themselves, the subject matter of those conceptual representations, becoming immediately present to the sensory consciousness of the subjects of these conceptual goings-on” (McDowell 1998: 467). If our conceptual activity is sufficiently constrained ‘from within’ by the objects that are the subject matter of our thinking then Sellars’ transcendental reflection undertaken from outside the states and episodes that are being vindicated is not needed to provide this constraint.

The transcendental task is entitling ourselves to see conceptual activity as directed toward a reality that is not a mere reflection of it. To discharge that task, we need not see conceptual representations in perception as externally constrained by anything except the relevant
elements of the independent reality toward which we are in the course of entitling ourselves to see conceptual activity, in general, as directed. There is a kind of circularity here, but not one that should make it look as if the putative constraining objects can only be projectings of what we are trying to see as conceptual activity—in vain, if we could not do better than this. The actualizations of conceptual capacities that we are focusing on when we do this transcendental work are shapings of sensory consciousness, and thus of what Kant describes, with an obvious appropriateness, in terms of receptivity. That ensures that the objects we are entitling ourselves to see as preset to subjects in intuition are genuinely independent of the subjects. (McDowell 1998: 473)

How does this result affect Sellars’ first reason for positing a manifold of sheer receptivity? Although in the “Woodbridge Lectures” McDowell does not directly address the question, we can make this point on his behalf: Sellars’ attempt to vindicate the notion that our thought is constrained by sensory elements that are alien to the sphere of thinking undermines his ability to uphold the direct realism he claims to avow. Rather than seeing our perceptual experience as being directly guided from within by the objects of our perceiving, one claims, on transcendental grounds, that it is instead guided by a non-apperceived manifold of sense that is analogically coordinated with the qualities and characteristics of the objects that we perceive. As we know, this theory of analogical coordination is attractive for Sellars because he thinks that it can explain how a non-apperceived manifold of sheer receptivity can rationally guide the flow of conceptual activity within perception without relating the pre-personal level of sensation to the personal level of concepts, something that is necessary in order to avoid the myth of the given. But what Sellars thinks is a gain is in fact a loss. By not explaining how the non-conceptual manifold of sheer receptivity relates to the intuitive yet conceptual demonstrative content that we experience within perception, Sellars ends up, as McDowell says, distancing “the world too far from our perceptual lives to be able to keep mystery out of the idea that our conceptual lives, including appearings, involve empirical content” (McDowell 1996: 145). In other words, even in light of the more sophisticated reading of Sellars provided in the “Woodbridge Lectures”, the basic problem that McDowell diagnosed in Mind and World still remains: Sellars, in not explaining the relation between sensation and the flow of conceptual activity within perception, cannot explain how the world,
under the aegis of sensory impacts, plays a rational role in the formation of our beliefs about
the world. But if one cannot explain this then one cannot plausibly claim to be offering a
direct realism in which our perception is opens us directly onto the features of the world.

What is unique in the case of Sellars is that the distance between the world and our
perceptual activity is not created—as it is for sense-data or indirect theories of perception—
for reasons internal to the phenomenology of perception (the problem of illusion,
hallucination, etc.). Rather, the distance and concomitant theoretical mystery is created for
reasons extraneous to the point of view of perception itself. Phenomenologically, perceivers
take the sensory aspects of the objects of their perception to directly and rationally influence
their thinking that things are one-way rather than another. By Sellars’ lights, however, this
appearance is, all things considered, an illusion. Perceivers think that their perception is
guided directly by the objects of their perceiving, but in fact it is not. Here, the authority of
perception, the authority upon which direct theories of perception depend, is undermined.10
However, if it can be shown that the vitiation of the authority of perception is undertaken for
reasons that can be satisfactorily accounted for from within the perceptual perspective, then
we would have good reasons to reject Sellars’ undermining. And this is what McDowell does:
by showing how constraint can be accounted for from within perception in a way that avoids
the myth of the given, McDowell undercuts the motivation for theoretically positing a
manifold of sheer receptivity and the distance that this engenders. By not incorporating this
perspective into his thought Sellars’ theory of perception falls short of his own best insights.

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1 This paper was substantially written before I had the good fortune of coming across two papers that explore in
detail the relationship between Sellars and McDowell. See Williams 2006 and deVries 2006. Both take it that
McDowell’s critique of Sellars is not successful because McDowell, in a variety of ways, misunderstands Sellars’
arguments and their basic aims. I am sympathetic to many of Williams and deVries specific complaints.
McDowell’s reading is a strong reading and as such tailors many aspects of Sellars’ thought so as to fit into a line of interpretation that is informed by presuppositions that are foreign to Sellars. However, both Williams and deVries focus on the McDowell’s first critical thesis, i.e., that sensations are explanatorily idle and can be replaced by intuition, and ignore the second thesis that is implicit in McDowell’s approach, i.e., that Sellars’ theory of sensation makes his direct realism impossible. If McDowell’s critique is looked at through the lens of the second thesis his position, I think, becomes much stronger.

2 I broke up this sentence from the ‘Woodbridge Lectures’ so it would better match the language of *Mind and World*.

3 Here we have not touched on McDowell’s conception of second nature. It is this notion which ultimately allows McDowell to avoid the myth of the given insofar as the conceptual shaping of our sensory episodes is not something that is brutally given but rather taken on through our acquiring a second nature. Sell McDowell 1996, chapter four.

4 This argument is obviously inadequate to prove this important point. For a conclusive discussion of this issue see Merleau-Ponty 1962.

5 Where I have ‘conceptual representations in [perceptual activity]’, Sellars has ‘conceptual representations in question’. My substitution is justified because the conceptual representations in question that Sellars is referring to are identified in the paragraph above as conceptual representations in perceptual activity.

6 As a reading of Kant this complaint seems correct. In the Transcendental Analytic, especially in the B deduction, it becomes apparent that for the content of the manifold of sheer receptivity to be so much as given already requires the imagination’s synthesis of apprehension in an intuition (in Kant’s terminology a formal intuition).

7 At Sellars 1968: 38, Sellars explicitly equates philosophical knowledge with transcendental knowledge.

8 This is an enormously complex area of Sellars’ thought that we can only gesture at. See Sellars 1968 chapter one.

9 As McDowell points out, for these statements to make sense one must undertake them from the perceiving subject’s point of view.

10 Sellars, it should be noted, has what is by his lights a good reason for undermining the authority of perception as an original mode of knowledge, one that is guided directly by the objects of perception. Sellars thinks that a directly realistic account of perception is only correct within the manifest image. But this image is, all things considered, false. In the dimension of describing and explaining the world this image will be replaced by the scientific image. If the objects of perception themselves, however, really guided perception—as McDowell posits—it would be much more difficult to argue that our perceptual relation to objects is ontologically secondary and in some sense illusory. Indeed, if the objects themselves guided our cognition it might seem as if the shape of our conceptual scheme were tied to the manifest categories implicit in the givenness of manifest objects. To ward off this conclusion Sellars maintains that it is not the objects themselves which guide our perception directly but a manifold of sheer receptivity which can be schematized in different ways depending upon the results of the best science.
References


