Introduction

1. This book first appeared without an Introduction. Since then, however, I have been made to realize that it is harder to understand than I thought. I hope an overview, omitting some details in order to focus on the central theme, will help at least some readers.

My aim is to propose an account, in a diagnostic spirit, of some characteristic anxieties of modern philosophy—anxieties that centre, as my title indicates, on the relation between mind and world. Continuing with the medical metaphor, we might say that a satisfactory diagnosis ought to point towards a cure. I aim at explaining how it comes about that we seem to be confronted with philosophical obligations of a familiar sort, and I want the explanation to enable us to unmask that appearance as illusion.

It matters that the illusion is capable of gripping us. I want to be able to acknowledge the power of the illusion's sources, so that we find ourselves able to respect the conviction that the obligations are genuine, even while we see how we can, for our own part, reject the appearance that we face a pressing intellectual task.

2. A good way into the picture I offer is to consider the plausibility of a minimal empiricism.

To make sense of the idea of a mental state's or episode's being directed towards the world, in the way in which, say, a belief or judgement is, we need to put the state or episode in a normative context. A belief or judgement to the effect that things are thus and so—a belief or judgement whose content (as we say) is that things are thus and

so—must be a posture or stance that is *correctly or incorrectly* adopted according to whether or not things are indeed thus and so. (If we can make sense of judgement or belief as directed towards the world in that way, other kinds of content-bearing postures or stances should easily fall into place.) This relation between mind and world is normative, then, in this sense: thinking that aims at judgement, or at the fixation of belief, is answerable to the world—to how things are—for whether or not it is correctly executed.

Now how should we elaborate the idea that our thinking is thus answerable to the world? In addressing this question, we might restrict our attention, at least tacitly, to thinking that is answerable to the *empirical* world; that is, answerable to how things are in so far as how things are is empirically accessible. Even if we take it that answerability to how things are includes more than answerability to the empirical world, it nevertheless seems right to say this: since our cognitive predicament is that we confront the world by way of sensible intuition (to put it in Kantian terms), our reflection on the very idea of thought's directedness at how things are must begin with answerability to the empirical world. And now, how can we understand the idea that our thinking is answerable to the empirical world, if not by way of the idea that our thinking is answerable to experience? How could a verdict from the empirical world—to which empirical thinking must be answerable if it is to be thinking at all—be delivered, if not by way of a verdict from (as W. V. Quine puts it) "the tribunal of experience"?[1]

That is what I mean by "a minimal empiricism": the idea that experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all. And this is one side of a combination of plausibilities that promises to account for the philosophical anxieties I alluded to. The other side is a frame of mind, which I shall come to (§4 below), that makes it hard to see how experience *could* function as a tribunal, delivering verdicts on our thinking.

Fully developed, of course, such a combination would amount to an antinomy: experience both must (minimal empiricism) and cannot (the line of thought I have yet to broach) stand in judgement over our

1. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961; 1st ed. 1953), pp. 20–46, at p. 41.

attempts to make up our minds about how things are. But consider a stage at which reflection is subject to such a pair of pressures, but not self-consciously enough for it to be clear that what they generate is an antinomy. With an inexplicit awareness of the tension between such a pair of tendencies in one's thinking, one could easily fall into an anxiety of a familiar philosophical sort, about that directedness of mind to world that it seemed we would have to be able to gloss in terms of answerability to how things are. In such a position, one would find oneself asking: "How is it possible for there to be thinking directed at how things are?" This would be a "How possible?" question of a familiar philosophical kind; it acquires its characteristic philosophical bite by being asked against the background of materials for a line of thought that, if made explicit, would purport to reveal that the question's topic is actually not possible at all.

3. It may seem surprising that I am associating empiricism with a philosophical anxiety about the possibility of *thought*. Surely, it may be objected, empiricism is an epistemological position, and the relevant question should rather be this: "How is it possible for there to be empirical *knowledge*?" What that comes to, in terms of Quine's juridical image, is something on these lines: "How can experience, standing in judgement over, say, a belief, return a verdict sufficiently favourable for the belief to count as a case of knowledge?"

But suppose we are prone to have our thinking shaped by the second element in my combination of plausibilities (which I have so far brought into view only in terms of its effect). That is just to suppose that we find it hard to see how experience can function as a tribunal, standing in judgement over our beliefs. This would be a difficulty about how experience can return any verdicts on our thinking at all, and that is surely more fundamental than a difficulty about how experience can return a particular kind of verdict, one that reaches some high level of favourableness.

It is true that modern philosophy is pervaded by apparent problems about knowledge in particular. But I think it is helpful to see those apparent problems as more or less inept expressions of a deeper anxiety—an inchoately felt threat that a way of thinking we find ourselves falling into leaves minds simply out of touch with the rest of reality, not just questionably capable of getting to know about it. A problem

about crediting ourselves with knowledge is just one shape, and not the most fundamental, in which that anxiety can make itself felt.

4. What is the pressure on our thinking that makes it hard to see how experience could function as a tribunal? I can bring it to light by rehearsing a central element in Wilfrid Sellars's attack on "the Myth of the Given".

Sellars insists that the concept of knowledge belongs in a normative context. He writes: "In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says."[2] It is a way of repeating what I have just been urging (§3 above) to say this: though Sellars here speaks of knowledge in particular, that is just to stress one application of the thought that a normative context is necessary for the idea of being in touch with the world at all, whether knowledgeably or not. One way of putting what Sellars is driving at is to say that epistemology is liable to fall into a naturalistic fallacy.[3] In the more general version I have insisted on, the thought is that the risk of a naturalistic fallacy besets reflection about world-directedness as such, whether knowledgeable or not. If we put Sellars's point this way, we are identifying the natural—as indeed Sellars sometimes does—with the subject matter of "empirical description"; that is, with the subject matter of a mode of discourse that is to be contrasted with placing something in the normative framework constituted by the logical space of reasons. Sellars separates concepts that are intelligible only in terms of how they serve to place things in the logical space of reasons, such as the concept of knowledge, from concepts that can be employed in "empirical description". And if we read the remark as a warning against a naturalistic fallacy, we are understanding "empirical description" as placing things in the logical space of nature, to coin a phrase that is Sellarsian at least in spirit.

What would the logical space of nature be? I think we capture the essentials of Sellars's thinking if we take it that the logical space of

2. "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, eds., *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 253–329, at pp. 298–9.

3. See p. 257 of "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" for a formulation on these lines.

nature is the logical space in which the natural sciences function, as we have been enabled to conceive them by a well-charted, and in itself admirable, development of modern thought. We might say that to place something in nature on the relevant conception, as contrasted with placing it in the logical space of reasons, is to situate it in the realm of law. But what matters for Sellars's point is not that or any other positive characterization, but the negative claim: whatever the relations are that constitute the logical space of nature, they are *different in kind* from the normative relations that constitute the logical space of reasons. The relations that constitute the logical space of nature, on the relevant conception, do not include relations such as one thing's being warranted, or—for the general case—correct, in the light of another. That is what Sellars is saying when he insists that "empirical description" cannot amount to placing something in the logical space of reasons.

Now, supposing we accept this dichotomy of logical spaces, which logical space would be the home of the concept of experience? Of course it depends on what we mean by "experience". But suppose we want to conceive the course of a subject's experience as made up of impressions, impingements by the world on a possessor of sensory capacities. Surely such talk of impingements by the world is "empirical description"; or, to put the point in the variant terms I have introduced, the idea of receiving an impression is the idea of a transaction in nature. On Sellars's principles, then, to identify something as an impression is to place it in a logical space other than the one in which talk of knowledge—or, to keep the general case in view, talk of world-directedness, knowledgeable or not—belongs. On these principles, the logical space in which talk of impressions belongs is not one in which things are connected by relations such as one thing's being warranted or correct in the light of another. So if we conceive experience as made up of impressions, on these principles it cannot serve as a tribunal, something to which empirical thinking is answerable. Supposing that it can would just be a case of the naturalistic fallacy that Sellars warns us against—a case of taking it that "empirical description" can amount to placing things in the logical space of reasons.

I have here extracted from Sellars a line of thought that at least potentially stands in tension with a minimal empiricism. (Whether the tension is actual depends on whether empiricism needs to conceive "the tribunal of experience" as made up of impressions; I shall come back to that question (§6 below).) In the lectures that follow, it is

mainly Donald Davidson who figures in the role I have here cast Sellars in: as someone whose reflection about experience disqualifies it from intelligibly constituting a tribunal. For these purposes, Sellars and Davidson are interchangeable. Sellars's attack on the Given corresponds, in a way I exploit in my first lecture, to Davidson's attack on what he calls "the third dogma of empiricism"—the dualism of conceptual scheme and empirical "content". And Davidson explicitly suggests that the thought dislodges even a minimal empiricism; he describes the third dogma of empiricism as "perhaps the last", on the ground that "if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to call empiricism".[4]

5. I have been suggesting that we can trace some distinctive anxieties of modern philosophy to a tension between two forces, both of which have an intelligible tendency to shape our reflection about empirical thinking, and thereby about world-directedness in general. One is the attractiveness of a minimal empiricism, which makes out that the very idea of thought's directedness at the empirical world is intelligible only in terms of answerability to the tribunal of experience, conceived in terms of the world impressing itself on perceiving subjects. The other is a frame of mind that makes it seem impossible that experience could be a tribunal. The idea of a tribunal belongs, together with the idea of what the tribunal passes its verdicts on, in what Sellars calls "the logical space of reasons"—a logical space whose structure consists in some of its occupants being, for instance, warranted or correct in the light of others. But the idea of experience, at least construed in terms of impressions, evidently belongs in a logical space of natural connections. That can easily make it seem that if we try to conceive experience as a tribunal, we must be falling into the naturalistic fallacy that Sellars depicts as a pitfall for would-be epistemologists. Suppose we are inexplicitly aware that our thinking is subject to both these forces; that makes it intelligible that we should find thought's being about the empirical world philosophically problematic.

As I said (§1 above), my aim is diagnosis, with a view to a cure. If philosophical anxiety about the very possibility of being in touch with the world can be traced to the tension between those two forces, a cure would require resolving the tension. Obviously the description I

4. "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", in Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), pp. 183–98, at p. 189.

have given leaves various options available for doing that. In this book I recommend one way of resolving this tension. Here I shall briefly locate it by distinguishing it from a couple of others.

6. One option would be to renounce empiricism, at least with experience construed in terms of impressions. As I have already mentioned (§4 above), Davidson explicitly links the fate of empiricism with the fate of scheme-content dualism, which he effectively demolishes in a way that parallels Sellars's attack on the Myth of the Given. And Sellars himself works at delineating a concept of impressions that is insulated from epistemology.

I do not believe a position on these lines can be genuinely satisfying. I urge this, specifically in connection with Davidson, in the first of the lectures that make up the body of this book. Davidson's ground for giving up empiricism is, in its essentials, the claim that we cannot take experience to be epistemologically significant except by falling into the Myth of the Given, in which experience, conceived in such a way that it could not be a tribunal, is nevertheless supposed to stand in judgement over our empirical thinking. That certainly has the right shape for an argument that we *must* renounce empiricism. The trouble is that it does not show how we *can*. It does nothing to explain away the plausibility of the empiricist picture, according to which we can make sense of the world-directedness of empirical thinking only by conceiving it as answerable to the empirical world for its correctness, and we can understand answerability to the empirical world only as mediated by answerability to the tribunal of experience, conceived in terms of the world's direct impacts on possessors of perceptual capacities. If we are restricted to the positions Davidson considers, the attractions of empiricism lead only to the incoherence of the Myth of the Given. But so long as the attractions of empiricism are not explained away, that fact is only a source of continuing philosophical discomfort, not a basis for being content with abandoning empiricism, however compulsory Davidson's conception of the options makes that seem.

It is true that, on the principles that induce Davidson and Sellars to reject empiricism, empirical thinking can be seen as rationally constrained by cases of its perceptually *appearing* to a subject that things are thus and so. This might be offered as a concession to the attrac-

tions of empiricism. But the concession does not fill the gap I am pointing to; it does not explain away the attractions of empiricism, spelled out in terms of impressions. When it perceptually appears to a subject that things are thus and so, that things are thus and so is itself a case of empirical content. As long as nothing is done to undermine the plausibility of the thought that empirical content in general is intelligible only in terms of answerability to impressions, empirical content will look just as problematic in this context as it does in the context of judgements or beliefs.

7. Sellars and Davidson think we are forced to renounce empiricism, in the relevant sense, partly because they think the logical space of reasons is *sui generis*, as compared with the logical space in which Sellars sees "empirical description" as functioning, which I have identified on Sellars's behalf with the logical space of nature. That is Sellars's way of putting the claim, but Davidson has a counterpart; what figures in Sellars as the *sui generis* character of the logical space of reasons figures in Davidson as the *sui generis* character of what he calls "the constitutive ideal of rationality".[5]

This points to a second way the tension could be resolved: rejecting the dichotomy of logical spaces. If we take this course, we can accept that the concept of experience belongs in the logical space of nature, but deny that that poses any problem for empiricism. The idea is that the logical space of reasons—in which, if we are to hold on to empiricism, experience must be related to empirical thinking—is just part of the logical space of nature; the normative relations that constitute the logical space of reasons can be reconstructed out of conceptual materials whose home is the logical space that Sellars, wrongly on this view, contrasts with the logical space of reasons. This outlook figures in this book under the label "bald naturalism". Bald naturalism refuses to accept that the relations that constitute the logical space of reasons are anything but natural, in a sense of "natural" that connects with the logical space that figures in Sellars (and, with different terminology, in Davidson) on the other side of a contrast with the logical space of reasons. According to this naturalism, moves of the sort Sellars stigmatizes as committing a naturalistic fallacy are indeed natural-

5. See especially "Mental Events", in Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980), pp. 207–25; the quoted phrase is from p. 223.

istic, but not thereby shown to be fallacious. Thus we can accept that the concept of experience belongs in the logical space of nature, but that does not debar experience, so conceived, from being intelligible as a tribunal. So there is no need to explain away the attractions of empiricism.

I shall say a little more about bald naturalism shortly (§9 below), but first I want to outline the different way of resolving the tension that I recommend.

8. My alternative holds on to the thought rejected by bald naturalism, that the structure of the logical space of reasons is *sui generis,* as compared with the structure of the logical space within which natural-scientific description situates things. Even so, my alternative makes room for us to suppose, as according to Sellars and Davidson we cannot, both that the very idea of experience is the idea of something natural and that empirical thinking is answerable to experience. This requires a different way to avoid the threat of a naturalistic fallacy.

The modern scientific revolution made possible a newly clear conception of the distinctive kind of intelligibility that the natural sciences allow us to find in things. The new clarity consists largely, I claim, in an appreciation of something close to what underlies Sellars's warning of a naturalistic fallacy. We must sharply distinguish natural-scientific intelligibility from the kind of intelligibility something acquires when we situate it in the logical space of reasons. That is a way of affirming the dichotomy of logical spaces, as bald naturalism refuses to. Even so, we can acknowledge that the idea of experience is the idea of something natural, without thereby removing the idea of experience from the logical space of reasons. What makes this possible is that we need not identify the dichotomy of logical spaces with a dichotomy between the *natural* and the normative. We need not equate the very idea of nature with the idea of instantiations of concepts that belong in the logical space—admittedly separate, on this view, from the logical space of reasons—in which the natural-scientific kind of intelligibility is brought to light.

On this view, Sellars is right that the logical space in which natural-scientific investigation achieves its distinctive kind of understanding is alien to the logical space of reasons. The logical space of reasons is the frame within which a fundamentally different kind of intelligibility

comes into view. And (the same point in different terms) Davidson is right that "the constitutive ideal of rationality" governs concepts that are for that reason quite special, in comparison with the conceptual apparatus of the nomothetic sciences. But it is one thing to acknowledge this—in Sellarsian terms, to single out a logical space that is to be contrasted with the logical space of reasons. It is another to equate that logical space, as Sellars at least implicitly does, with the logical space of *nature*. That is what makes it seem impossible to combine empiricism with the idea that the world's making an impression on a perceiving subject would have to be a natural happening. The mistake here is to forget that nature includes *second nature*. Human beings acquire a second nature in part by being initiated into conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the logical space of reasons.

Once we remember second nature, we see that operations of nature can include circumstances whose descriptions place them in the logical space of reasons, *sui generis* though that logical space is. This makes it possible to accommodate impressions in nature without posing a threat to empiricism. From the thesis that receiving an impression is a transaction in nature, there is now no good inference to the conclusion drawn by Sellars and Davidson, that the idea of receiving an impression must be foreign to the logical space in which concepts such as that of answerability function. Conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the *sui generis* logical space of reasons, can be operative not only in judgements—results of a subject's actively making up her mind about something—but already in the transactions in nature that are constituted by the world's impacts on the receptive capacities of a suitable subject; that is, one who possesses the relevant concepts. Impressions can *be* cases of its perceptually appearing—being apparent—to a subject that things are thus and so. In receiving impressions, a subject can be open to the way things manifestly are. This yields a satisfying interpretation for the image of postures that are answerable to the world through being answerable to experience.

9. The position I call "bald naturalism" figures in this book only as a competitor with the outlook I have just sketched, in the project of exorcizing some philosophical anxieties. The shared aim is to see how we need not seem obliged to set about *answering* the questions that express the anxieties. I have suggested that we can bundle the sup-

posed problems together in a question on these lines: "How is empirical content possible?" Empirical content looks problematic, in the way I aim to deal with, when one becomes inexplicitly aware of an apparent tension between empiricism and the fact that the idea of an impression is the idea of an occurrence in nature. If we can achieve a way of seeing things in which there is after all no tension there, the question, taken as a way of expressing that philosophical puzzlement, should lapse; that needs to be distinguished from its seeming to have been answered. I concern myself with bald naturalism only as sharing the wish to achieve that effect.[6]

There is a possible confusion to avoid here. Much contemporary work sets out, in a naturalistic spirit, to answer (not exorcize) questions that can be framed in the "How possible?" form, about empirical content or other aspects of mindedness. The work I mean aims to give perspicuous descriptions of the material constitution of, say, perceivers, in such a way as to make it intelligible that things composed of mere matter can possess the relevant complex of capacities. A question to which this would be an appropriate response is not a "How possible?" question of the sort I am concerned with. As I said (§2 above), a "How possible?" question of the sort I am concerned with expresses a distinctive kind of puzzlement, issuing from an inexplicit awareness of a background to one's reflection that, if made explicit, would yield an argument that the topic of the question is not possible at all. To respond to a "How possible?" question of this kind in, so to speak, engineering terms, with a perspicuous description of the requisite material constitution, would be plainly unhelpful; it would be like responding to Zeno by walking across a room. That leaves it open that investigations of the "engineering" sort might be fine for other purposes. In this book I consider bald naturalism only as a way to exorcize (not answer) the questions that give expression to that distinctively philosophical kind of puzzlement, the kind that issues from a frame of mind that, when fully explicit, would purport to display an impossibility in what the questions are asked about. Bald naturalism figures here as, I claim, a less satisfying way to do that than my alternative. I do not concern myself with those different questions and an-

6. The label "bald naturalism" is perhaps infelicitous for a position with a sophisticated motivation on these lines; that is what I acknowledge in the footnote on pp. 88–9. I took myself to be stuck with the label even so, since I had given it a thematic prominence in the lectures of which the book is a version.

swers, the ones that figure in inquiries into the machinery of mindedness.

I have tried to make it plausible that the anxieties I aim to exorcize issue from the thought—often no doubt only inchoate—that the structure of the logical space of reasons is *sui generis,* as compared with the logical framework in which natural-scientific understanding is achieved. On this view, it emerges as unsurprising that the period in which dealing with these supposed difficulties came to seem the dominant obligation of philosophy coincides with the rise of modern science, in which natural-scientific understanding, as we are now equipped to conceive it, was being separated out from a hitherto undifferentiated conception of understanding in general. According to my picture, an important element in this clarification of the proper target of natural science was an increasingly firm awareness that we must sharply distinguish natural-scientific understanding from the kind of understanding achieved by situating what is understood in the logical space of reasons; that is, precisely, that the structure of the logical space of reasons is *sui generis,* as I have read Sellars, and in different terms Davidson, as claiming it is.

Now bald naturalism has it that that perhaps inchoate sense of a conceptual divide was simply wrong; it would be revealed to be wrong by a reconstruction of the structure of the logical space of reasons in terms that belong in the logical space of natural-scientific understanding. This claim is programmatic, but that is not my ground for finding bald naturalism unsatisfying. The point is rather one that I mentioned at the beginning of this Introduction (§1 above). It is easy—and not because we are merely stupid—to be captivated by the kind of philosophy I aim to exorcize. That means that a proposed exorcism is more satisfying to the extent that it enables us to respect, as insights, the driving thoughts of those who take the familiar philosophical anxieties to pose real intellectual obligations (our driving thoughts when we find ourselves beset by the anxieties), even while we unmask the supposed obligations as illusory. Now my picture is unlike bald naturalism in just that way. I acknowledge as an insight the basic conviction that generates the anxieties, in combination with the scarcely questionable conception of impressions as occurrences in nature. In my picture, those who take it that philosophy has to answer (rather than exorcize) questions about how minds can be in touch with the world are not wrong in supposing that the logical space of reasons is *sui generis,* in just the way that seems to lead to problems about how

responsiveness to reasons can fit into the natural world. (Indeed I think that was a prime lesson our ancestors learned at the time of the rise of modern science.) We can disown an obligation to try to answer the characteristic questions of modern philosophy, without needing to deny, as bald naturalism does, that a real insight is operative in seeming to be faced with that obligation.

To make my point here, I need not pretend to have an argument that the bald naturalist programme—reconstructing the structure of the logical space of reasons in terms that belong in the logical space of natural-scientific understanding—*cannot* be executed. The point is just that the availability of my alternative and, I claim, more satisfying exorcism undercuts a philosophical motivation, the only one relevant to my concerns in this book, for supposing the programme *must* be feasible. It is not philosophically threatening to suppose there is insight in the thought that reason is not natural, in the only sense of "natural" countenanced by bald naturalism.

10. It should be clear that reflection about perceptual experience has served in this Introduction, as it does in this book, as just one example of a type. Parallel puzzlements will be prone to arise wherever we want to speak of responsiveness to reasons. "Responsiveness to reasons" is a good gloss on one notion of freedom. So the puzzlement in its general form is about how freedom, in that sense, fits into the natural world. That seems hard to comprehend if we are tempted to equate the natural with exemplifications of concepts whose home is the logical space that Sellars contrasts with the logical space of reasons. In the fifth lecture I talk briefly about another instance of the type.

Some friendly readers have taken issue with the negative attitude I profess in this book to what I call "constructive philosophy" (see, e.g., p. 95). Let me bring the point I mean to make in those terms into connection with the way I have set things out in this Introduction. What I mean by "engaging in constructive philosophy" is attempting to *answer* philosophical questions of the sort I have here singled out: "How possible?" questions whose felt urgency derives from a frame of mind that, if explicitly thought through, would yield materials for an argument that what the questions are asked about is impossible. Evidently it can seem sensible to embark on such a project only if one

does not quite understand the predicament that seems to motivate it. If the frame of mind is left in place, one cannot show how whatever it is that one is asking about is possible; if the frame of mind is dislodged, the "How possible?" question no longer has the point it seemed to have. Either way, there is no prospect of answering the question as it was putatively meant. So if I am right about the character of the philosophical anxieties I aim to deal with, there is no room for doubt that engaging in "constructive philosophy", in this sense, is not the way to approach them. As I have put it, we need to exorcize the questions rather than set about answering them. Of course that takes hard work: if you like, constructive philosophy in another sense. And of course that is what I offer in this book.

Mind and World

LECTURE I

Concepts and Intuitions

1. The overall topic I am going to consider in these lectures is the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world. I shall focus the discussion in terms of a familiar philosophical outlook, which Donald Davidson has described as a dualism of scheme and content.[1] That will get us quickly to Kant. One of my main aims is to suggest that Kant should still have a central place in our discussion of the way thought bears on reality.

When Davidson talks about a dualism of scheme and content, "scheme" means "conceptual scheme". If content is dualistically opposed to what is conceptual, "content" cannot mean what it often means in contemporary philosophy, namely, what is given by a "that" clause in, for instance, an attribution of a belief: just to have a label, we can call content in this modern sense "representational content". Representational content cannot be dualistically set over against the conceptual. That is obviously so, however hospitable we are to the idea that some representational content is non-conceptual. (I shall come to that issue in my third lecture.)

So why is it content that is supposed to stand over against concepts, in the dualism Davidson criticizes? We can arrive at an understanding of the terminology from the way it figures in Kant's remark "Thoughts without content are empty".[2] For a thought to be empty

1. "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), pp. 183–98. See especially p. 187, "a dualism of total scheme (or language) and uninterpreted content", and p. 189, "the dualism of conceptual scheme and empirical content".

2. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Macmillan, London, 1929), A51/B75.

would be for there to be nothing that one thinks when one thinks it; that is, for it to lack what I am calling "representational content". That would be for it not really to be a thought at all, and that is surely Kant's point; he is not, absurdly, drawing our attention to a special kind of thoughts, the empty ones. Now when Kant says that thoughts without content are empty, he is not merely affirming a tautology: "without content" is not just another wording for "empty", as it would be if "content" simply meant "representational content". "Without content" points to what would *explain* the sort of emptiness Kant is envisaging. And we can spell out the explanation from the other half of Kant's remark: "intuitions without concepts are blind." Thoughts without content—which would not really be thoughts at all—would be a play of concepts without any connection with intuitions, that is, bits of experiential intake. It is their connection with experiential intake that supplies the content, the substance, that thoughts would otherwise lack.

So the picture is this: the fact that thoughts are not empty, the fact that thoughts have representational content, emerges out of an interplay of concepts and intuitions. "Content" in Davidson's dualism corresponds to intuitions, bits of experiential intake, understood in terms of a dualistic conception of this interplay.

2. This Kantian background explains why what stands over against the conceptual, in the dualism Davidson considers, is often described as the Given. In fact "dualism of scheme and Given" is a better label than "dualism of scheme and content", because it does not resonate confusingly with the idea of representational content. It also suggests a specific understanding of why the dualism is tempting.

Kant makes his remark about intuitions and concepts in the course of representing empirical knowledge as the result of a co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity, between sensibility and understanding.[3] Now we should ask why it seems appropriate to describe the understanding, whose contribution to this co-operation is its com-

3. To give the lead-up to the passage I have already quoted: "If the *receptivity* of our mind, its power of receiving representations in so far as it is in any wise affected, is to be entitled sensibility, then the mind's power of producing representations from itself, the *spontaneity* of knowledge, should be called the understanding. Our nature is so constituted that our *intuition* can never be other than sensible; that is, it contains only the mode in which we are affected by objects. The faculty, on the other hand, which enables us to *think* the object of sensible intuition is the understanding. To neither of these powers may a pre-

mand of concepts, in terms of spontaneity. A schematic but suggestive answer is that the topography of the conceptual sphere is constituted by rational relations. The space of concepts is at least part of what Wilfrid Sellars calls "the space of reasons".[4] When Kant describes the understanding as a faculty of spontaneity, that reflects his view of the relation between reason and freedom: rational necessitation is not just compatible with freedom but constitutive of it. In a slogan, the space of reasons is the realm of freedom.[5]

But if our freedom in empirical thinking is total, in particular if it is not constrained from outside the conceptual sphere, that can seem to threaten the very possibility that judgements of experience might be grounded in a way that relates them to a reality external to thought. And surely there must be such grounding if experience is to be a source of knowledge, and more generally, if the bearing of empirical judgements on reality is to be intelligibly in place in our picture at all. The more we play up the connection between reason and freedom, the more we risk losing our grip on how exercises of concepts can constitute warranted judgements about the world. What we wanted to conceive as exercises of concepts threaten to degenerate into moves in a self-contained game. And that deprives us of the very idea that they are exercises of concepts. Suiting empirical beliefs to the reasons for them is not a self-contained game.

The dualism of conceptual scheme and "empirical content", of

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ference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

4. "In characterizing an episode or a state as that [better: one] of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says." This is from pp. 298–9 of Sellars's classic attack on the Myth of the Given, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, eds., *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 253–329. In much of the rest of these lectures, I shall be concerned to cast doubt on Sellars's idea that placing something in the logical space of reasons is, as such, to be contrasted with giving an empirical description of it. But the theme of placing things in the space of reasons is of central importance for me.

I say that the space of concepts is at least part of the space of reasons in order to leave it open, for the moment, that the space of reasons may extend more widely than the space of concepts; see the text below for this idea.

5. For a thoughtful discussion of this idea, see Robert Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979), 187–96.

scheme and Given, is a response to this worry. The point of the dualism is that it allows us to acknowledge an external constraint on our freedom to deploy our empirical concepts. Empirical justifications depend on rational relations, relations within the space of reasons. The putatively reassuring idea is that empirical justifications have an ultimate foundation in impingements on the conceptual realm from outside. So the space of reasons is made out to be more extensive than the space of concepts. Suppose we are tracing the ground, the justification, for a belief or a judgement. The idea is that when we have exhausted all the available moves within the space of concepts, all the available moves from one conceptually organized item to another, there is still one more step we can take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience. It can only be pointing, because *ex hypothesi* this last move in a justification comes after we have exhausted the possibilities of tracing grounds from one conceptually organized, and so articulable, item to another.

I began with the thought that is expressed in Kant's remark: the very idea of representational content, not just the idea of judgements that are adequately justified, requires an interplay between concepts and intuitions, bits of experiential intake. Otherwise what was meant to be a picture of the exercise of concepts can depict only a play of empty forms. I have modulated into talking about how the idea of the Given figures in a thought about the grounding that entitles some empirical judgements to count as knowledgeable. But this explicitly epistemological idea is straightforwardly connected with the more general idea I began with. Empirical judgements in general—whether or not they reflect knowledge, and even whether or not they are justified at all, perhaps less substantially than knowledge requires—had better have content of a sort that admits of empirical justification, even if there is none in the present case (say in a quite unsupported guess). We could not begin to suppose that we understood how pointing to a bit of the Given could justify the use of a concept in judgement—could, at the limit, display the judgement as knowledgeable—unless we took this possibility of warrant to be constitutive of the concept's being what it is, and hence constitutive of its contribution to any thinkable content it figures in, whether that of a knowledgeable, or less substantially justifiable, judgement or any other.

This supposed requirement would bear immediately on observational concepts: concepts suited to figure in judgements that are di-

rectly responsive to experience. The supposed requirement is reflected in a familiar picture of the formation of such concepts, a picture that is a natural counterpart to the idea of the Given. The idea is that if concepts are to be even partly constituted by the fact that judgements in which they figure are grounded in the Given, then the associated conceptual capacities must be acquired from confrontations with suitable bits of the Given: that is, occasions when pointing to an ultimate warrant would have been feasible. But in any ordinary impingement on our sensibility, it would have to be a manifold Given that is presented to us. So in order to form an observational concept, a subject would have to abstract out the right element in the presented multiplicity.

This abstractionist picture of the role of the Given in the formation of concepts has been trenchantly criticized, in a Wittgensteinian spirit, by P. T. Geach.[6] I shall come back to Wittgenstein's thought about this sort of question later in this lecture (§7).

Once we have equipped ourselves with this picture of how empirical substance is infused into concepts at the ground level, the level of observational concepts, it will seem straightforward to extend the picture from there. The idea is that empirical substance is transmitted from the ground level to empirical concepts that are further removed from immediate experience, with the transmission running along channels constituted by the inferential linkages that hold a system of concepts together.

3. I have tried to explain what makes the idea of the Given tempting. But in fact it is useless for its purpose.

The idea of the Given is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought. But we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities. The attempt to extend the scope of justificatory relations outside the conceptual sphere cannot do what it is supposed to do.

6. *Mental Acts* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957), §§6–11.

What we wanted was a reassurance that when we use our concepts in judgement, our freedom—our spontaneity in the exercise of our understanding—is constrained from outside thought, and constrained in a way that we can appeal to in displaying the judgements as justified. But when we make out that the space of reasons is more extensive than the conceptual sphere, so that it can incorporate extra-conceptual impingements from the world, the result is a picture in which constraint from outside is exerted at the outer boundary of the expanded space of reasons, in what we are committed to depicting as a brute impact from the exterior. Now perhaps this picture secures that we cannot be blamed for what happens at that outer boundary, and hence that we cannot be blamed for the inward influence of what happens there. What happens there is the result of an alien force, the causal impact of the world, operating outside the control of our spontaneity. But it is one thing to be exempt from blame, on the ground that the position we find ourselves in can be traced ultimately to brute force; it is quite another thing to have a justification. In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications.[7]

It can be difficult to accept that the Myth of the Given is a myth. It can seem that if we reject the Given, we merely reopen ourselves to the threat to which the idea of the Given is a response, the threat that our picture does not accommodate any external constraint on our activity in empirical thought and judgement. It can seem that we are retaining

7. In the lecture as delivered, I said "excuses" where I now say "exculpations"; Zvi Cohen pointed out that that does not make the contrast I want. What I want is an analogue to the sense in which if someone is found in a place from which she has been banished, she is exculpated by the fact that she was deposited there by a tornado. Her arriving there is completely removed from the domain of what she is responsible for; it is not that she is still responsible, but there is a basis for mitigating any sanctions.

When we are tempted by the Myth of the Given, we carefully ensure that relations across the envisaged outer boundary of the space of concepts, relations between bits of the Given and the most basic judgements of experience, can be reason-constituting; that is the point of taking the space of reasons to extend more widely than the space of concepts. But we forget to consider how things look at the new outer boundary of the space of reasons, where it makes contact with independent reality. What we wanted was to see our exercises of spontaneity as subject to a constraint imposed by the world itself, but in such a way as not to undermine the applicability of the idea of spontaneity. We wanted to be able to credit ourselves with responsible freedom, so that we are within the scope of possible justifications, all the way out to the ultimate contact between our mental life and the world. My main point in this lecture is to bring out how difficult it is to see that we can have both desiderata: both rational constraint from the world and spontaneity all the way out. The Myth of the Given renounces the second, and the Davidsonian response that I consider below (§6) renounces the first.

a role for spontaneity but refusing to acknowledge any role for receptivity, and that is intolerable. If our activity in empirical thought and judgement is to be recognizable as bearing on reality at all, there must be external constraint. There must be a role for receptivity as well as spontaneity, for sensibility as well as understanding. Realizing this, we come under pressure to recoil back into appealing to the Given, only to see all over again that it cannot help. There is a danger of falling into an interminable oscillation.

But we can find a way to dismount from the seesaw.

4. The original Kantian thought was that empirical knowledge results from a co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity. (Here "spontaneity" can be simply a label for the involvement of conceptual capacities.) We can dismount from the seesaw if we can achieve a firm grip on this thought: receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation.

The relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity. (It is important that that is not the only context in which they are operative. I shall come back to this in §5.) It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity. We should understand what Kant calls "intuition"—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content. In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge.

Of course one can be misled into supposing that one takes in that things are thus and so when things are not thus and so. But when one is not misled, one takes in how things are. It does not matter much that one can be misled. I shall not talk about it until my final lecture, and not much then.

In the view I am urging, the conceptual contents that sit closest to the impact of external reality on one's sensibility are not already, *qua* conceptual, some distance away from that impact. They are not the results of a first step within the space of reasons, a step that would be retraced by the last step in laying out justifications, as that activity is conceived within the dualism of scheme and Given. This supposed first step would be a move from an impression, conceived as the bare reception of a bit of the Given, to a judgement justified by the impression. But it is not like that: the conceptual contents that are most basic

in this sense are already possessed by impressions themselves, impingements by the world on our sensibility.

This makes room for a different notion of givenness, one that is innocent of the confusion between justification and exculpation. Now we need not try to make out that the space of reasons is more extensive than the space of concepts. When we trace the ground for an empirical judgement, 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. But it takes us to something in which sensibility—receptivity—is operative, so we need no longer be unnerved by the freedom implicit in the idea that our conceptual capacities belong to a faculty of spontaneity. We need not worry that our picture leaves out the external constraint that is required if exercises of our conceptual capacities are to be recognizable as bearing on the world at all.

5. I said (§4) that when we enjoy experience conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity, not exercised *on* some supposedly prior deliverances of receptivity. And it is not that I want to say they are exercised on something else. It sounds off key in this connection to speak of *exercising* conceptual capacities at all. That would suit an activity, whereas experience is passive.[8] 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. The content is not something one has put together oneself, as when one decides what to say about something. 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.

Because experience is passive, the involvement of conceptual capacities in experience does not by itself provide a good fit for the idea of

8. Of course this is not to deny that experiencing the world involves activity. Searching is an activity; so are observing, watching, and so forth. (This sort of thing is usefully stressed by people who think we should not conceive experience as passive reception at all, such as J. J. Gibson; see, for instance, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1968).) But one's control over what happens in experience has limits: one can decide where to place oneself, at what pitch to tune one's attention, and so forth, but it is not up to one what, having done all that, one will experience. This minimal point is what I am insisting on.

a faculty of spontaneity. That may make it seem that I am not really disarming the Myth of the Given, but merely rejecting the terms that pose the apparent problem it responds to. What generates the temptation to appeal to the Given is the thought that spontaneity characterizes exercises of conceptual understanding in general, so that spontaneity extends all the way out to the conceptual contents that sit closest to the impacts of the world on our sensibility. We need to conceive this expansive spontaneity as subject to control from outside our thinking, on pain of representing the operations of spontaneity as a frictionless spinning in a void. The Given seems to supply that external control. And now it may seem that when I stress that experience is passive, I am dissolving the temptation by simply denying that spontaneity extends all the way out to the content of experience, even though I claim that conceptual capacities are operative in experience.

But it is not like that. The craving for external friction in our picture of spontaneity is not something we can satisfy in that way, by simply restricting the scope of spontaneity, making it less extensive than the sphere of the conceptual.

We would not be able to suppose that the capacities that are in play in experience are conceptual if they were manifested only in experience, only in operations of receptivity. They would not be recognizable as conceptual capacities at all unless they could also be exercised in active thinking, that is, in ways that do provide a good fit for the idea of spontaneity. Minimally, it must be possible to decide whether or not to judge that things are as one's experience represents them to be. How one's experience represents things to be is not under one's control, but it is up to one whether one accepts the appearance or rejects it.[9] Moreover, even if we consider only judgements that register experience itself, which are already active in that minimal sense, we must acknowledge that the capacity to use concepts in those judgements is not self-standing; it cannot be in place independently of a capacity to use the same concepts outside that context. That is so even with the concepts that are most immediately linked to the subjective character of experience itself, the concepts of secondary qualities. Quite generally, the capacities that are drawn on in experience are recognizable as conceptual only against the background of the fact

9. The point here is well illustrated by familiar illusions. In the Müller-Lyer illusion, one's experience represents the two lines as being unequally long, but someone in the know will refrain from judging that that is how things are.

that someone who has them is responsive to rational relations, which link the contents of judgements of experience with other judgeable contents. These linkages give the concepts their place as elements in possible views of the world.

For example, consider judgements of colour. These judgements involve a range of conceptual capacities that are as thinly integrated into understanding of the world as any. Even so, no one could count as making even a directly observational judgement of colour except against a background sufficient to ensure that she understands colours as potential properties of things. The ability to produce "correct" colour words in response to inputs to the visual system (an ability possessed, I believe, by some parrots) does not display possession of the relevant concepts if the subject has no comprehension of, for instance, the idea that these responses reflect a sensitivity to a kind of state of affairs in the world, something that can obtain anyway, independently of these perturbations in her stream of consciousness. The necessary background understanding includes, for instance, the concept of visible surfaces of objects and the concept of suitable conditions for telling what colour something is by looking at it.[10]

Of course the concepts that can figure in the content of experience are not restricted to concepts of secondary qualities. Once we take that into account, it becomes even clearer that the passive operation of conceptual capacities in sensibility is not intelligible independently of their active exercise in judgement, and in the thinking that issues in judgement.

The conceptual capacities that are passively drawn into play in experience belong to a network of capacities for active thought, a network that rationally governs comprehension-seeking responses to the impacts of the world on sensibility. And part of the point of the idea that the understanding is a faculty of spontaneity—that conceptual capacities are capacities whose exercise is in the domain of responsible freedom—is that the network, as an individual thinker finds it governing her thinking, is not sacrosanct. Active empirical thinking takes place under a standing obligation to reflect about the credentials of the putatively rational linkages that govern it. There must be a stand-

10. For an elaboration of points of this kind, see Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", §§10–20.

ing willingness to refashion concepts and conceptions if that is what reflection recommends. No doubt there is no serious prospect that we might need to reshape the concepts at the outermost edges of the system, the most immediately observational concepts, in response to pressures from inside the system. But that no-doubt unreal prospect brings out the point that matters for my present purpose. This is that although experience itself is not a good fit for the idea of spontaneity, even the most immediately observational concepts are partly constituted by their role in something that is indeed appropriately conceived in terms of spontaneity.[11]

So we cannot simply insulate the passive involvement of conceptual capacities in experience from the potentially unnerving effects of the freedom implied by the idea of spontaneity. If we think that the way to exploit the passivity of experience is to deny that spontaneity extends all the way out to the content of experience, we merely fall back into a misleadingly formulated version of the Myth of the Given. If we try to keep spontaneity out of the picture but nevertheless talk of conceptual capacities operating in experience, the talk of conceptual capacities is mere word-play. The trouble about the Myth of the Given is that it offers us at best exculpations where we wanted justifications. That trouble shows up again here, in connection with impingements on spontaneity by the so-called conceptual deliverances of sensibility. If those impingements are conceived as outside the scope of spontaneity, outside the domain of responsible freedom, then the best they can yield is that we cannot be blamed for believing whatever they lead us to believe, not that we are justified in believing it.

I am not, then, proposing a cheap defeat of the Given, to be achieved by exploiting the fact that experience is passive so as to keep experience out of the scope of spontaneity. The view I am recommending is that even though experience is passive, it draws into operation capacities that genuinely belong to spontaneity.

6. It need not be a mere superficial oversight if someone fails to see a possibility here—if someone cannot understand how capacities that

11. I intend the imagery of this paragraph to be reminiscent of the well-known closing section of W. V. Quine's classic paper "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in his *From a Logical Point of View* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961; 1st ed. 1953), pp. 20–46.

belong to spontaneity could be inextricably implicated in an operation of mere receptivity. It can be difficult to see a way out here, and the roots of the difficulty lie deep.

I want to provide a first illustration of this from Davidson himself. In a well-known paper in which he recommends a coherence approach to truth and knowledge,[12] Davidson shows a blind spot for the way out that I have described. He does not argue against it; it simply does not figure among the possibilities that he contemplates.

Davidson is clear that if we conceive experience in terms of impacts on sensibility that occur outside the space of concepts, we must not think we can appeal to experience to justify judgements or beliefs. That would be to fall into the Myth of the Given, with its confusion of justification and exculpation. The space of reasons does not extend further than the space of concepts, to take in a bare reception of the Given. So far, this is just what I have been urging.

But 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. According to Davidson, experience is causally relevant to a subject's beliefs and judgements, but it has no bearing on their status as justified or warranted. Davidson says that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" (p. 310), and he means in particular that experience cannot count as a reason for holding a belief.

Of course I agree with the point this train of thought starts from. But the conclusion is quite unsatisfying. Davidson recoils from the Myth of the Given all the way to denying experience any justificatory 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. This is just one of the movements in the oscillation that I have spoken of. There is nothing to prevent it from triggering the familiar recoil in its turn. Davidson's picture depicts our empirical thinking as engaged in with no rational constraint, but only causal influence, from outside. This just raises a worry as to whether the picture can accommodate the sort of bearing on reality that empirical content amounts to, and that is just the kind of worry that can make an appeal to the Given seem necessary. And Davidson does nothing to

12. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", reprinted in Ernest LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), pp. 307–19.

allay the worry. I think we should be suspicious of his bland confidence that empirical content can be intelligibly in our picture even though we carefully stipulate that the world's impacts on our senses have nothing to do with justification.

Of course Davidson believes that his position is a place where thought can come to rest, not a movement in an interminable oscillation. But I think he contrives to make it seem so only by going insufficiently deeply into the motivation of the Myth of the Given.

He remarks that a foundationalist conception of experience "leads to skepticism" (p. 314). Of course it is true that appealing to the Given gets us nowhere in epistemology. But it is not true that philosophical worries about scepticism arise out of the failure of the idea of the Given. And the idea of the Given is not something that comes to us in calm reflection, as if from nowhere, as a possible basis for the epistemology of empirical knowledge, so that we can cheerfully drop it when we see that it does not work. Rather, the idea of the Given is a response to a way of thinking that underlies the familiar philosophical anxiety about empirical knowledge, and that way of thinking is precisely what Davidson endorses.

We can seem to be forced into the idea of the Given; that is what happens when we are impressed by the thought that conceptual capacities belong to a faculty of spontaneity, and fall into worrying that our picture deprives itself of the possibility that exercises of concepts could be what it depicts, because it leaves out any rational constraint from outside the sphere of thought. One form that this worry takes is the fear that we have no convincing way to credit ourselves with empirical knowledge. The recoil to the Given that results from this worry—whether in its generic form (how can it be that exercises of spontaneity bear on a reality outside the sphere of thinking at all?) or in its specifically epistemological form (how can exercises of spontaneity amount to knowledge?)—is a natural response to the very sort of "coherence theory of truth and knowledge" that Davidson recommends. Such theories express precisely the unnerving idea that the spontaneity of conceptual thinking is not subject to rational constraint from outside. Coherentist rhetoric suggests images of confinement within the sphere of thinking, as opposed to being in touch with something outside it. To one who finds such imagery both appropriate and worrying, the idea of the Given can give the appearance of reinstating thought's bearing on reality. And at this point in the dialectic,

it is no good pointing out that the appearance is illusory, that the idea of the Given does not fulfil its apparent promise, if the worry that can make the idea nevertheless seem inescapable remains urgent, or is even exacerbated. The effect is simply to bring out that neither of the two positions that we are being asked to choose between is satisfying.

Davidson does nothing to discourage us from taking his coherentist rhetoric in terms of confinement imagery. On the contrary, he positively encourages it. At one point he says, "Of course we can't get outside our skins to find out what is causing the internal happenings of which we are aware" (p. 312). This is, as it stands, a very unsatisfactory remark. Why should we suppose that to find out about external objects we would have to get outside our skins? (Of course we cannot do that.) And why should we suppose that we are interested in finding out what is causing internal happenings of which we are aware, rather than that we are simply interested in the layout of the environment? Of course getting outside our skins is not the same as getting outside our thoughts. But perhaps we can understand how Davidson can be so casual in this remark if we take it that our literal confinement inside our skins strikes him as an analogue to a metaphorical confinement inside our beliefs, which he is happy to let his coherentism imply. Davidson's picture is that we cannot get outside our beliefs.

Of course Davidson knows that such confinement imagery tends to prompt a recoil to the idea of the Given, the idea that truth and knowledge depend on rational relations to something outside the conceptual realm. He thinks he can allow free rein to confinement imagery, but pre-empt the recoil by arguing, within his coherentist framework, for the evidently reassuring thesis that "belief is in its nature veridical" (p. 314). Davidson argues for that thesis by connecting belief with interpretation, and urging that it is in the nature of interpretation that an interpreter must find her subjects mostly right about the world with which she can observe them causally interacting.

I do not want to dispute that argument. But I do want to raise the question how effectively it can reassure us, if we are worried about whether Davidson's coherentist picture can incorporate thought's bearing on reality. Suppose one feels the worry in this familiar form: so far as the picture goes, one might be a brain in a mad scientist's vat. The Davidsonian response seems to be that if one were a brain in a vat, it would be correct to interpret one's beliefs as being largely true

beliefs about the brain's electronic environment.[13] But is that the reassurance we need if we are to be immunized against the attractions of the Given? The argument was supposed to start with the body of beliefs to which we are supposed to be confined, in our active efforts to suit our thinking to the available justifications. It was supposed to make the confinement imagery unthreatening by reassuring us that those beliefs are mostly true. But the response to the brain-in-a-vat worry works the wrong way round. The response does not calm the fear that our picture leaves our thinking possibly out of touch with the world outside us. It just gives us a dizzying sense that our grip on what it is that we believe is not as firm as we thought.[14]

I think the right conclusion is this: whatever credence we give to Davidson's argument that a body of belief is sure to be mostly true, the argument starts too late to certify Davidson's position as a genuine escape from the oscillation.

The only motivation for the Myth of the Given that figures in Davidson's thinking is a shallow scepticism, in which, taking it for granted that one has a body of beliefs, one worries about their credentials. But the Myth of the Given has a deeper motivation, in the thought that if spontaneity is not subject to rational constraint from outside, as Davidson's coherentist position insists that it is not, then we cannot make it intelligible to ourselves how exercises of spontaneity can represent the world at all. Thoughts without intuitions are empty, and the point is not met by crediting intuitions with a causal impact on thoughts; we can have empirical content in our picture only if we can acknowledge that thoughts and intuitions are rationally con-

13. We have this on the testimony of Richard Rorty; see p. 340 of his "Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth", in LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation*, pp. 333–55.

14. It takes care to say precisely why the response is unsatisfying. It is not that we are being told we may be egregiously wrong about what our beliefs are about. If I protest that some belief of mine is not about electronic impulses or whatever but about, say, a book, the reply can be: "Certainly your belief is about a book—given how 'a book' as you use the phrase is correctly interpreted." The envisaged reinterpretation, to suit the hypothesis that I am a brain in a vat, affects my higher-level beliefs about what my first-level beliefs are about in a way that precisely matches its effect on my first-level beliefs. The problem is that in the argument Rorty attributes to Davidson, we ring changes on the actual environment (as seen by the interpreter and brought into the interpretation) without changing how things strike the believer, even while the interpretation is supposed to capture how the believer is in touch with her world. This strikes me as making it impossible to claim that the argument traffics in any genuine idea of being in touch with something in particular. The objects that the interpreter sees the subject's beliefs as being about become, as it were, merely noumenal so far as the subject is concerned.

nected. By rejecting that, Davidson undermines his right to the idea that his purportedly reassuring argument starts from, the idea of a body of beliefs. In that case his attempt to disarm the confinement imagery does not work, and his position is exposed as a version of one phase in the oscillation. A genuine escape would require that we avoid the Myth of the Given without renouncing the claim that experience is a rational constraint on thinking.

I have suggested that we can do that if we can recognize that the world's impressions on our senses are already possessed of conceptual content. But there is a block that prevents Davidson from seeing any possibilities in this direction. I shall come back to this in later lectures.

7. The Myth of the Given expresses a craving for rational constraint from outside the realm of thought and judgement. This craving is most familiar in connection with empirical knowledge of the world about us: knowledge yielded by what Kant calls "outer sense".[15] But it is instructive to see that the spatial phrase that I have just used, "outside the realm of thought and judgement", is only metaphorical. Exactly the same temptation arises in connection with what Kant calls "inner sense".[16] The realm of thought and judgement includes judgements about the thinker's own perceptions, thoughts, sensations, and the like. The conceptual capacities that are operative in such judgements must belong to spontaneity just as much as any other conceptual capacities do, and that can generate the spectre of a frictionless spinning in a void for this region of thought too. Then, in the way that should by now be familiar, ensuring friction, which is required for genuine content, can seem to oblige us to take exercises of concepts in this region to be rationally grounded in something extra-conceptual, bare presences that are the ultimate grounds of judgements.

This description of an apparently compulsory way of thinking fits Wittgenstein's target in the so-called Private Language Argument. If we understand that polemic as applying a general rejection of the Given, we make available to ourselves a sharp appreciation of its cogency. And perhaps we can also acquire a richer understanding of the

15. For instance at B67.

16. For instance at A22/B37. For the two phrases together in a single discussion, see the footnote at Bxxxix–xli.

general point by considering the way it shows up in those familiar passages of Wittgenstein.[17]

I say "so-called Private Language Argument" because according to this reading the main point of the conception Wittgenstein attacks is to claim that "judgements of inner sense" are ultimately grounded on bare presences, rather than to devise a way to put the bare presences into words. If someone in the grip of the conception was convinced by an argument that language could not embrace the supposed items she insists on, she might reply that that is really just her point. If language could embrace them, that would mean they were within the conceptual sphere, and the point of acknowledging them is to acknowledge something that constrains spontaneity, which moves within that sphere, from outside. So certainly language cannot capture them; but still, it can seem necessary to insist, they are there to be pointed to as the ultimate justifications for judgements of "inner sense". The fundamental thrust of Wittgenstein's attack is not to eliminate the idea of a private language, which by itself would merely push the line of thought that he opposes to this point. Wittgenstein's attack undermines even this position, which has already given up the idea of a private language, by applying the general moral: a bare presence cannot be a ground for anything.

However, if one becomes convinced that the ultimate grounds for judgements of experience must be bits of the Given, one will naturally take oneself to be committed to the possibility of concepts that sit as closely as possible to those ultimate grounds, in the sense that their content is wholly determined by the fact that judgements involving them are warranted by the right sort of bare presence. These concepts will be the concepts that are supposed to be expressible by the words of a private language. Only one person could be the subject to whom a particular bit of the Given is given. So any concept that was constituted by a justificatory relation to a bare presence would have to be, to that extent, a private concept. It would be natural to suppose that these private concepts are acquired by abstraction from a manifold Given, as in the story about concept-formation that I mentioned ear-

17. I have said a little more about this reading of Wittgenstein in "One Strand in the Private Language Argument", *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 33/34 (1989), 285–303. See also my "Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein", in Klaus Puhl, ed., *Meaning Scepticism* (De Gruyter, Berlin, 1991), pp. 148–69.

lier. The work of abstraction is the private ostensive definition that figures in Wittgenstein's polemic.

So situating the Private Language Argument in the context of a general rejection of the Given does not dispense us from considering the argument against private language, or at any rate against private concepts, as such. Still, I think we put those of Wittgenstein's remarks that are specifically about private language in the right light if we see them as efforts to insist on the consequences for language of the general point: that a bare presence cannot supply a justificatory input into a conceptual repertoire from outside it, the sort of thing the connection between concepts and spontaneity made us hanker for. If a concept is constituted by a justificatory linkage to a bare presence, which is what its being a private concept would amount to, then spontaneity does not extend as far as it. In fact it is really the point of the conception to exempt exercises of these supposed concepts from the responsibility that comes with spontaneity. What we have here is a version of a structure I mentioned earlier (§5), in connection with a misconception of the fact that experience is passive. Calling something to which spontaneity does not extend "a concept", and calling the linkage "rational", is fraudulent labelling: in effect, labelling a mere exculpation a justification, in the vain hope that that could make it be one.

I mentioned Geach's Wittgensteinian attack on the abstractionist account of concept-formation (§2). I have been suggesting that the Private Language Argument applies the general rejection of the Given. But it would be misleading to represent the Private Language Argument as a particular application of a more general thought. As I said, any concept that was constituted by a justificatory relation to a bare presence would have to be a private concept. Making the abstraction that would be necessary to form such a concept would be giving oneself a private ostensive definition. In effect the idea that concepts can be formed by abstraction from the Given just is the idea of private ostensive definition. So the Private Language Argument just is the rejection of the Given, in so far as it bears on the possibilities for language; it is not an application of a general rejection of the Given to a particular area. What is an application of the general point is the rejection of bare presences as what sensations and so forth are.

It makes no difference if the right occasions for performing a private ostensive definition are supposed to be signalled by other people. That is a way in which one might hope to integrate a private element,

rational responsiveness to a bare presence, into a composite concept that has a public aspect, a rational linkage into a shareable conceptual repertoire, as well. Wittgenstein expresses the idea in this passage: "Or is it like this: the word 'red' means something known to everyone; and in addition, for each person, it means something known only to him? (Or perhaps rather: it *refers* to something known only to him.)"[18] If the idea of rational responsiveness to a bare presence is a confusion, this linkage into a shareable repertoire cannot save these supposedly composite concepts from being vitiated by their private ingredients. The confusion between justification and exculpation just shows up at the joint between the supposed ingredients of the composite concept.

The Myth of the Given is especially insidious in the case of "inner sense". In the case of "outer sense", the idea is that the Given mediates between the experiencing subject and an independent outer reality, of which the subject is aware through this mediation. If we reject the Given, we are not thereby abolishing the outer reality, but merely obliging ourselves not to suppose that awareness of it is mediated in that way. But the objects of "inner sense" are internal accusatives to the awareness that "inner experiences" constitute; they have no existence independently of that awareness.[19] That means that if we let bare presences into the picture, they figure as the only objects of awareness in play; they cannot figure as mediating an awareness of something else beyond them, at any rate if the mediated awareness is itself to be conceived in terms of "inner sense" at work.[20] And the result is that when we reject the Given here, we can seem to be rejecting "inner" awareness altogether. There seems to be nothing else for "inner experience" to be experience of.

How can we reject the Given without thus obliterating "inner" awareness? To give the impressions of "inner sense" the right role in justifying judgements, we need to conceive them, like the impressions of "outer sense", as themselves already possessing conceptual content; to supply the necessary limit to the freedom of spontaneity, we need

18. *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1951), §273.

19. See P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (Methuen, London, 1966), pp. 100–1.

20. Not that "inner experience" cannot mediate awareness. For instance, a certain sensation might yield a mediated awareness of a certain bodily condition. But here the object of the mediated awareness is not "inner" in the Kantian sense. See the text below.

to insist that they are indeed impressions, products of receptivity. So the impressions of "inner sense" must be, like the impressions of "outer sense", passive occurrences in which conceptual capacities are drawn into operation. But if we are to respect the point about internal accusatives, we cannot conceive these passive operations of conceptual capacities exactly on the model of the impressions of "outer sense". We cannot suppose that these operations of conceptual capacities constitute awareness of circumstances that obtain in any case, and that impress themselves on a subject as they do because of some suitable relation to her sensibility. No doubt there are circumstances that obtain in any case, and figure in the aetiology of impressions of "inner sense": for instance, bodily damage in the case of feelings of pain. But if we are to respect the point about internal accusatives, we cannot suppose that such circumstances are objects of an awareness that is constituted by the impressions of "inner sense". (Although one can no doubt learn to find out about such circumstances from the impressions of "inner sense".) If we can make out that judgements of "inner sense" are about anything, it has to be that they are about the impressions of "inner sense" themselves, not about something independent of which the impressions constitute awareness.

This is a very difficult area. Wittgenstein himself sometimes seems to betray an understandable wish to duck the difficulties. What I have in mind here is the fact that he sometimes seems to toy with denying that self-ascriptions of sensation are assertions, articulations of judgements about states of affairs, at all.[21]

I have claimed that we should connect "inner experience" with conceptual capacities, so as to think about "inner sense" in parallel with "outer sense" to the fullest extent that is possible. One obvious source of difficulty about this is that creatures with no faculty of spontaneity can surely, for instance, feel pain. (Remember that "spontaneity" alludes to conceptual capacities. I am not trying to obliterate the self-moving character of merely animal life.) I shall come back to this in later lectures. My aim here has been not to wrap the matter up, but

21. For instance, p. 68 of *The Blue Book* (in *The Blue and Brown Books* [Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958]): "The difference between the propositions 'I have pain' and 'he has pain' is not that of 'L. W. has pain' and 'Smith has pain'. Rather it corresponds to the difference between moaning and saying that someone moans." I would not dispute what is said in the first of these sentences. But sentences like the second have suggested, at least to some commentators, a doctrine that assimilates "avowals" to other modes of expression, so as to distance them from assertions, and that strikes me as a cop-out.

only to introduce the suggestion that we should read the Private Language Argument as an attack on the Given.

8. In this lecture, I have claimed that we are prone to fall into an intolerable oscillation: in one phase we are drawn to a coherentism that cannot make sense of the bearing of thought on objective reality, and in the other phase we recoil into an appeal to the Given, which turns out to be useless. I have urged that in order to escape the oscillation, we need a conception of experiences as states or occurrences that are passive but reflect conceptual capacities, capacities that belong to spontaneity, in operation. In the next lecture I shall start to consider some difficulties about this conception.