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## EPISODE I

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### *Cogito and Homo sapiens*

Just as nature developed itself as a whole from the original act of self-consciousness, a second nature will emerge...from free self-determination.

– F. W. J. Schelling, *The System of Transcendental Philosophy*

...man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions – eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment – while in his human functions, he is nothing more than animal.

– Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*

### *Nature*

1. We are human beings. This plain fact indicates, at least implicitly, that we are at the same time rational and natural. This may seduce us ‘to see ourselves as peculiarly bifurcated, with a foothold in the animal kingdom and a mysterious separate involvement in an extra-natural world of rational connections,’<sup>1</sup> John McDowell observes. We do not need reductive physicalism to ensure that we are *Homo sapiens*, and we do not need substance dualism to maintain that each of us is, or has, a *Cogito*. The trouble is that it is hard to see how we can be both natural and rational: if we conceive ‘nature’ as the domain exhausted by scientific investigations narrowly construed, it seems obvious that there is no room for the notion of ‘reason.’ But we cannot have a satisfying self-image without accommodating the element that makes us properly human.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mind and World*, p.78.

2. Wilfrid Sellars once remarked: '[i]n 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.'<sup>2</sup> Relations in the space of reasons are rational, normative ones; they can be evaluated as correct or incorrect. McDowell contrasts the space of reasons with 'the realm of law,' which is demarcated by natural science.<sup>3</sup> The Sellars-McDowell line of thought is that the two spaces are *sui generis* (i.e. different in kind)<sup>4</sup>. That is to say, if one attempts to reconstruct the intelligibility of the space of reasons from the resources of the realm of law, one '[falls] into a naturalistic fallacy.'<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the *sui generis* nature should not be secured by 'picturing the space of reasons as an autonomous structure – autonomous in that it is constituted independently of anything specifically human (the idea of the human is the idea of what pertains to a certain species of animals)...'<sup>6</sup> This pair of thoughts serves to respect our commonsense that we are rational animals, without committing ourselves a presumably mystical 'supernaturalism' – a thought that renounces our status as *natural* beings.<sup>7</sup> But things are not so simple. If the space of reasons is of its own kind, evading the net of *natural* sciences, how can we understand it without the notion of 'supernatural'? And if we are to avoid unpalatable supernaturalism, how can we preserve the idea that human beings are properly *human* precisely because we live in the space of reasons?

The predicament is well characterized by a Sellarsian metaphor 'the clash of the images,' introduced by James O'Shea.<sup>8</sup> The two images – the manifest image and the scientific image – clash because of the *sui generis* thesis, and supernaturalism seems to be the inescapable result of the clash. The Sellarsian task, which is taken up by McDowell as well as other Sellarsians, is to 'fuse the images,' put by Jay Rosenberg,

<sup>2</sup> 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,' pp. 298-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Mind and World*, p.xv. Notice that the realm of law should not be understood as the space of 'causal relations to objects,' as Rorty does in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.157. McDowell offers two reasons for this. First, following Russell's 'On the Notion of Cause,' in his *Mysticism and Logic* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1917), pp.132-51, McDowell thinks that 'the idea of causation should be replaced, in the role of basic organizing principle for the world as viewed by natural science, with something like the idea of law-governed processes' (*Mind and World*, p.71, n.2). Second, 'it is also disputable in its implication that the idea of causal connections is restricted to thinking that is *not* framed by the space of reasons' (ibid., same footnote). Reasons can be causes; causations that figure in the space of reasons are called the 'space of reason causations' by Richard Gaskin, in his *Experience and the World's Own Language* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), p.28. This qualification will become important when we later consider some objections against McDowell's position.

<sup>4</sup> *Mind and World*, p.xix.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>8</sup> *Wilfrid Sellars: Naturalism with a Normative Turn* (Polity Press, 2007), p.10. The metaphor is based on Sellars's classic paper 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man,' in Robert Colodny (ed.), *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), pp.35-78.

O'Shea's teacher.<sup>9</sup>

But not everyone is Sellarsian. There are two main strands in response to the dilemma presented above. One is to '[deny] that the spontaneity of the understanding is *sui generis* in the way suggested by the link to the idea of freedom.'<sup>10</sup> This is called 'bald naturalism.' It is 'bald' because it erases what is distinctively human. McDowell has no intention to argue that bald naturalism is false; he only suggests that the view is 'a less satisfying way to [solve the philosophical puzzlement in question] than [his] alternative,'<sup>11</sup> which will emerge later. The other way is to regard 'the structure of the space of reasons' as 'simply extra-natural...as if we had a foothold outside the animal kingdom, in a splendidly non-human realm of identity.'<sup>12</sup> This is called 'rampant platonism.' It is 'rampant' because it overemphasizes what is distinctively human. Here again, McDowell does not, and cannot knock it down. After all, though the view is indeed mysterious, it does not follow that it cannot be true in a mysterious way. What McDowell (and indeed everyone who opposes to it) can do is to elaborate one or another more satisfying way to understand human being.<sup>13</sup>

### *Nurture*

1. The view McDowell recommends 'is a naturalism of *second nature*,' and it 'can equally see it as a *naturalized platonism*.'<sup>14</sup> In order to understand this, first we need to learn more about the notion of 'second nature.'

Recall that when the notion of the realm of law is introduced, it is supposed to be contrasted with the space of reasons. The realm of law is coextensive with, and indeed defined by, the domain of natural sciences. A natural, and indeed seemingly unavoidable thought followed from this is that nature is exhausted by the realm of law. This line of thought is neutral with regard to the disagreement between bald naturalism and rampant platonism, for what they disagree is whether the space of reasons is *sui*

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<sup>9</sup> Wilfrid Sellars: *Fusing the Images* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2007). I first met Jay and Jim at the conference in memoriam of Sellars 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,' summer 2006, held by University College London. Although we did not discuss anything specific about Sellars at that occasion, still I am indebted to them very much, both through casual conversations and subsequent email correspondences. Jay passed away couple of weeks before I started to write this essay. I regret that I cannot dedicate the piece to him in person.

To say that the task in question is a Sellarsian one is not to say that it is *exclusively* Sellarsian. Actually, many so-called 'naturalistic' philosophers aim to show that the mind depends on, and therefore is compatible with, natural phenomena, given that nature is understood as the realm of law. I say 'many' because there are also many other 'reductive naturalists' who repudiate the space of reason altogether. I will come back to this presently.

<sup>10</sup> *Mind and World*, p.67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xxi.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>13</sup> I will say more about this later in this episode when I discuss Crispin Wright's objection.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91, my italics.

*generis*; their common ground is the equation between nature and the realm of law. McDowell manages to steer a middle course between the two by introducing the notion of ‘second nature’: the realm of nature includes *both* the realm of law and the space of reasons, so the thesis that the space of reasons is *sui generis* is compatible with the insistence that human beings are fully *natural* beings.

To identify nature with the realm of law is distinctively modern; the development of this thought has often been called ‘disenchantment.’<sup>15</sup> In order to motivate his broader understanding of nature, McDowell goes back to the era before enlightenment, in particular ancient Greek. Let me quote him a bit:

Virtue of character properly so called [by Aristotle] includes a specifically shaped state of the practical intellect: ‘practical wisdom,’ in the standard English translation. This is a responsiveness to some of the demands of reason...The picture is that ethics involves requirements of reason that *are there* whether we know it or not, and our eyes are opened to them by the acquisition of ‘practical wisdom.’<sup>16</sup>

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle’s word for ‘practical wisdom’ is ‘*phronesis*.’ I emphasize ‘are there’ in this passage to indicate the *objective* character of ethical demands conceived by McDowell. Now he intends this ‘to serve as a model for the understanding, the faculty that enables us to recognize and create the kind of intelligibility that is a matter of placement in the space of reasons.’<sup>17</sup> A further and crucial question is how this line of thought can help us out of the stalemate between bald naturalism and rampant platonism. As indicated above, the gambit is to develop a satisfying notion of second nature. So what we need are reasons for thinking that Aristotelian practical wisdom deserves to be called second ‘nature.’

McDowell suggests that ‘[we] are alerted to these demands by acquiring appropriate conceptual capacities. When a decent *upbringing* initiates us into the relevant way of thinking, our eyes are opened to the very existence of this tract of the space of reasons.’<sup>18</sup> In saying this, what McDowell has in mind ‘is what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*.’<sup>19</sup> Now this can be recognized as genuine *nature* because ‘[our] *Bildung* actualizes some of *the potentialities we are born with*’<sup>20</sup>: what we are born with is our animal first nature, which is *not different in kind* from those which are possessed by other animals. What is distinctively human is that our animal

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70. Correspondingly, McDowell calls his own position ‘a partial reenchantment of nature’ at p.97.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79, my italics.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82, my italics.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88, my italics.

first nature includes miscellaneous complex potentialities suitable for fostering the space of reasons. We have extraordinary complicated brains and sense organs, and these powerful resources help us, say, begin to parse strings of sounds emitted from other's mouths. McDowell, an empiricist to be sure, does not need to reject Chomskian innate faculties in this respect. Our second nature is what makes us special, but our remarkable first nature is also crucial for our rational animal lives. We can see that the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality and actuality is at work here: our potentialities relevant to the initiation into the space of reasons are our animal first nature, but when proper upbringing kicks in, those potentialities are actualized (or realized) as the capacities to be responsive to reasons.<sup>21</sup> In this way, we gain a satisfying self-image 'without offering to reinstate the idea that the movement of the planets, or the fall of a sparrow, is rightly approached in the sort of way we approach a text or an utterance or some other kind of action.'<sup>22</sup>

What McDowell rejects is 'an intelligible distortion undergone by the Aristotelian idea that normal human beings are *rational animals*.'<sup>23</sup> The root of this distortion is to conceive 'an animal endowed with reason [as] *metaphysically split*'<sup>24</sup>: we are *natural* because we are confined in the realm of law, but we are also *supernatural* because we are responsive to reasons. This distortion can be set straight by recognizing that for Aristotle, responsiveness to reasons is our second *nature*, which is realized by our first nature potentialities under suitable upbringing. We should recognize that 'rationality is *integrally part* of [human beings'] animal nature.'<sup>25</sup> Our animal nature includes first and second natures, and this does justice to both the thought that our rational capacities are natural, and the thought that we share something with other animals. In accommodating the latter, we do not need to reject the idea that rationality is *intrinsic* to our animal nature. In the context of the conceptuality of experiences, McDowell says that 'it is not compulsory to attempt to accommodate the combination of something in common and a striking difference in [a] *factorizing* way: to suppose our perceptual lives include a core that we can also recognize in the perceptual life of a mere animal, and *an extra ingredient in addition*.'<sup>26</sup> Although the contexts are

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<sup>21</sup> Part of this paragraph is appropriated from 'Openness and the Social Initiation into the Space of Reasons,' a piece I co-author with Professor Chung - I Lin, my thesis supervisor. It was presented at the Conference on Brandom's Philosophy, held by Tsing Hua University, March 2008. I am indebted to Brandom for helpful comments.

<sup>22</sup> *Mind and World*, p.72. This insistence that the meaningfulness of the world is different from that of the text will be important in my fourth episode, when I consider how McDowell replies to objections from Michael Ayers and Arthur Collins.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108, my italics.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108, my italics.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109, my italics.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64, my italics. The notion of 'factorization' is supposed to be contrasted with 'integration.' To say that AB can be factorized into A and B is to say that the individuation conditions of them respectively are independent of each others.

different, the general lesson should apply here too.

2. As we have seen, second nature is supposed to '[give] human reason enough of a foothold in the realm of law to satisfy any proper respect for modern natural science.'<sup>27</sup> I shall discuss two objections that run at the opposite direction. The first maintains that in order to secure the foothold in the realm of law, second nature must be located in both the space of reasons and the realm of law, but this nonetheless leads to incoherence. The second maintains that the foothold in the realm of law cannot be secured anyway; that is, the insistence on second 'nature' leads to supernaturalism come what may.

The first line of objection is taken by Paul Bartha and Steven Savitt (henceforth B&S).<sup>28</sup> They assert that McDowell's position is 'simply untenable.'<sup>29</sup> The general principle underlying their argument is that 'there is no way to account for an interactive relationship between [two wholly separate worlds] without undercutting the point of maintaining their separateness.'<sup>30</sup> The main trouble of Cartesian dualism nicely illustrates this: if *res cogitans* and *res extensa* are different in kind, the putative interactions between them become unintelligible. And if one insists that there must be a bridge, this supposed bridge must thereby belong to both realms at the same time, but this violates the premise that the two realms are different in kind.<sup>31</sup>

They first notice, rightly, that second nature belongs to the space of reasons, for it is supposed to account for spontaneity. But they argue that it belongs to the realm of law either, for it 'must involve interaction with the natural environment.'<sup>32</sup> If so, the *sui generis* character of the space of reasons collapses, given the lesson drawn from Cartesian dualism, and according to B&S, Passmore.

No one, McDowell included, can sensibly deny that 'human perception (and therefore human reason) is also conditioned by the physical processes that govern the interaction between our sensory apparatus and our environment – processes that belong to the realm of law.'<sup>33</sup> But the inference from this to the conclusion that second nature is also an inhabitant of the realm of law is a *non sequitur*. The sense of 'conditioning' here should be 'an *enabling* question,' as opposed to 'a constitutive one.'<sup>34</sup> The distinction between the space of reasons and the realm of law, by contrast,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>28</sup> 'Second-Guessing Second Nature,' *Analysis* 58 (1998), pp.252-63.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.254.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.257.

<sup>31</sup> B & S quotes John Passmore's *Philosophical Reasoning* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p.44 at this point, but I think this is quite redundant, given that we are so familiar with the trouble instantiated by Cartesian dualism.

<sup>32</sup> 'Second-Guessing Second Nature,' p.258.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.258.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Content of Perceptual Experience,' *The Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994), pp.190-205;

is obviously a *constitutive* matter. One can claim that perception and reason nevertheless belong to the realm of law, but that needs arguments, and the above *non sequitur* can do nothing about it. And that is not McDowell's position anyway.<sup>35</sup>

B&S thought that McDowell commits that second nature belongs to both the space of reasons and the realm of law, and this is a straightforward misinterpretation. This misunderstanding is understandable, however, given that it seems to be a natural interpretation of the thought that reasons can be causes: if second nature is ultimately *natural*, it must be in the *causal* network, which means it must be in the realm of law as well. The falsity of this inference should now be clear: as I discussed in the third footnote, McDowell warns us that the opposite of the space of reasons should not be the space of *causes*, for if it is so, it follows that there is no causal relation in the space of reasons, and therefore reasons cannot be causes. B&S are nevertheless indifferent about this reminder, regarding the realm of law as the space of causes (and thereby unwittingly committing that reasons cannot be causes), and thinking that if McDowell is willing to do justice to the fact that reasons can be causes, he has to admit that second nature belongs to both the space of reasons and the realm of law, and the *sui generis* claim collapses. Their objection is based on a misunderstanding of the distinction between the space of reasons and the realm of law, as we have seen. McDowell would say that if we see the crucial contrast as between the space of *reasons* and the space of *causes*, it is 'too late' to insist that spontaneity belongs to both. And additionally, that position leads to incoherence, as B&S's rehearsal of the Cartesian trouble shows.

The opposite objection is proposed by Crispin Wright.<sup>36</sup> Wright thinks that McDowell hasn't done enough work to exclude rampant platonism. He identifies and criticizes three criteria allegedly proposed by McDowell:

- (i) that the correctness of ethical judgment is constrained by 'contingencies of our life';
- (ii) that it needs only an ordinary, unmysterious ethical education to initiate people into 'the rational demands of ethics';
- (iii) that correct ethical judgment is 'essentially within reach' of our ethical thinking.<sup>37</sup>

As I see it, only (ii) deserves our attention here, for (i) and (iii) are more like

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reprinted in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp.341-58, at p.352, my italics.

<sup>35</sup> B&S also cites the above paper from McDowell, but for another purpose. It is striking that they didn't notice the enabling / constitutive distinction in the very same paper.

<sup>36</sup> 'Human Nature?' in Nicholas H. Smith (ed.), *Reading McDowell: on Mind and World* (Routledge, 2002), pp.140-59.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153.

descriptions of McDowell's picture. I shall therefore focus on (ii). The point I am going to argue, however, applies to (i) and (iii) as well, for the point is that McDowell never attempt to provide *any criterion* to distinguish naturalized platonism from its rampant relatives.

In discussing (ii), Wright asks:

Why should Rampant Platonists find any difficulty in the idea that it takes only an ordinary training to trigger the exercise of the social non-natural epistemic capacities in which they believe? What exactly is the problem in that *combination*?<sup>38</sup>

Here Wright is pointing out the *compatibility* of *Bildung* and rampant platonism; he thinks, rightly in my view, that McDowell's invocation of *Bildung* and related considerations does not exclude rampant platonism. But why is this compatibility a problem for McDowell?

We need to bear in mind that McDowell never attempts to knock rampant platonism and bald naturalism down. In the case of rampant platonism, as I said in the previous section, though 'the view is indeed mysterious, it does not follow that it cannot be true in a mysterious way.' Rampant platonism, by its nature, is irrefutable given the *sui generis* thesis; it asserts that the space of reasons is autonomous *simpliciter*, which means it is *wholly (holily?)* independent of other kinds of intelligibility. Therefore the only way to repel rampant platonism is to refute the *sui generis* thesis, that is, to embrace bald naturalism. So the charge from Wright is unfair: rampant platonism is a thesis that can only be repelled by bald naturalism, but McDowell is clearly not a bald naturalist. It is understandable, nevertheless, why Wright has this demanding task in mind: he himself is a dedicated bald naturalist.<sup>39</sup> But he had better remember that not everyone shares his metaphysical position.

McDowell is well aware that given his anti-bald naturalism, he cannot *refute* rampant platonism. What he can sensibly do is to *urge* us to accept a much more moderate position, naturalized platonism, by elaborating a sensible notion of 'second nature.' Of course a rampant platonist can always say that given the *sui generis* thesis, he can accommodate whatever we say. But why should this matter? Consider the case of radical skepticism. Nowadays most people recognize that such a radical thesis is not refutable, so what we non-skeptics can do is to argue, in one way or another, that we have no good reason to believe in radical skepticism, or we have good reasons to believe otherwise. The situation is quite similar when it comes to rampant platonism.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.154, my italics.

<sup>39</sup> To my knowledge, Wright never explicitly identifies himself as a bald naturalist, but his identity is clear in the context of the theory of meaning: he sides with his teacher Dummett in holding that a theory of meaning should be 'full-blooded.' I will say more about this in my third episode.



Although bald naturalism is indeed incompatible with that version of platonism, the latter can always insist that the physicalist reduction in question is not successful, for there is no common ground for evaluating the success of reduction. So what we can hopefully have is something like McDowell's picture: provided a reasonable story about how human beings can become responsive to reasons – in his case, through *Bildung*, custom, and language – we have good reasons to believe in a naturalized platonism. Why needs more?

3. Now, given McDowell's demanding conception of human being, the question about the status of mere animals becomes urgent. This can be fully answered only after we say more about McDowell's view of experience, conceptual capacities, rationality, and self-consciousness, but I can here sketch a general picture with Hans-Georg Gadamer's distinction between 'world' and 'environment.'<sup>40</sup> Gadamer writes:

[Although] the concept of environment was first used for the purely human world...this concept can be used to comprehend all the conditions on which a living creature depends. But it is thus clear that man, unlike all other living creatures, has a 'world,' for other creatures do not in the same sense have a relationship to the world, but are, as it were, embedded in their environment.<sup>41</sup>

He further relates this openness to the world to human's possession of languages:

Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends [on] the fact that man has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for on other creature that is in the world. But this world is verbal in nature...that language is originally human means at the same time that man's being in the world is primordially linguistic.<sup>42</sup>

And the crucial difference between human beings' openness to the world and mere animals' embedment in the environment is the very idea of 'freedom':

Moreover, unlike all other living creatures, man's relationship to the world is characterized by *freedom from environment*. This freedom implies the linguistic

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<sup>40</sup> See *Truth and Method* (Continuum Publishing Group, 2004; rev. trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall), pp.438-56.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.441.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.440.

constitution of the world. Both belong together.<sup>43</sup>

Here is not the place to defend Gadamer's distinction; I introduce it at this point only because it helps us to understand McDowell's general picture of mere animals.<sup>44</sup> McDowell says that for his purpose, the point of the distinction 'is that it shows in some detail how we can acknowledge what is common between human beings and brutes, while preserving the difference that the Kantian thesis forces on us.'<sup>45</sup> What is in common between us and them is that both, as living creatures, embed in and cope with our immediate environments; as animals, all of us are structured by our 'immediate biological imperatives.'<sup>46</sup> '[A] merely animal life,' however, 'is shaped by goals whose control of the animal's behaviour at a given moment is an immediate outcome of biological forces. A mere animal does not weigh reasons and decide what to do.'<sup>47</sup> In the case of human being, by contrast, we can say that '[to] acquire the spontaneity of the understanding is to become able, as Gadamer puts it, to "rise above the pressure of what impinges on us from the world" (*Truth and Method*, p.444) – that succession of problems and opportunities constituted as such by biological imperatives – into a "free, distanced orientation" (p.445).'<sup>48</sup> In a word, human beings enjoy 'full-fledged subjectivity,' as opposed to mere animals' 'proto-subjectivity.'<sup>49</sup>

Thus, we can avoid a 'peculiarly bifurcated' ontology, exemplified by two strands of the Cartesian thoughts.<sup>50</sup> On the one hand, the Cartesians maintain a position more radical than bald naturalism in their treatment of mere animals, regarding them as zombic automata. On the other hand, they insist on a position more radical than rampant platonism in the case of human being, seeing them as having immaterial mental substances. This strange two-fold view is more radical than bald naturalism, for in holding this naturalism one does not need to regard mere animals as zombies: the zombie thesis is far stronger than the idea that mere animals are locked in the realm of law. And this view is more radical than rampant platonism, for in urging this platonism one does not thereby commit the idea that human beings have, or are immaterial souls: the soul thesis is far stronger than the idea that human beings can

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.441.

<sup>44</sup> I will say more about this in my episode three, where I evaluate the debate between McDowell and Donald Davidson whether a public language plays any significant role in constituting the human intellect.

<sup>45</sup> *Mind and World*, p.115.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp.115-6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp.116-7.

<sup>50</sup> Here I do not refer to Descartes in particular. Indeed, terms like 'platonism' and 'Cartesian' figured in McDowell's texts only serve to illustrate different ways of thinking vividly. On the contrary, he does refer to particular philosophers when he elaborates the relation between concept and intuition, the role of second nature, and the distinction between world and environment.

reach a mysterious, non-animal space of reasons. Against both of these, McDowell urges that ‘exercises of spontaneity belong to *our* way of actualizing ourselves as animal.’<sup>51</sup>

There might be some worries about McDowell’s two presuppositions. One is that human beings really enjoy freedom of the will; the other is that mere animals are non-rational. McDowell himself seems to be confident with both of them, but I think it is reasonable to formulate the essence of his thinking by conditionals: *given that* we humans do enjoy freedom of will, and *given that* mere animals are indeed non-rational, or at least do not possess rationality in the sense that they can respond to reasons *as such*,<sup>52</sup> then the view McDowell recommends is much more satisfying than both bald naturalism and rampant platonism, since his picture reconciles two important facts about us: we are denizens of the animal kingdom, and we are rational beings.<sup>53</sup>

4. I begin my exposition of McDowell’s philosophy with the issues concerning human beings’ place in nature. I adopt this approach because I regard the following remarks of McDowell as quintessential:

In order to introduce the attractions of a relaxed naturalism, I have exploited philosophical difficulties about perceptual experience. But this focus was not essential; the difficulties exemplify a type...Now the difficulty concerns not the *passivity* of experience as such, but its *naturalness*. The problem is that operations of sensibility are actualizations of a potentiality that is part of our nature. When we take sensing to be a way of being acted on by the world, we are thinking of it as a natural phenomenon, and then we have trouble seeing how a *sui generis* spontaneity could be anything but externally related to it. But passivity is *not part of the very idea* of what it is for a natural potentiality to be actualized. So we should be able to construct a train of thought about actualization of active natural powers, duplicating the difficulties I have exploited in the case of passive natural powers.<sup>54</sup>

This vital passage appears in his Lecture V, and therefore is, unfortunately, often overlooked by philosophers in the analytic tradition. Even his colleague Robert Brandom complains that ‘[t]he social nature of spontaneity and the space of reasons is acknowledged, but only *belatedly*, in the discussion of the need for knowers and

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.78, my italics.

<sup>52</sup> The distinction between responsiveness to reasons and responsiveness to reasons *as such* will be important when it comes to the disagreements between McDowell and Hubert Dreyfus, but I shall leave the nuance in my fourth episode; for now I just want to stress that we are subjects who are in the games of giving and asking for reasons.

<sup>53</sup> McDowell’s presupposition about freedom will be briefly discussed in my epilogue.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.89, my italics.

agents to be properly brought up in order to be sensitive to various sorts of norms.’<sup>55</sup> He sees this as a ground for arguing that McDowell’s overall picture is a ‘residual *individualism*.’<sup>56</sup> This line of criticism assumes that McDowell’s writing strategy reveals his view about the conceptual order, which means he does not assign the conceptual priority to the social elements. But the fact is quite to the contrary. McDowell is the philosopher who insists on *the* conceptual priority for the social. He even finds fault in the picture depicted by Donald Davidson, who painstakingly stresses the essential importance of the social elements:

In recent work, Davidson has undertaken to build the concept of objectivity out of a ‘triangulation’ between these self-standing subjects, pairwise engaged in mutual interpretation. This comes into conflict with the Kantian thesis of interdependence that I consider in Lecture V, §5, and reconsider in Lecture VI, §4. By my lights, if subjects are already in place, it is *too late* to set about catering for the constitution of the concept of objectivity.<sup>57</sup>

It seems to me that McDowell does not present Davidson’s position accurately, for Davidson doesn’t try to derive objectivity from ‘self-standing subjects.’ Rather, he makes clear that his aim is to show that knowing our own minds, knowing others’ minds, and knowing the external world ‘form a tripod; if any leg were lost, no part would stand.’<sup>58</sup> But this mismatch is understandable, for McDowell’s Locke Lecture was given in 1991, while most of Davidson’s papers explicit on this topic were written after that. My purpose here is not to take part in the debate; what I would like to stress is that McDowell often finds other philosophers’ do not give due weight to the *priority* of the social, so it is uncharitable to think that he himself does not acknowledge that priority. It is possible to argue that McDowell’s ‘too late’ argument applies to himself after all, but anyway we should recognize that in McDowell’s picture, the social elements plays constitutive roles in social *initiation* into the space of reasons; conceptually speaking, his invocation of ‘*Bildung*’ and ‘second nature’ does not come into the picture ‘only belatedly,’ as Brandom and many others mistakenly suppose.

In this episode, I introduce the tension between reason and nature, and discuss how McDowell manages to ease the tension without canceling the *sui generis* character of

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Perception and Rational Constraint,’ in Enrique Villanueva (ed.), *Perception* (Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 241-59, at p.256, my italics.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.258. I argue against this line of thought in my ‘Openness and the Social Initiation into the Space of Reasons,’ co-authored with Lin.

<sup>57</sup> *Mind and World*, p.186, my italics.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Three Varieties of Knowledge,’ in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.) *A. J. Ayer Memorial Essays: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 30* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), reprinted in Davidson’s *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001), pp.205-20, at p.220.

the space of reasons. To be sure, I do not offer a wholesale defense of second nature and other related notions. My main theme in this essay, as I said in my introduction, is the *applications* of second nature – how a creature with second nature can be a perceiver, knower, thinker, speaker, agent, person, and (self-) conscious subject – as opposed to second nature *per se*. There are a lot more to be said about this Aristotelian notion, but I would like to leave it to some other occasions.