

# Acquaintance, Conceptual Capacities, and Attention.

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**ABSTRACT:** Russell's theory of acquaintance construes perceptual awareness as at once constitutively independent of conceptual thought and yet a source of propositional knowledge. Wilfrid Sellars, John McDowell, and other conceptualists object that this is a 'myth': perception can be a source of knowledge only if conceptual capacities are already in play therein. Proponents of a relational view of experience, including John Campbell, meanwhile voice sympathy for Russell's position on this point. This paper seeks to spell out, and defend, a claim that offers the prospects for an attractive, unacknowledged element of common ground in this debate. The claim is that conceptual capacities, at least in a certain minimal sense implicit in McDowell's recent work, must be operative in perceptual experience, if it is to rationalize judgement. The claim will be supported on the basis of two premises, each of which can be defended drawing, *inter alia*, on considerations stressed by Campbell. First, that experience rationalizes judgement only if it is attentive. Second, that attention qualifies as a conceptual capacity, in the noted, minimal sense. The conjunction of the two premises might be dubbed 'attentional conceptualism'.

## 1. Introduction

Russell's theory of acquaintance offers a stark view of the relation of perception to thought. At its heart lie two conditions placed on perceptual awareness (the basic form of acquaintance with particulars, for Russell) in its relation to propositional knowledge. On the one hand, perceptual awareness is viewed as 'essentially simpler than' and 'logically independent of' propositional knowledge (Russell 1912, p. 72). On the other, it is held to be a source of propositional knowledge (Russell 1912, p. 48). A key question in the reception of the theory of acquaintance has been to what extent perception can jointly meet these conditions.

In his attack on the 'Myth of the Given', Wilfrid Sellars voiced scepticism.<sup>1</sup> Perception can be a source of knowledge, he argued, only if perceptual awareness depends on the possession and operation of conceptual capacities. Conceptual capacities depend in turn on their use in the context of making knowledgeable claims about things. Therefore, Sellars concluded, perception turns out not to be independent of knowledge, in some suitable,

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<sup>1</sup> Sellars 1956, the *locus classicus* of the attack on the 'Myth of the Given', mentions neither Russell nor acquaintance, under that name. Many of its central arguments are however anticipated in Sellars 1949, which expressly targets Russell on acquaintance.

‘logical’ or constitutive sense of independence. In recent decades, this conceptualist line of critique has been advanced notably by John McDowell (1994, 2009).

The influence of the conceptualist critique contributed to a neglect of the theory of acquaintance for much of the second half of the last century. In this century, however, resurgent relationist views of perception have rekindled interest in and even sympathy for the theory. My leading exemplar here will be the views of John Campbell (2002, 2009, 2012).<sup>2</sup> He departs from Russell in taking the objects of perceptual awareness to be not private sense-data but public objects (a view shared by most recent relationists). Campbell lauds, though, Russell’s ambition to articulate a view of perception as a relationship that is at once somehow more primitive than thought about an object whilst, at the same time, playing a vital role in enabling such thought (Campbell 2002, p. 6).

My aim in this paper is to spell out, and defend, a claim that offers the prospects for an attractive, unacknowledged element of common ground in the debate between conceptualist and relationist responses to the theory of acquaintance. The claim is that conceptual capacities, *at least in a certain, fairly minimal sense to be made clear*, must be operative in perceptual experience, if it is to rationalize judgement. That claim is on the face of it friendly to conceptualists. Setting aside the qualification about the ‘fairly minimal sense’, the claim has long been central to Sellars’s and McDowell’s conceptualism. More importantly, the relevant ‘fairly minimal sense’ is one that, I will argue, is implicit in McDowell’s recent, recast conceptualism, outlined in his paper ‘Avoiding the Myth of the Given’ (AMG) (2008) and later work. The next section addresses this recast conceptualism, pointing out some differences from McDowell’s earlier, propositionalist conceptualism in *Mind and World* (1994). These differences turn out to call for a reconsideration of the notion of a ‘conceptual capacity’. On McDowell’s current understanding of that notion, which corresponding to what I describe as ‘a fairly minimal sense’, conceptual capacities are distinguished by (i) belonging to the understanding and (ii) bestowing content with categorial unity and form. The next section outlines readings of these conditions.

The target conclusion here, that conceptual capacities, in the sense outlined, must be operative in experience, if it to rationalize judgement, will be supported on the basis of two premises. Each premise will be defended, inter alia, on the basis of considerations stressed by Campbell. While he may or may not be entirely happy about endorsing both, each is at least not clearly inconsistent with his view. At least in this weak sense, then, the defence of the target conclusion is friendly towards at least one notable relationist.

The first premise, defended in section 3, relates to a respect in which Campbell differs from Russell. While Russell denied attention is needed for acquaintance (Russell 1914,

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<sup>2</sup> Other relationists include Brewer (2011) and Travis (2013).

p. 445–6), Campbell argues perceptual experience constitutes acquaintance with an object, enabling rational thought about it, only if the subject’s consciously attends to that object (Campbell 2002, p. 6; 2012, p. 71). The premise defended in section 3 relates closely to Campbell’s view here. It states that perceptual experience of an object rationalizes judgement about it only if it is an experience in which one attends to the object. Beside Campbell’s (2002, pp. 8–9) nice case of ‘the sea of faces’, the defence draws on reflections on the phenomena of change and inattention blindness and visual extinction. I also address recent arguments, due to Susanna Siegel and Nico Silins (2014, 2019), that inattentive experience can justify belief.

The second premise is defended in section 4. It states that attention qualifies as a conceptual capacity, in the current, fairly minimal sense. That is to say that attention belongs to the understanding (a view I show to be held by Kant – a chief source of both Sellars’s and McDowell’s conceptualism), and bestows content with categorial unity and form. Again, the defence of these points relies *inter alia* on themes from Campbell.

The conjunction of the premises defended in sections 3 and 4 might be dubbed ‘attentional conceptualism’. They imply that conceptual capacities, in the current fairly minimal sense, must be operative in experience, if it is to rationalize judgement. Attentional conceptualism offers a novel route to this conclusion, with potential to appeal far outside the ranks of card-carrying conceptualists.

## 2. McDowell’s recast conceptualism

If Russell’s conception of acquaintance is mythical, as Sellars and McDowell contend, what would a more promising view of perceptual experience look like? Sellars (1968) and, following him, McDowell (1994, 2009) take their cue here from Kant’s conception of intuition. At first blush, this might seem surprising, for Kant opposes intuitions to concepts. Sellars and McDowell argue, though, that Kant’s opposition is an artefact of his restriction of ‘concepts’ to general, mediate representations, while intuitions are singular and relate immediately to their objects (Kant 1998: A320/B376–77). They prefer a broader sense of ‘conceptual’, linking it to capacities belonging to Kant’s ‘higher’ cognitive faculty, the understanding. This allows Kant to emerge as a pioneering conceptualist. This is so because Kant, as Sellars and McDowell read him, takes intuitions of objects to be due not to sensibility (our passive, receptive faculty) alone but also constitutively to depend on the operation of the understanding.<sup>3</sup>

In one of McDowell’s more recent, summary statements of his view, the Sellarsian and Kantian backdrop is evident:

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<sup>3</sup> Sellars and McDowell both think Kant needs to be corrected at some points, but disagree on just which, see McDowell 2009.

In the experience of rational subjects, things are given to them to be known, in knowledge of a kind only rational subjects can have, knowledge that is a standing in the space of reasons. Is this givenness a case of what Sellars rejects as the Myth of the Given? No, but that is only because the experience of rational subjects, experience in which things are given for rational knowledge, itself draws on capacities that belong to the rational intellect, the understanding. (McDowell 2009: vii)

This summary highlights two key features of McDowell's conceptualism. First, the interest in experience is epistemic. The conceptualist requirements placed on experience are held to apply to it in its capacity of being a source of knowledge. No argument is given for imposing them on aspects of sensory awareness (if any) prior to, or irrelevant to, its status of providing knowledge. Second, 'knowledge' is taken in a demanding sense, on which it is to be understood in terms of knowledgeable, rational judgements: mental acts of making up one's mind, open to reflection on their grounds. Putative experience that is realized in creatures incapable of such judgements, or that merely feeds into forms of knowledge not to be understood in terms of such judgements, is set aside. I will adopt these limitations tacitly for the rest of this section. When I speak of experience, I mean experience in so far as it is a source of knowledge, understood in this demanding sense.

In *Mind and World* and various later essays (e.g., his 1998, 2006), McDowell set out a highly influential and much-discussed form of conceptualism. However, in AMG (2008), he abandons important components of the earlier view. Before turning to these changes, though, it is useful to distinguish three central claims that have remained constant throughout. Perhaps most centrally:

*Operation in Experience:* In perceptual experience, conceptual capacities are already actualized; they are not merely actualized in judgements based on experience.<sup>4</sup>

In AMG, he glosses conceptual capacities variously as capacities 'belonging to the understanding', or 'to reason', and affirms Operation in Experience as follows:

[W]e must suppose capacities that belong to [the understanding] – conceptual capacities – are in play in the way experience makes knowledge available to us. ...

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<sup>4</sup> McDowell speaks variously of conceptual capacities being 'actualized', 'operative', 'drawn on', or 'in play' in experience. I assume these come to the same thing.

Avoiding the Myth requires capacities that belong to reason to be operative in experiencing itself, not just in judgement in which we respond to experience. (McDowell 2008, p. 258)

A second, closely related claim, retained throughout, is:

*Same Kind of Content:* Perceptual experience has the same kind of content as judgements.

In AMG, McDowell describes perceptual experiences as intuitions and endorses Same Kind of Content in the following terms:

[T]he content unified in intuitions is of the same kind as the content unified in judgments: that is, conceptual content. (2008, p. 265)

Thirdly, McDowell adopts throughout a Fregean view of the content of judgements:

*Fregeanism:* The contents of judgements are Fregean propositions: truth-evaluable, abstract entities, with a logical structure, whose constituents are modes of presentation of objects, properties, or functions.<sup>5</sup>

Now, if we ask what kind of content judgements have, for McDowell, it is natural to turn to Fregeanism an answer. It is natural to think, moreover, ‘the same kind’ in Same Kind of Content picks up on that answer, and so to infer that Fregeanism thereby generalizes *pari passu* to experience. Before AMG, McDowell endorsed this apparent implication:

*Propositionalism:* Perceptual experiences have propositional content; specifically: contents taking the form of Fregean propositions.

Propositionalism suggests, moreover, a natural interpretation of the conceptual capacities that Operation in Experience claims are actualized in experience. Gareth Evans (1982, pp. 100–5) argued that the status of Fregean propositions as structured goes hand in hand with the fact that having such a proposition in mind is the joint exercise of several distinguishable cognitive capacities, which he dubbed ‘Ideas’. In entertaining the proposition *That cup is blue*, an Idea of mine of the relevant cup (in which the cup is thought of in a certain way) is

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<sup>5</sup> For McDowell, Fregean propositions may well be object-dependent. Fregeanism does not imply a descriptivist view of singular thought or reference.

jointly activated with an Idea of mine of the property of being blue (in which blue is thought of in a certain way). The former Idea could also be activated jointly with an Idea of mine of red, say, thereby thinking *That cup is red*, and so on. In general, having in mind a Fregean proposition is, for Evans, the joint actualization, in a certain logical combination, of Ideas corresponding to each of the modes of presentation of an object, property or function that are the constituents of the proposition.

Now, if perceptual experiences have Fregean propositional content, and such content can be entertained in a subject's mental life only through the joint activation of Ideas, this makes it extremely natural to identify the conceptual capacities that, according to Operation in Experience, is actualized in experience with Ideas. This identification of conceptual capacities in general, and of those operative in experience in particular, is explicitly endorsed in McDowell's pre-AGM view (cf. McDowell 1998, pp. 10–12).

In AMG, however, McDowell rejects Propositionalism.<sup>6</sup> Arguing that any representational content would be propositional (whereby he seems to mean of the Fregean sort), he denies that experiences have representational content *tout court* (2008, pp. 266–7). McDowell denies moreover that experiences have sub-propositional contents that can be identified as being fragments of, or potential constituents of, complete Fregean propositions (2008, p. 270).

These revisions raise questions about how now to understand Operation in Experience. It seems hard to retain the identification of conceptual capacities with Evansian Ideas. If Ideas – capacities for thinking of things, in certain ways – are actualized in experience, how could that not bestow on experience a complete Fregean content, or at least a constituent thereof? If conceptual capacities are not Ideas, what are they? Questions also arise over Same Kind of Content. If 'the kind of content' such that experiences and judgements both have content of that kind is neither Fregean propositions, nor other kinds of propositions or representational contents (if any), nor constituents of Fregean propositions, then *what* could the relevant same kind be? I shall begin with the question raised over Operation in Experience. This will, in due course, lead us to that raised over Same Kind of Content.

McDowell is committed, I take it, to a somewhat broadened conception of conceptual capacities that includes, but is not limited to, Evansian Ideas. Such a conception is not articulated very explicitly in AMG or other later work. However, two recurrent themes, or strands, in his glosses on the conceptual are, first, that it belongs to the understanding (2008, pp. 257, 262, 265) and, second, that it is characterized by content having what he calls

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<sup>6</sup> His chief reason for rejecting Propositionalism, it seems, is that it assimilates experiences too closely to beliefs, thereby threatening to move his view into the target range of his own arguments, in *Mind and World*, against Davidson's coherentist claim that only a belief can be a reason for a belief, cf. McDowell 2008, pp. 268–72.

categorial unity and form (2008, pp. 261, 263). McDowell does not explicitly argue that these conditions jointly suffice for a something to be a conceptual capacity, but I cannot see that he offers any further necessary conditions, not supposed to be entailed by those two. He thus seems to treat them as sufficient; I will here simply suppose they are.

The first strand, then, invokes a Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding, and identifies conceptual capacities as ones belonging to the understanding. The understanding, for McDowell, is as a capacity paradigmatically manifested in our being responsive to reasons as such (McDowell 2006, pp. 128–34). In such responsiveness, we not merely think, or do, something for a reason, but in so doing are capable of reflecting upon whether the putative reason in question really is an adequate reason for thinking, or doing, that. Such a capacity for reflection on reasons, and for changing one’s view or course accordingly (if that is what reflection suggests), is the cash value McDowell finds behind Kant’s talk of the ‘spontaneity’ of the understanding. In belonging to the understanding, conceptual capacities are exercisable in mental acts responsive to reason in this way.

The second strand, invoking categorial unity and form, require bit more setting-up discussion. A useful starting point here, I think, is with the platitude that, whatever a conceptual capacity may be, its actualization should be a case of having something in mind – a case of something’s being presented to, or represented by, one – in one way of another. Let’s use ‘content’ in a broad sense so that a mental episode has content just in case it is an episode in which something is had in mind/presented to/represented by whoever is the subject of the episode. ‘Content’ here is not definitionally restricted to propositional or representational content. To talk of the content of an experience is simply to talk of the experience in its aspect of being an experience *of* things. Even such anti-representationalists as Travis (2009), Brewer (2011) or Campbell would grant experiences have content in this sense. (I shall assume that if one draws a distinction between the objects of one’s experience and how one experiences them, then a specification of content might be sensitive to facts of both kinds.) On this broad sense of ‘content’, our starting platitude can be rephrased as saying that the actualization of a conceptual capacity, in a mental episode, entails it has content.

We may now ask: if the content of a mental episode is to be bestowed by the operation of *conceptual* capacities (as opposed to other candidate content-bestowing capacities, if any), what conditions does this content have to meet? At this point, Same Kind of Content can be invoked to deliver one such condition, viz. the content must be of ‘the same kind’ as that of judgement.<sup>7</sup> Notice that, if this is a necessary condition for content-bestowing

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<sup>7</sup> Strictly speaking, Same Kind of Content, along with Operation in Experience, only implies that the conceptual capacities *operative in experience* bestow ‘the same kind’ of content as judgement. I am here assuming (for simplicity, but inessentially to the overall argument) that Same Kind of Content is a special case of a generalization to the effect that any mental state in which conceptual contents are operative has the same kind of content as judgment.

capacities to be conceptual, as I will assume it is, Operation in Experience entails Same Kind of Content.

Yet what is the relevant ‘same kind’? As we saw, the revisions McDowell makes in AMG rules some familiar candidate answers out. He does not elaborate at any length about what the relevant ‘same kind’ positively might be. However, a central claim, as we noted, is that experiential content, like judgemental content, has categorial unity and form (2008, pp. 261, 263). By categorial unity, he alludes to a unity that is of a kind with the unity of propositions, i.e., roughly, the unity consisting in the fact that propositions, in spite of being structured entities, are not a mere list of elements but fit them together logically so as to make an evaluable claim. Similarly, the notion of categorial form is supposed to be of a kind with, and presumably to be understood in terms of, the logical forms of propositions (cf. 2009, p. 127).

How, though, should these notions of form and unity, explained in terms of propositions, apply to experiential content, if the latter is precisely not a proposition, or even a constituent thereof? I will here suggest the following reply, which McDowell does not explicitly endorse, but which seems to cohere with what he says:

Although the most straightforward, and primary, way for a content to have categorial unity and form is for it to simply *be* a proposition, a content can also have these features, in a perhaps derivative, or secondary way, if it is not a proposition but essentially depends on, and is individuated in terms of, a certain relation in which it stands to a proposition or set of propositions. The suggestion would be that this latter, secondary option applies to experiential contents. These contents are to be individuated in terms of certain propositions, which the experiencer herself is in a position to grasp, and which the relevant experience makes it rational for her to endorse. Moreover, in their capacity of playing this individuating role, it matters that the relevant propositions, rationalized by the experience, are structured, having a logical form. That is why it is apt to think of the experiential content as having categorial form. The logical form of the rationalized propositions is non-redundant to bringing out some vital features of the rationalizing experiential contents.

The suggested reading here is, of course, highly abstract and schematic. In section 4 below, we will seek to flesh it out in terms of an example from Campbell, involving the experience of object identity across time, or across sensory modalities. As we shall see, in identifying just what this experience of object identity amounts to, Campbell himself invokes inferences, of such-and-such logical forms, to which the experience is held characteristically to entitle the thinker.

For now, we may observe that the just-suggested way of individuating experiential contents, in terms of propositions rationalized, would be an alternative to some other options in the literature. For example, it contrasts with how a naïve realist like Bill Brewer would individuate at least the fundamental experiential content of perception, viz. in terms of the



physical objects experienced, and the point of view from which one experiences them, where point of view is understood in terms of such parameters as viewing angle, lighting conditions, etc.<sup>8</sup> It also contrasts with an individuation of content in terms of the objects perceived and the properties perceptually attributed thereto, as might be proposed by a representationalist trading exclusively in Russellian contents.<sup>9</sup>

The outlined reading of categorial unity and form goes beyond what McDowell explicitly says, as we noted. It seems, though, to fit how he often sets out his view. When characterizing the content of experience, he does not go in for a specification in either the naïve realist or Russellian representationalist style just indicated. Instead, he invokes precisely the knowledgeable judgements experience enables. Here is one illustrative example:

Though they are not discursive, intuitions have content of a sort that embodies an immediate potential for exploiting that same content in knowledgeable judgments. Intuitions immediately reveal things to be the way they would be judged to be in those judgments. (McDowell 2008, p. 267)

To get a feel for the reading we have proposed, a rough analogy might be helpful, even one from a quite different domain. Let's compare the contents of experiences and judgements, respectively, with the moral statuses of infants and adults, and consider the following view of the latter statuses:

‘Adults, qua autonomous persons, have a special moral status, call it dignity, that no creature not (yet) a person could have. Still, infants do have a weighty moral status of their own, non-equivalent with dignity but not necessarily therefore morally second-class. The latter status, call it nobleness, essentially depends on, and, in part, is what it is in virtue of, the dignity that belongs to the person the infant normally would grow into. It would be mistake – akin, perhaps, to the Myth of the Given – to try to secure an apt moral status for infants by looking *merely* at their already actualized, pre-personal properties (which is not to say, of course, that those properties are irrelevant or unnecessary to understanding how they can have nobleness). Although there is a specific kind of status of adults, dignity, that infants lack, they do have a vitally important kind of status, nobleness, in common with adults, since the dignity of adults entails (more or less trivially perhaps) their nobleness.’

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<sup>8</sup> See Brewer 2011, pp. 92–137. Brewer restricts ‘content’ to representational content, whereas, on our usage here, a specification of content is simply a specification of the experience in its aspect of being an experience of things (where this might include not just facts about the objects experienced, but also about how they are experienced). The qualification ‘at least the fundamental’ is included since Brewer holds there is also an aspect to perceptual consciousness, viz. what he terms ‘thick looks’, that need to be individuated in conceptual and perhaps propositional terms, paradigmatically exemplified by our perceptual recognition of things as belonging to various categories (Brewer 2011, pp. 121–2).

<sup>9</sup> One such theorist might be the Tye of Tye 2009.

This moral view, if coherent, would offer an at least a partial analogy with the experience/judgement-relationship, on the suggested construal, as follows. In each case, a certain normatively important status of a less intellectual being (the content of the experience/the moral status of the infant) is what it is in virtue of a similar, but more specific, status of a more intellectual being (the content of the judgement/the moral status of persons), to which the former being stands in some broadly functional/teleological relation of tending to be taken up/develop into. It is a good question just how deep the analogy might go (and how many grains of salt with which it should be taken). These must however be left for another occasion. For now, suffice it to gesture at the analogy as a way of conveying a rough, intuitive sense of the reading here proposed of how, for McDowell, experiential contents can be of a certain ‘same kind’ as propositions, having categorial unity and form, yet not be propositions.

### 3. Attention and the rational role of experience

The discussion of experience in the last section tacitly embodied a restriction to experience in its role of making judgements rational, a restriction reflecting the focus, in McDowell (and before him in Sellars), on this epistemic role of experience.

In this section, I defend the claim that, in order for experience to play such an epistemic role, it must involve attention. More precisely, I will defend:

*Attentive Rationalizing* Perceptual experience of an object rationalizes a judgement about it only if it is an experience in which one attends to that object.

By ‘an experience in which one attends to’ an object I mean one where it is an aspect of one’s overall perceptual consciousness that one attends to that object. Thus conscious attention is in question. I follow the widespread and plausible view that it is possible to attend to more than one object at a given time (it is commonly suggested one might at least attend to three or four, see, e.g., Scholl 2009), and that, if attention is graded, one can attend to one object whilst attending even more to something else. In saying an experience ‘rationalizes a judgement’, e.g. the judgement that this thing before one is white, I mean that the experience occurrently exerts some rational pressure in favour of that judgement. This is not to say one would necessarily be rationally sub-par in not making the judgement (perhaps you could, quite rationally, refrain from even considering the question whether the relevant object is white). The point is, rather, that if you positively adopt some cognitive attitude towards the proposition in question that is incompatible with judging it true, such as consciously suspending judgement or rejecting it, you are under some rational pressure to discount your experience, by positing reasons to think your experience illusory or untrustworthy. A rational

judgement, I will assume, can be regarded as one in which the subject is competently moved to make the judgement by such rational pressure.

Now, on some views, perceptual experience is limited to what one attends to: there is no perceptual experience of an object apart from attending to it.<sup>10</sup> If this is so, Attentive Rationalizing trivially follows. Thus, if one makes the contrary supposition that there is, or may well be, conscious perceptual experience of objects to which one does not attend, Attentive Rationalizing is if anything harder to defend. In this section I shall, therefore, make that supposition.

Attentive Rationalizing may be motivated by reflection on imagined or empirically attested cases. A nice imagined case is Campbell's story of 'the sea of faces' (2002, pp. 8–9).<sup>11</sup> Suppose you are confronted with a small crowd, and an interlocutor asks for your view of the hair colour (say) of 'that person' before you. The indicated person is within your field of view, but your experience is as of a sea of faces; you do not attend to any one in particular, and you do not know which person is in question. Yet, when forced to guess, it turns out that you are right. Indeed, you are able reliably to give right answers for a range of the visible characteristics of the person in question. So you have a blindsight-like capacity for reliable answers about her. However, intuitively, when you venture, say, 'That woman is red-haired', you are not rational in making that judgement in the way you normally are in making perceptual judgements. Compare with a case where you consciously attend to the person in question, 'highlighting' her in your experience, now judging the same characteristics of her. Intuitively, there is difference in kind in the rationality of your judgements about her. Attentive Rationalizing fits the intuition here that the mere experience of an object is not enough for rational perceptual judgement about it.

Empirically attested cases in support of Attentive Rationalizing may be drawn from change and inattention blindness (for review of these phenomena, see, e.g. Rensink 2009). Reflect on a case where you have been change-blind of some change, or inattentionally blind of some object, in your field of view, which then catches your attention and escapes change/inattention blindness. Specifically, reflect back on your situation before the relevant change or object all of a sudden stood out for you. If you are like me, it will strike you that you would then have been quite irrational, making as it were epistemic leaps in the dark, if you had made judgements to the effect that those changes or objects were present before you. Moreover, this intuition, that you could not then reasonably have judged, going by vision, that those changes or objects were there, would seem closely related to the ease with which we accept the description of these cases as forms of blindness. It might be inveighed here that we

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<sup>10</sup> For defense, see, e.g., Prinz 2011.

<sup>11</sup> In using Campbell's 'sea of faces' case to support the importance of attention to the rational role of experience, I follow Smithies 2011.

accept that description because we think, perhaps rightly, that we completely lack conscious experience of those items. Yet suppose, as we do, that we do have experience outside of attention. On that supposition, an attractive alternative explanation of our admitting these cases as forms of blindness is the noted intuition that we cannot make use of the experience to come to know of the relevant objects/changes.<sup>12</sup> Attentive Rationalizing permits us to allow perceptual experience of items towards which we are change-/inattentionally blind, without the uncomfortable implication that this experience places some rational pressure on us to accept the presence of those items before us, or else discount the experience as illusory, or hallucinatory.

It is worth stressing that we are here reflecting on a rather special sequence of experience, viz. a case where you are at first change-/inattentionally blind of an object or change before then noticing it, realizing that it was there before your eyes all along. I do not mean to suggest that untutored reflection on any old perceptual experience would or should elicit acceptance of Attentive Rationalizing. On the contrary, it might well be that we are prone to think, upon untutored reflection, that experience of unattended objects ought to be available to us as input to knowledge and rational judgement pretty much as experience of attended objects are (with due allowance, to be sure, for the perhaps less determinate and detailed, or more vague, way in which unattended items are experienced). Some such conception might explain, in part, why change/inattentional blindness is liable come as a surprise.

The neurological disorder of extinction offers further relevant empirical cases (for reviews on extinction, see Driver & Vuilleumier 2001 and Riddoch *et al.* 2009). Extinction patients have unilateral lesions to the parietal lobe. Lesions are typically on the left side, and for ease of presentation I shall pretend they always are. When a stimulus is presented on the contralesional, right side on its own, it is perceived in an approximately normal manner. Patients do not, then, have a major sensory deficit in their right hemifield (unlike, say, patients with hemianopia). Yet if another stimulus is simultaneously presented on the left side, the stimulus on the right will often not be noticed: the concurrent left-side stimulus ‘extinguishes’ the right-side one. The extinguished stimulus still receives considerable sensory-perceptual processing. For example, the meaning of an extinguished word may prime later decisions. Furthermore, if stimuli are concurrently presented on each side, and the right-side stimulus belongs to a category that tends strongly to attract attention, such as faces, the right-side stimulus is more likely to escape extinction than a neutral stimulus would have

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<sup>12</sup> For closely related arguments from change and inattentional blindness to the conclusion that attention is necessary for perceptual information to be available to rational control of action, reasoning or verbal report, see Smithies 2011. Smithies considers alternative accounts of inattentional and change blindness, including amnesia and agnosia accounts, that I pass over here.

been. This exemplifies a range of evidence indicating that extinction is, at least in some of its central manifestations, an attentional deficit, in which left-side stimuli are excessively prone to attract or retain attention at the expense of right-side ones. Patients have often been assumed to lack consciousness of extinguished stimuli, yet, as Block (2001, pp. 198–203) argues, if we make a conceptual distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness, it is not obviously ruled out that patients have phenomenal consciousness, and so perceptual experience, of extinguished items. Let's suppose they do, and consider a patient undergoing a standard test, where stimuli sometimes are presented on the left side, sometimes the right, and sometimes on both sides, being asked to tell which condition obtains. If the patient, in a given case, suffers extinction, and, accordingly, incorrectly judges a stimulus appears on the left only, it seems we would not deem her irrational in doing so. This is so even if the subject lacks any belief to the effect that she may be subject to positive illusions or hallucinations in which things appear on her right although nothing is there. Yet, if her supposed perceptual experience of the extinguished stimulus on the right rationalized her in judging a stimulus to be present there, and she lacked any such beliefs about the risk of illusions or hallucinations, her judgement would seem rationally subpar. Attentive Rationalizing prevents this untoward result.

Recently, however, Siegel and Silins (2014; 2019) have argued that, assuming there is perceptual experience outside of attention, such inattentive experience can give reasons for beliefs, and both propositionally and doxastically justify beliefs, about the inattentively experienced objects. Their arguments might also be taken to support the conclusion that, contrary to Attentive Rationalizing, non-attentive experience can rationalize judgement (although Siegel and Silins do not explicitly make this further claim). I will argue, though, that their arguments do not disprove Attentive Rationalizing.

Some of Siegel and Silins's arguments for the optionality of attention for propositional justification rely on an analogy with beliefs. Consider beliefs held in long-term memory, that are recallable but not actually recalled at a given moment, i.e. that are not occurrent at that time. Siegel and Silins argue such beliefs may, at that time, constitute reasons for certain further beliefs, and propositionally justify them. For example, suppose I first make an appointment for a one-on-one meeting with Liza at noon, and some time later make a similar appointment with Frank. Knowledge of each appointment is stored in my memory (e.g., if asked 'Do you have an appointment with Liza at noon?', I will immediately affirm). Yet it is only when both show up outside my door at noon that I notice the conflict. Siegel and Silins (2014, p. 155) argue I could then rightly kick myself, admonishing myself that I had reason to believe I had conflicting appointments. Now, the kind of 'mental grip' I have here on the information stored in long-term memory, but not occurrently recalled, is epistemically analogous, they suggest, to the kind of 'mental grip' we have on the contents of inattentive

experience. If the former gives reasons and propositionally justifies belief, why not also the latter?

I grant you are right to kick yourself in this example, and that there are various senses in which you should have realized the conflict, e.g. because you should have been more careful in keeping track of your appointments, or have failed in some epistemic virtue. I also grant that you possess evidence that you have conflicting appointments, and, since evidence arguably constitute reasons to believe, that you have reasons to believe that you do. If having evidential reasons to believe *p*, suffices for having propositional justification for that belief, I even grant that you have such justification.

I deny, though, that your stored knowledge or beliefs rationalize you in judging, at a given moment, that you have conflicting appointments at noon, independently of whether or not you are, at that moment, recalling any of that stored information, in the sense of occurrently bringing it to mind. To see this, suppose the thought strikes you, sometime before noon, that you have conflicting appointments at noon. When this thought strikes you, however, you are neither recalling your appointment with Liza, nor recalling that with Frank, nor is there any other specific commitment of yours that is occurring to you.<sup>13</sup> In this situation, it seems you would not be rational in endorsing the thought that you have conflicting appointments. If you did endorse it, that would seem an eccentric leap, not rationally intelligible, at least not from your perspective at the time. This is not to say that you need occurrently to recall everything that might be rationally relevant to your judgement (for example, perhaps you do not need occurrently to think that Frank and Liza are distinct), only (to put it roughly) that some significant parts of what would be your reason should be occurrent to you. By analogy, Attentive Rationalizing does not require you to attend to everything that might be rationally relevant to your judgement, only to the object of your judgement. So if you would not be rational in making the relevant judgment in this scenario, then it seems the analogy Siegel and Silins rely on between our mental grip on information stored in long-term memory but not occurrently recalled and the contents of non-attentive experience, adds up to a case in favour of, rather than against, Attentive Rationalizing.

Siegel and Silins (2014, pp. 158–9) also argue inattentive experience can doxastically justify belief, i.e. that beliefs can be based on such experience, and thereby qualify as well-founded (assuming the experience propositionally justifies). In support of this claim they observe that behaviour might be responsive, in a putatively intelligent manner, to objects or facts that are inattentively sensed, such as when a driver makes apt adjustments to the wheel

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<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that you have forgotten about either appointment. For a wide range of cues, including being asked whether you have an appointment at noon with Frank/Liza, you would immediately recall the appointment on being presented with the cue. There can be such a wide range of cues even if the precise occurrent thought that strikes you here – that you have conflicting appointments at noon – is not itself such a cue.

upon inattentively sensing a widening of a bend in the road ahead. They argue well-founded beliefs mediate between sensory-perceptual states and behaviour here. However, I doubt there are compelling grounds here for attributing beliefs here, as mediating cognitive states distinct both from sensory-perceptual states on the one hand and low-level motor-control representations on the other. At least, there is good evidence that sensory input can smoothly fine-tune one's ongoing action, through the dorsal visual stream, without passing through a layer of conscious belief (cf. Milner & Goodale 2006). It might be replied that even action guided through the dorsal stream could be regarded as involving a layer of *unconscious* beliefs. However, even if this were admitted, and such unconscious beliefs were granted to be reliably based on inattentive visual input, it would not discredit Attentive Rationalization, which concern the preconditions for rationalized judgments, where judgements are precisely conscious mental acts.

Another argument Siegel and Silins (2014, p. 159) offer for thinking that beliefs might be based on inattentive experience is inspired by a case described by Martin. Archie is looking for a cuff link. Looking into a drawer, he fails to notice the cuff link lying there, and continues searching the room. Eventually he gives up and leaves for dinner. On the way to dinner, Archie agitatedly recalls his search. Having a relatively good visual memory, he recalls how things looked as he checked the drawer. Suddenly he realizes that the cuff link was lying there. (Martin 1992, pp. 749–50) On Siegel and Silins's construal, Archie is supposed not to attend to the object that is the cufflink when looking through the drawer.<sup>14</sup> When he later judges that the cuff link was in the drawer, they argue, his judgement is based on his earlier inattentive experience of the same.

The assumption here that we can later consciously recall seeing something we did not at the time attend to is highly controversial. In change and inattention blindness, unattended items are not typically available for later conscious recall. Similarly, although extinguished items in visual extinction may enter implicit memory, as indicated by priming effects, I am not aware of evidence that subjects later can consciously recall them (cf. Vuilleumier *et al* 2002). In so far as Archie did not attend to the cufflink, that might precisely be a reason to doubt that he will later be able to recall seeing it there.<sup>15</sup>

Even if that controversial assumption is granted, problems remain, stemming from the fact that Archie's judgement, on his way to dinner, is immediately based on a form of visual episodic memory. How could that show that his judgement is (also) based on the earlier

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<sup>14</sup> This supposition is not clearly built into the case as Martin conceives it. For Martin's purposes, it is consistent to assume Archie attends to the cuff link, as long as he does not recognise it as such.

<sup>15</sup> The likeliest cases of consciously recall of previously inattentively perceived items are perhaps 'partial report' tasks in Sperling type paradigms (Siegel and Silins elsewhere rely on such examples). For recent arguments that attention is needed for recall even here (and references to the contrary view), see Mack *et al.* 2016.

inattentive perceptual experience? Siegel and Silins do not go into this, and so I am led to speculate, but I can only see candidate routes here. First, perhaps Siegel and Silins intend the case so that, although Archie relies on an episodic memory, in that act of remembering his earlier perceptual experience, or a suitable part thereof, is relived or re-experienced, thus allowing his judgement to be immediately based on his (relived) experience after all. As against this proposal, however, Siegel and Silins do not argue that Archie fails to attend to the cuff link within the context of his episodic memory. The default supposition here would certainly be that he *does* attend it. If this is so, any relived visual experience of the cuff link would, by supposition, differ relevantly from the original one, viz. precisely in what attentional distribution that goes with or characterizes it.

Second, Siegel and Silins might have some mediate form of basing and rationalization in mind. Perhaps they would argue as follows. ‘Suppose you start out believing P, infer therefrom that Q, and then later, believing Q, infer that R. Then, although your belief that R is immediately based on your belief that Q, we would, and should, also recognize it as being based on, and rationalized by, your belief that P, if only mediately. Analogously, Archie’s visual memory, on which his judgement is immediately based, derives from his previous visual experience. So there are grounds here too for saying his judgement is based on, and rationalized by, the latter, if only mediately.’

However, in the belief→belief→belief process, both transitions are of a kind. Both are rationally assessable, reason-responsive inferences. In the visual-experience→visual-memory→judgement process, they are not of a kind. The latter but not the former is a rationally assessable, reason-responsive act.<sup>16</sup> It might be fortunate, useful, unpleasant, etc. to have, or lack, such-and-such visual episodic memories. We might be more or less rational in relying on them. Yet, on the face of it, we are not epistemically rational or irrational already by virtue of having, or lacking, such-and-such visual episodic memories. Siegel (2017) would perhaps disagree with this, as she thinks even perceptual experiences are rationally assessable. This is not the place to rebut her radical view on this matter. I remain unconvinced, though, that we should abandon the traditional, and (I think) compelling, view of perceptual experience, and visual episodic memory, as arational. If this is right, there is a pertinent structural difference between belief→belief→belief and visual-experience→visual-memory→judgement. Even if two linked, rationally assessable basing relations allow for a sense in which the third state is mediately based, in a rationally assessable sense, on the first,

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<sup>16</sup> In saying the transition to the judgement is reason-responsive, I do not mean to commit myself to the controversial claim that the judgement is based on reasons provided by the relevant memory experience. I only mean that the rationality of the judgement is sensitive to reasons possessed by the thinker, e.g. having to do with the reliability of what she seems to be recalling.



this gives no grounds for finding such structure in Archie's case, where the first step, to the visual memory is of a quite different, arational kind.

#### 4. Attention as a conceptual capacity

This section argues that attention qualifies as a conceptual capacity, in the sense relevant to McDowell's recast conceptualism. That is to say that attention belongs to the understanding, and bestows content with categorial form and unity, on the reading of these conditions outlined in section 2.

Let's consider, first, whether the capacity of attention belongs to the understanding. Since the notion of the understanding in play here derives from Kant, and since, more generally, McDowell, following Sellars, has the ambition that his conceptualism emerge through a critical reading of Kant, it is pertinent very briefly to review here how Kant himself view attention and its relation to the understanding.

Kant clearly regards attention as faculty of the understanding. At the outset of his treatment of understanding, in the first *Critique*, he offers 'attention, its hindrance and consequences' as a leading topic of 'applied logic', a discipline that is said to study the rules of the understanding, in so far as it is subject to contingent, empirically ascertained conditions (Kant 1998, pp. A54-55/B78-79). Attention is invoked again at a central juncture of the B deduction, where (to put it broadly) Kant argues that the understanding, in the guise of what he inter alia calls the productive imagination, affects sensibility, thereby enabling empirical knowledge of objects intelligibly ordered in space and time. Kant there claims that this sort of affection of sensibility by the understanding is something everyone can recognise in herself since 'every act of attention can give us an example of this' (B156-7, nt.).<sup>17</sup>

Central to Kant's grounds for subsuming attention under the understanding is a conception of attention as an active power, subject to choice. Thus, in metaphysics lectures delivered as he was publishing the first edition of the first *Critique*, he describes attention as 'consciousness with the power of choice', a characterization that comes on the heels of an account of the distinction between sensibility and the understanding in terms of the former being passive, a case of receptivity, the latter 'self-active', having spontaneity (Kant 1997, pp. 29.877-8). This characterization links closely with McDowell's favoured construal of the notion of spontaneity, on which it adverts to a sensitivity to, and responsibility in the light of,

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<sup>17</sup> Kant also repeatedly addresses attention in the *Anthropology*, where attention is given an interesting role in rendering otherwise 'obscure' representations clear (or 'illuminated') or even distinct, and as such ripe for knowledge (Kant 2006, p. 7.135). He comes at least close to making attention necessary for knowledge, and affirms that the understanding must contain the faculty of attention (p. 7.138). For a discussion of Kant on attention, congenial to this paper, see Merritt & Valaris 2017.

reasons, appreciated as such (cf. McDowell 1998, p. 6; 1994, pp. 4-5, 60). The power of choice for Kant plausibly involves such a sensitivity and responsibility to reasons.

Now, attention clearly is exercisable in mental acts, responsive to reasons, grasped as such (which is not to deny that attention also can be passively drawn to stimuli). As Campbell observes:

We may have to appeal to the deepest aspects of an agent's personal life in explaining why his conscious attention has just the focus that it does, and we have no way of recasting this causal-explanatory work in information-processing terms. (Campbell 2002, p. 14)

This is arguably no merely accidental feature of the capacity of attention had by reflective, yet limited thinkers such as us. If attention were forever at the mercy of what happened to be the most powerful outer stimulus or inner biological drive, it could not perform the job of putting our limited cognitive resources to work on topics or objects relevant to questions or ends we are setting for ourselves. That job – of securing that attention be paid to things that matter to us – seems vital to what we think of as attention. It shows up, e.g., in how we ask or even admonish people to pay it in such-and-such ways. If a mental capacity did not perform that job, we would, I think, reckon that capacity ipso facto to differ in kind and nature from what we consider the capacity of attention.<sup>18</sup> This, to be sure, is just a stab in a direction of a defence of this claim. It suggests, though, that attention belongs to the understanding, in that it is actualisable in reason-responsive mental acts, in which attention is paid to things, because they matter to us.

A clarification may be in order here. I have just been stressing the reason-responsiveness of attending, while the last section defended Attentive Rationalizing, i.e. (to simplify slightly) that attention is needed for perceptual experience to rationalize judgement. Two questions must be kept firmly apart, though: (i) for what reasons does one attend to a perceived object, and (ii) what is the rationalizing role of one's attentive experience of that object? The answer to (i) may and perhaps even must include practical or telic considerations; the answer to (ii) concerns the epistemically rationalizing role of experience.

Though it is important to be clear about the distinction between these questions, they can of course be linked. One attends to an object, at least often and in part, out of interest in it, because one wants to know (more) of it. Specifically, the reason-responsiveness of attention allows one's manner of attending to be responsive to grounds for (to put it roughly) having another look or looking more carefully at things. Thus, we can see how the reason-

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<sup>18</sup> For a recent view of attention stressing its character of being, in rational subjects, under their rational control, and aiming to account for how that character could belong to the very nature of attention, see Watzl 2017.

responsiveness of attention is, at least, relevant to enabling (attentive) perceptual experience to meet the requirement of openness to self-critical scrutiny that McDowell places on would-be rationalizers (cf., e.g., 1994, p. 40; 2006, pp. 128–34).<sup>19</sup>

The second strand we distinguished in McDowell's gloss on conceptual capacities was that they bestow content with categorial unity and form. In our discussion of this claim, we set out from the platitude that actualizations of conceptual capacities are cases of having something in mind. They are cases of something's being presented to, or represented by, whoever actualizes the capacities. Attention meets this platitude. In actualizing the capacity of attention, one attends to something, and thereby has it in mind, in that it is either presented to, or represented by, one. In our broad sense of 'content', the actualization of attention in a mental episode thus entails it has content. The question now is whether that content has categorial unity and form. On our reading of the latter phrase, that is to ask: Is the relevant content either itself propositional or to be individuated in terms of certain propositions rationalized by the attentive experience, where the logical form of these propositions matter to their individuating role?

Campbell has repeatedly stressed a feature of our attentive perceptual awareness of objects that, I shall argue, supports an affirmative reply. When we perceptually attend to an object, the identity of that object, across at least brief moments of time, or sensory modalities, or perhaps in other respects, is apparent to us (Campbell 2009, pp. 654, 657–8). For example, looking at a car moving towards me, it is apparent to me that *this* thing now here is one and the same as an object that moments before was a little further away. Selecting a bottle from the fridge, it is manifest that this cold, round thing I am feeling is one and the same as this green, ampullaceous thing I am seeing. The apparent identity of the object here does not boil down to the mere identity of the object perceived at various times, or through different modalities. Consider a dense swarm of flies. At first, I notice one fly, call him Billy, close to a curtain. Moments later, I see Billy again, near the middle of the swarm. Yet, in the meantime, I have, as we say, lost track of Billy: it is not evident to me that this fly here is the same as that I saw moments before close to the curtain (as it might well have been had Billy been flying unaccompanied before me). Similarly, if I am facing a tall, narrow wine rack, full of bottles, and I have to reach around to pull one out from behind, it may will not be obvious to

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<sup>19</sup> It is a further step to argue that *only* attention can ensure that perceptual experience meets the requirements for rationalizing judgement *and* that only attention can do so at least in part because of the reason-responsiveness etc. that makes it a capacity of the understanding. To make this further step would, in effect, be to support and explain Attentive Rationalizing in terms of the features of attention that, as we here argue, make it a conceptual capacity, in the sense relevant to recast conceptualism. Taking that step would however require going into the connections between attention, reflection, and reasoning, in ways that easily would need a paper to itself. I must, then, leave these questions about the inner explanatory links between the view of attention as a conceptual capacity and Attentive Rationalizing for another occasion.

me, in my overall perceptual experience, that this cold round thing I am grabbing is the same as this brown one I am looking at.

As Campbell underscores (2009, pp. 654-5), this feature of attentive perceptual experience of objects – that we experience objects as one and the same, across at least brief periods or time, or over modalities – seems not merely incidental; it is, arguably, essential for us to have an experience as of a moderately stable and coherent world of surrounding physical objects.

What, then, does the apparent identity of an object, to which we are perceptually attending, come to? Campbell approaches this question in terms of a conception of perceptual experiences as individuated not merely by the objects they are of and their qualities, but also by the ‘standpoint’, as he calls it, from which one experiences them. The term ‘standpoint’ brings to mind the point of view in space from which one perceives things, and Campbell certainly intends the notion to capture something of the perspectival nature of perception. However, Campbell links the notion of a standpoint with the idea that our experience of an object, from a given standpoint, provides us with a corresponding understanding of a term referring to that object, where these understandings are individuated along Fregean lines:

Suppose your understanding of  $t_1$  is provided by your experience of the thing from standpoint X, and your understanding of  $t_2$  is also provided by your experience of the thing from standpoint X. That is constitutive of your understanding the identity statement, ‘ $t_1$  is identical to  $t_2$ ’ as uninformative, as an instance of the logical law of identity. Understanding the terms in this way, you have the right to trade on identity in inferring from ‘ $t_1$  is F’ and ‘ $t_2$  is G’, to ‘something is both F and G’. In contrast, suppose your experiencing the object from standpoint X provides your understanding of  $t_1$ , and your experiencing the object from some quite different standpoint Y provides your understanding of the coreferential term  $t_2$ . This constitutes your understanding the identity statement, ‘ $t_1$  is identical to  $t_2$ ’ as informative; it is not merely an instance of the logical law of identity. ... The points in this paragraph are all laid down in advance of any substantive description of the notion of a ‘standpoint’. (Campbell 2009, p. 658)

Campbell, then, invokes certain propositional contents – specifically, certain logical forms of certain propositions, and corresponding patterns of valid inference – to characterise the notion of a standpoint he sees as partially individuating our perceptual experience of things.<sup>20</sup> The propositional contents invoked, with the relevant forms and corresponding inferential

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell does not explicitly mention attention in this context, but, since he takes conscious attention to an object to be needed to understand a perceptual demonstrative referring to it, it seems that, when he says that ‘your understanding of  $t_1$  is provided by your experience of the thing from standpoint X’ he must implicitly be assuming your experience of the thing to be attentive.

potentials, are propositional contents that the experience, from the relevant standpoint, entitles one to or makes rational. Let's suppose this Fregean characterization could be construed as purporting to individuate standpoints, in the sense of articulating part of what makes them the features of our attentive experience that they are. Now standpoint is partly individuating of the content of experience (on our broad sense of 'content'). It would follow that the content of experience is at least partly individuated by the cited Fregean characterization. Thus, the content of attentive experience of objects would turn out to have categorial unity and form, on our reading.

It is not clear, though, whether Campbell intends the cited Fregean characterization to be individuating of standpoint in the sense of articulating what makes something the standpoint it is. This depends on how we are to interpret his remark that the Fregean condition is 'laid down in advance of any substantive description' of standpoint. On an alternative interpretation of this remark, and its wider context, he reasons as follows. 'Let a "Substantive Account" be an account of what makes something the standpoint it is that appeals to various more or less familiar parameters of the perceptual situation, such as the perceiver's vantage point upon the object, the lighting conditions, general visual acuity, and the like, but not to propositions or inferences made rational by the experience, from the relevant standpoint.<sup>21</sup> The Fregean condition that is "laid down in advance" does not tell us what standpoints are. Rather, it articulates a condition of success for a Substantive Account, viz: that it will turn out that sameness of standpoint upon an object makes available propositions about that object wherein the identity of that object is uninformative, entitling us to trade on the identity of the object, as per the Fregean condition.'

If the content of experience is adequately characterized by the objects of experience and their qualities, as they are perceived from a standpoint specified by a Substantive Account, so understood, it would follow that we have not secured a categorial unity or form for that content.

As Campbell recognises, though, that it is far from straightforward to articulate a Substantive Account. For one thing, sameness of spatial perspective on an object is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of standpoint. It is not necessary, as Campbell observes, since the sameness of an object might be perceptually manifest to me even as I move in relation to it, or it in relation to me, in which case I perceive it from one and the same standpoint. Sameness of perspective is it not sufficient either. I may fail to keep track of an object, not because of any movement on its or my part, but because of various sorts of

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<sup>21</sup> This is how Brewer (2011, pp. 95–99) specifies what corresponds on his view to Campbell's notion of standpoint, in so far as it is construed as a third relatum on the relation of awareness, beside object and subject of awareness. Brewer (2011, p. 96, nt. 2) explicitly does not follow Campbell in laying down a Fregean condition on the individuation of this third relatum.

distractions, say from objects moving nearby, or even from engaging in a concurrent non-visual attention-demanding task.<sup>22</sup> What goes for spatial perspective goes for other parameters of perception, like lighting conditions and acuity. An object I am looking at might manifestly remain one and the same before me, even as the light goes darker or as my acuity drops. Thus sameness of standpoint, over time, must be compatible with shifts in these parameters. Conversely, sameness of these parameters, even jointly with spatial perspective and with each other, does not guarantee that one will keep track of an object, since, again, non-visual attention demanding tasks can disrupt one's ability visually to keep track of the object.

Campbell acknowledges, in effect, that a general, explicit articulation of a Substantive Account is not readily forthcoming, but claims such an articulation is not needed. We have an implicit grip on what standpoints are, he argues. In a given case, we will often be able to point to specific features of perceptual parameters (vantage point, lighting, distance, etc.) that are constitutive of someone's standpoint, in that case. Even if we cannot articulate relevant features of a given standpoint, we can often imagine them.

However, Campbell might here seem to be confusing questions about our epistemic grip on standpoint, as ordinary reflective perceivers, with questions about the proper metaphysical account of what makes something the standpoint it is. The implicit abilities Campbell invokes do not allay the suspicion that a general individuating account of what standpoints are, couched in terms of the noted familiar sorts of perceptual parameters, will take the form of an unsystematic disjunction of different conjunctions of determinates for these parameters. By contrast, the Fregean condition Campbell 'lays down in advance' is nicely unified and systematic. This speaks in favour the view that it is the latter, rather than the unsystematic disjunction, that tells us what makes something the standpoint it is.

Is there a way of accepting this conclusion and still validating Campbell's ambition that the account of standpoint will 'show how we can characterize a way of experiencing an object without appealing to ... the idea that "ways" are characterized by associated representations' (Campbell 2009, p. 659)? If 'associated' is taken broadly, the answer must be 'No'. An individuating link with propositional contents and their forms, as articulated in the Fregean condition, would surely count as some form of association. However, if 'associated' is taken more narrowly, as implying that experiencing something from a certain standpoint (or in a certain 'way', as Campbell puts it here) is already a matter of entertaining propositional or other representational contents about it, then perhaps the answer can be 'Yes'. At least, if McDowell's recast conceptualism, on the reading we have proposed, has any promise, that view may be invoked here. Although experiential content (via, in this case, the factor of

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<sup>22</sup> For a study of how visual object tracking can be disrupted by distractors, or concurrent non-visual tasks, such as judging pitch of tones, see Tombu & Seiffert 2008.

standpoint) is individuated in terms of propositions rationalized, that content need not itself be propositional or even representational, or so the recast conceptualism proposes. In other words: that recast conceptualism is an attractive bet for one who accepts our conclusions about standpoint, yet wants to retain as much as possible of Campbell's anti-representationalism.<sup>23</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The main claims of sections 3 and 4 respectively were (i) that experience rationalizes judgement only if the capacity of attention is operative in experience in a certain way, so that one consciously attends to the object one judges about, and (ii) that the capacity of attention is a conceptual capacity, in the sense of that term relevant to McDowell's recast conceptualism. Their conjunction may be dubbed attentional conceptualism, in as much as they imply that experience rationalizes judgement only if conceptual capacities, in that sense, are operative therein.<sup>24</sup> Attentional conceptualism offers a novel route to this traditional conceptualist contention, resting on considerations that are at least non-trivially related to those advanced by McDowell or Sellars, and that should have appeal far outside the ranks of card-carrying conceptualists.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> What light would the categorial unity and form of attentive experience throw on Attentive Rationalizing? Now, if (a) experiential content needs to have categorial unity and form to rationalize judgement, and (b) only attentive experience has such form, Attentive Rationalizing follows. We have not, though, defended (a) or (b). We have not even defended a certain weakening of (b) to the effect that attention is needed to for experience to have categorial unity and form on the ground outlined in the text, viz. of presenting object identity (for discussion of related questions within psychology, see, e.g., Scholl 2009). If attention is not needed here, the argument for Attentive Rationalizing from (a) and (b) won't get off the ground. It would not, though, disprove Attentive Rationalizing, since attention may, for other reasons, be required for perceptual experience to rationalize judgement, cf. nt. 19 above.

<sup>24</sup> Objection: "conceptual capacities" is plural, while "the capacity of attention" is singular. So (i) and (ii) does not imply that conceptual capacities must be operative.' Reply: First, although 'capacities' perhaps conversationally implicates 'two or more', a strict implication to this effect has not been made explicit or motivated, as an official part, right from the outset, of the core conceptualist claim that conceptual capacities must be operative. It is true that, on McDowell's pre-AMG, propositionalist conceptualism, at least two such capacities would have to be operative, since experience was supposed to have structured propositional content, the possession of which was supposed to manifest the joint actualization of two or more Evansian Ideas. That argument, though, falls with the fall of propositionalism. Second, the capacity of attention can be regarded as a super-capacity with sub-capacities, individuated in various more or less specific ways: e.g. capacities to attend to objects, to attend to several objects at once, to attend to *this* particular thing before me, to attend to properties, etc. This is, arguably, not altogether unlike how the capacity for conceptual thought, more generally, can be considered as a super-capacity with various sub-capacities, individuated in various more or less specific ways. The case here presented for attentional conceptualism can, arguably, be fleshed out with more specific arguments for thinking (i) that several such sub-capacities need to be operative, for experience to rationalize judgement, and (ii) that each of these sub-capacities qualify as conceptual. This must however be left for another occasion. Third, even if the latter project were to fail, and 'conceptual capacities' should be construed as requiring 'at least two', it would be interesting to see how *very* close one can come to establishing a form of conceptualism through the route here sketched.

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