

AN AESTHETIC GROUNDING FOR THE ROLE OF CONCEPTS IN EXPERIENCE IN KANT, WITTGENSTEIN AND MCDOWELL

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Abstract. The paper begins by asking, in the context of McDowell's *Mind and World*, what guides empirical judgement. It then critically examines David Bell's account of the role of aesthetic judgement, or experience, in Kant and Wittgenstein, in shedding light on empirical judgement. Bell's suggestion that a Wittgensteinian account of aesthetic experience can guide the application of empirical concepts is criticised: neither the discussion of aesthetic judgement nor aesthetic experience helps underpin empirical judgement. But attention to the parallel between Wittgenstein's discussion of understanding rules and the question of how empirical concepts can be applied to particulars suggests how to dissolve the felt need for an answer. This in turn helps shed light on McDowell's conceptualist account of experience.

Introduction

In *Mind and World*, John McDowell defends a broadly Kantian account of the harmony of thought and world in which experience plays a central role in removing 'transcendental anxiety' about intentionality. Thought's bearing on the world is rendered unmysterious (a less Wittgensteinian philosopher would say 'is made possible') by the fact that experience can take in how the world is. A key element of that final thought is that experience itself is (always already) conceptualised.

McDowell's main argument for experience being conceptualised and for his rejection of the Myth of the Given is simple. The only model we have of a reason for a belief – something that normatively disciplines that belief – is a relation in which both items related are already conceptual-

ised. So if the final step in giving a reason for an empirical judgement is an extra-conceptual act of pointing, it will not sustain a rational friction between belief and the world. We will be exempted from blame for the outermost impacts of the world on us, but that will not underpin a notion of getting the world right. „In effect the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications” (McDowell 1994, p. 8).

This argument is reiterated in Lecture III of *Mind and World* where McDowell criticises the work of Gareth Evans who plays the role of a subscriber to the Myth of the Given. On Evans’ account, experiences are non-conceptual. They are the product of an information system that is more primitive than the ability to make judgements or form beliefs. Because experiences are non-conceptual on Evans’ account, his account is a version of the Myth of the Given. McDowell argues therefore that it falls prey to the objection set out in Lecture I.

The problem is this. Because experiences themselves are not conceptually shaped they lie outside the realm of spontaneity, responsible for concepts. Evans describes experiences as having content of a special non-conceptual variety. But McDowell suggests that because that content lies outside spontaneity it cannot provide a rational constraint on judgement even though Evans’s talk of non-conceptual content blurs that point.

But the word ‘content’ plays just the role (...) to make it seem that we can recognise rational relations between experiences and judgements, so that we can say, as Evans does, that judgements of experience are ‘based upon’ experience, even though these relations are supposed to hold across a boundary that encloses spontaneity... If these relations are to be genuinely recognizable as reason constituting, we cannot confine spontaneity within a boundary across which the relations are supposed to hold. The relations themselves must be able to come under the self-scrutiny of active thinking (McDowell 1994, p. 53).

Despite McDowell’s argument, however, the idea that experience is conceptualised raises a question which, following McDowell’s Kantian distinction between concept and intuition can be put as follows:

Q What guides the application of a concept in an experience or to an intuition?

Of course, given McDowell’s simple argument there can be no answer to Q which starts with an unconceptualised intuition. That would be to subscribe to the Myth of the Given and undermine the necessary rational friction between thought and world. Nevertheless, to be told that there can be no answer to the question so phrased is not yet to be shown why the ques-

tion is a bad question. If concept application is a matter of skilled empirical judgement, surely it has to be guided? A further diagnostic move is needed.

This paper has two related aims. One is to augment McDowell's simple argument for a conceptualised account of experience by criticising an alternative sketched (earlier) by David Bell. The other is to show how best to respond to Q. This latter aim is a piece of therapeutic philosophy: heading off a felt discomfort to which McDowell himself seems insufficiently sensitive.

Bell's suggestion is helpful, if ultimately unsuccessful, because, like McDowell, he draws heavily on both Wittgenstein and Kant. But he argues that there is a middle ground for a kind of guidance by the world in the selection of concepts. In other words, Bell suggests that there is a middle ground between exculpation and justification. I will argue that this is not so but, that by examining his suggestion, light can be shed on McDowell's account.

I. The context of Q in Bell's interpretation of Kant

In *The Art of Judgement*, David Bell suggests that a satisfactory account of judgement must meet a number of constraints. It must account for the nature or content of judgements and Bell suggests that this involves accounting for their subjectivity, objectivity, reflexivity and rationality. But it must also meet a key formal constraint, the 'principle of spontaneity':

If the performance of an act of type ϕ is learned, or rule governed, then it cannot be a general requirement of my performing an arbitrary act of type ϕ that I have already performed an act of that type... (Bell 1987, p. 225).

Thus no account of judgement that presupposes an act of the same kind will do. But considering empirical judgement in the face of experience – Q – presents a problem.

[I]f thought and judgement are to be possible, then the relation in which we stand to what we think or mean must be immediate and direct. If we are to avoid the incoherence of a regressive infinity of acts of judgement, or identification, interpretation, understanding or thought, then at some point we must judge immediately, spontaneously – and this means without having already judged, identified, understood, or grasped a thought on the basis of any prior such act (Bell 1987, p. 226).

Further, a central aspect of the account of empirical judgement is that the principle of spontaneity should be met in the case of judgements about particulars. Particulars are the 'go cart of judgement' (Bell 1987, p. 227).

[I]f objectivity is to be possible, then the concept of an object in general must find application in sensory experience. This would be impossible were we incapable of discovering, or being aware of, a minimal necessary unity and coherence in that experience. This awareness itself cannot, however, be already conceptually articulated: what is required here is an awareness of unity that grounds the possibility of judgement... (Bell 1987, p. 229).

Bell goes on to suggest that Kant was aware of this challenge to an account of judgement and that it lay at the heart of the schematism chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* but also the *Critique of Judgement*.

Whilst the focus of the schematism chapter of the first Critique is the question of how to apply the categories – the hierarchy of very general and fundamental concepts in Kant's philosophical system – to experience, he also deals with everyday empirical concepts. The categories present additional problems because as high level concepts – and unlike empirical concepts – they are 'heterogeneous from empirical intuitions' and an intermediary has to be provided between the two for which Kant invokes the notion of time. Things are not so complicated in empirical cases. Nevertheless, even here Kant suggests that an intermediary is needed between concepts and objects.

[I]t is [still] schemata, not images of objects, which underlie our pure sensible concepts... The concept of 'dog' signifies a rule according to which my imagination can delineate the figure of a four footed animal in a general manner, without limitation to any single determinate figure such as experience, or any possible image that I can represent in concreto, actually presents (Kant 1929, pp. 182-183).

But he recognises that this account does not really address Q commenting:

[T]his schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover (Kant 1929, p. 183).

There are two problems here. Firstly, there is the question of just how one can 'delineate the figure of a four footed animal in a general manner'. If, however, one removes reference to the figure from the account one is left with no explanation of the connection between the concept to be applied

and the experience one has and thus no answer to Q. It is obvious in fact that, as an answer to the problem at hand, the account faces deep problems. Without some intermediary between concept and experience there is no attempt at a solution, whilst any proposed intermediary will reduplicate the original problem. How can one bring the right concept to bear on an experience assuming that one is not already given that concept?

The Critique of Judgment has also been interpreted as attempting to answer this general question (see, e.g., Bell 1987; Caygill 1989; Vossenkuhl 1989). In its solution, reflective judgment plays a central role and is defined by contrast to determinate judgment as follows:

If the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is determinate... But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely reflective (Kant 1987, p. 18).

The task which reflective judgment has to undertake is to ascend from the particular in nature to the universal. A necessary presupposition of this activity is that nature can be brought under concepts. This principle, which is not constitutive of nature but is a subjective principle governing judgment, is that we think of nature as purposive: we think of it, roughly, as art. The claim, roughly, that we must think of the world as teleological, is one part of the solution.

The other is that aesthetic judgment sheds light on how judgment generally is possible. The key element of aesthetic judgment, Kant suggests, is the 'ability to judge an object in reference to the free lawfulness of the imagination' in which there is 'a subjective harmony of the imagination with the understanding without an objective harmony' (Kant 1987, pp. 91-92). It is the harmony of the faculties of imagination and understanding in judgment which is both the source of pleasure that grounds aesthetic judgment and which solves Q. Both understanding and imagination act on the same shared ungrounded assumption of the purposiveness of nature. Imagination structures the sensory manifold independently of, but in such a way that it will fit with, conceptual understanding. This is not the result of further legislation governing the two faculties. There is no further explanation of the harmony. Nevertheless there is a presumption of universal agreement in aesthetic judgments: a subjective universality in the harmonious operation of the faculties. Thus Kant's account of aesthetic judgment highlights a harmony which occurs in reflective judgment generally and sheds light on empirical judgment by answering Q.

This brisk summary is clearly insufficient to serve as a basis for assessing Kant's answer to Q: his substantiation of reflective judgment and invocation of an unexplained harmony of faculties. But that is not my intention here. Instead I want merely to identify the broad shape of his answer and see, following Bell, whether such a response can be offered in the framework of Wittgensteinian philosophy. Bell suggests that Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic experience provides a further way to fill out Kant's account in such a way that it meets his general constraint: the principle of spontaneity.

But before looking at Bell's account of Wittgenstein I wish to do two things. Firstly, I will briefly look to see how Q might seem pressing in the context of interpretations of Wittgenstein independently of a Kantian background. Secondly, I will develop a Wittgensteinian response to Q using his account of aesthetic judgement. But I will argue that it fails. Finally I will assess Bell's suggestion (which looks to aesthetic experience) and draw some lessons from it for a better understanding of Wittgenstein and McDowell.

II. Is there a relation between aesthetic and empirical judgments in Wittgenstein?

Q can seem to be particularly pressing given a communitarian reading of Wittgenstein which holds that the correctness of an individual's attempt to apply a rule consists in its ratification or refutation by others (Kripke 1982; Wright 1986). Such a reading invites the thought that, although it explains what being correct or incorrect comprises, it does nothing to explain how an individual is guided by the rule in making an application of it. The reason for this is that the constraint which provides normativity is external to the individual's practice.

Communitarian interpretations have been increasingly criticised, but there is some motivation to press Q even without a communitarian reading. The key claim in any plausible interpretation of Wittgenstein is that for judgments to be correct or incorrect there must be a normative standard external to any judgment. That claim invites the question from the first person perspective of how one can aim to be right in judgment given that being right is agreeing with something external to that judgment.

On the assumption that there is good motivation for Q one can immediately see one constraint on possible answers which follows Bell's 'principle of spontaneity' and echoes a Wittgensteinian worry. No explanation

which invokes a further rule will work because this would introduce an infinite regress. It would only be a satisfactory answer if an explanation of how one could apply that further rule were either unnecessary or already available. But a further explanation would indeed be necessary because the meta-rule would, like the first rule, require an external standard which is what motivated the question in the first place. (All this, of course, echoes *Philosophical Investigations*, § 201.)

It is for this reason that Bell suggests a middle path is required between providing no answer to Q and providing an incoherent answer invoking objective rules for application of which we would require still further rules. And he suggests that Wittgenstein can augment Kant's account of reflective judgement.

The purpose of the appeal to Wittgenstein is to attempt to substantiate the claim that there are subjective conditions which are necessary for, and cast light on, the possibility of rule governed empirical judgment. Furthermore, and thus far in agreement with Bell, Wittgenstein claims that there is a connection between aesthetic judgement and straight-forwardly rule-governed judgment or understanding:

Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a sentence lies nearer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme. Why is just this the pattern of variation in loudness and tempo? One would like to say: „Because I know what it's all about.” But what is it all about? I should not be able to say. In order to ‘explain’ I could only compare it with something else which has the same rhythm (I mean the same pattern). (One says: „Don't you see, this is as if a conclusion were being drawn” or „This is as it were a parenthesis”, etc. How does one justify such comparisons? – There are very different kinds of justification here.) (Wittgenstein 1967, § 527).

We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.) (Wittgenstein 1967, § 531).

Then has „understanding” two different meanings here? – I would rather say that these kinds of use of „understanding” make up its meaning, make up my concept of understanding.

For I want to apply the word „understanding” to all this. (Wittgenstein 1967, § 532)

Hearing a word in a particular sense. How queer that there should be such a thing! Phrased like this, emphasised like this, heard in this way, this sentence is the first of a series in which a transition is made to these sentences, pictures, actions. (Wittgenstein 1967, § 543).

These passages suggest that in addition to giving some account of subjectivity, Wittgenstein might also provide the resources for explaining empirical judgments via aesthetic understanding. Perhaps the sort of understanding characterised here by musical understanding – which, he suggests, cannot be put into words – underpins rule governed judgments and thus answers Q.

Two major and related themes can be discerned in these and other of Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic understanding (Wittgenstein 1978; 1953; 1955). One is Wittgenstein's claim that aesthetic judgments have an element of normativity and can be given partial justifications (Wittgenstein 1953, §§ 527, 202h; Wittgenstein 1955, § 19; Wittgenstein 1978, pp. 5-7). The other theme – which is what Bell highlights – is that aesthetic understanding depends on characteristic aesthetic experience. This is in turn likened to relation of understanding and experience found in aspect perception (Wittgenstein 1953, §§ 193-229). For simplicity I will refer to these as judgment and experience and consider them in turn.

III. Wittgenstein, aesthetic judgment and normativity

Wittgenstein claims that aesthetic judgments possess an element of normativity. Thus rather than concentrating on the use of words like 'beautiful' he claims that one should focus on aesthetic correctness. Relevant judgments are not of the form: 'that is very nice' but 'that is too short'. Furthermore, reasons can be given for such judgments, usually via contextual comparison. These show how the aesthetic object can be experienced in a certain way. (I will say more about how they do this in the next section).

Talk of normativity and justification may seem to suggest that Wittgenstein subscribes to an objective, cognitivist aesthetic philosophy. If so then it seems unlikely that he could help answer Q. But that interpretation is complicated by the way that justificatory reasons come very swiftly to an end. Of course that claim alone should come as no surprise since a general conclusion of the rule-following considerations is that reasons must terminate. But whereas it is 'part of the framework on which the working of our language is based' that 'disputes don't break out (among mathematicians,

say) over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not' (Wittgenstein 1953, § 240) no such agreement grounds aesthetic judgments:

Aesthetic discussions [are] like discussions in a court of law, where you try to „clear up the circumstances” of the action which is being tried, hoping that in the end what you say will „appeal to the judge”... if by giving reasons of this sort you make another person „see what you see” but it still „does not appeal to him” that is „an end” of the discussion (Wittgenstein 1955, § 19).

In both the aesthetic and the mathematical case, reasons come to an end. But, according to Wittgenstein, they terminate in agreement in the latter case but not always in the former. It is this that suggests to other commentators that Wittgenstein is a subjectivist (Osbourne 1966; Paton 1967; Slater 1983). Rather than enter that terminological debate, however, I want to examine how there can be such a contrast. What is the difference between aesthetic justification and justification in empirical or mathematical cases?

The difference is, I suggest, well captured by the presence in the latter cases of what Wright calls 'cognitive command' (Wright 1992, pp. 140-173). Cognitive command characterises a subset of discourses in which judgments can be framed. It states that:

It is a priori that differences of opinion formulated within the discourse, unless excusable as a result of vagueness in a disputed statement, or in the standards of acceptability, or variation in personal evidence thresholds, so to speak, will involve something which may properly be regarded as a cognitive shortcoming (Wittgenstein 1992, p. 144).

Thus the difference between aesthetic and empirical judgments is that in the latter case but not in the former it is a priori that a difference of opinion implies that at least one opinion is wrong. Unlike aesthetics, in empirical and mathematical judgments it is not the case that 'if by giving reasons of this sort you make another person „see what you see” but it still „does not appeal to him” that is „an end” of the discussion'. Although cognitive command captures this difference between aesthetics and mathematical judgments, care must be taken in determining what it amounts to. I will argue that, properly interpreted, it shows that Wittgensteinian aesthetics do not help to provide an answer to Q. To establish this it will be necessary to digress briefly on the surrounding context of Wright's test.

Wright deploys cognitive command as a part of a broader metaphysical programme. The first stage of that is the definition of a sufficiently minimal notion of truth to be acceptable to anti-realists. A truth predicate can be defined for any discourse with appropriate syntax and discipline. He then

proposes a series of further realist standards which discourses might also meet over and above, their capacity for a minimal truth value. The debate about realism is thus separated from the debate over whether a discourse sustains truth. Cognitive command is defined in an attempt to capture the intuition that some discourses correspond to or represent the facts by 'beefing up' the correspondence relation beyond the pleonastic sense that all true judgments correspond to the facts. If a discourse satisfies the further constraint of cognitive command a greater level of realism about it has been justified, and its judgments are cognitive achievements.

Wright argues that cognitive command is not ensured merely by the discipline necessary for minimal truth because that only ensures that there is generally a standard governing assertion which may in special cases lapse. One can now see how it might apply to Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic judgments. These possess discipline sufficient to warrant talk of correctness in widely agreed cases but do not pass the further test of cognitive command. Disagreement can be explained as divergence of taste rather than the result of some error.

If Wright's interpretation of the significance of cognitive command were correct it would indicate the nature of the difference between aesthetics and empirical discourses. Empirical judgments would reflect, represent, or correspond, to antecedent facts which were cognised. Aesthetic judgment would involve the exercise of a different sort of faculty which was not a form of cognition or perception. Aesthetic judgment might then comprise the intermediate case that Bell requires for an answer to Q. They would lack full objectivity but would not be mere whimsy. But the grounding assumption for this conclusion is unwarranted.

Cognitive command does not capture the idea of representation or correspondence by itself and thus cannot show that aesthetics is less cognitive than anything else. Some hint of this is provided by the fact that it is not only empirical judgments but also judgments in mathematics and in games like chess that satisfy it. The underlying problem is this. Cognitive command can be specified purely from within the realm of rules. It amounts to a further clarification of the rules governing a discourse: roughly, that if ever there is disagreement in the application of a rule then it or some related rule has been misapplied. By contrast, applying Wright's picture to aesthetics, it is possible to maintain discipline whilst also building some slack into the rules.

Aesthetic judgments are disciplined by rules but those rules lack this further constraint. Since one can explicate cognitive command simply as

a codification of the rules – a rule acting on other rules – without mentioning representation or the world, it will not serve to ground the right kind of difference between empirical or mathematical judgments and aesthetics. The hope was that consideration of aesthetic judgment would serve as a middle path between the belief that thought is ultimately ungrounded and the incoherence of the belief that it can be given a final justification via rules for applying rules. But it transpires that the mere possibility of acceptable disagreement after reasons have come to an end does not help here. It does not help explain how one can be guided by rules in empirical judgment because it presupposes guidance by aesthetic rules.

This description of aesthetic judgment depends on the cogency of there being rules to which cognitive command does not apply. It depends on the possibility of normative rules without the guaranteed convergence of those who have mastered them. It seems to me that, in the light of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations, this position is not easily precluded. Why should the normative practices that constitute rules not be gappy? Why should there not be some areas of indeterminacy? But, if there were an argument to the effect that to be rule governed at all is also to meet the constraint of cognitive command, that would merely show that Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic judgment was wrong. If so, then it would still not present a plausible middle path solution to Q.

The general problem of invoking the partial normativity of aesthetic judgment to explain our ability to apply concepts in empirical judgments may now be put like this. To support his own claim of the relevance of aesthetic judgments for explicating empirical judgments, Bell quotes Wittgenstein saying that understanding meaning and understanding a musical theme are closer than one thinks (Bell 1987, p. 243). Bell's problem, however, is that although he wishes to emphasise the relevance of the one case to the other, he cannot allow the two cases to converge because if so aesthetic judgment simply presupposes rather than helps explicate the issue. But that is what happens.

IV. Wittgenstein, aesthetic experience and seeing aspects

The discussion in the previous section assumed that aesthetic judgments were normative in virtue of 'gappy' rules which did not meet the further constraint of cognitive command. But there is also a second ingredient in

Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic understanding which both sheds further light on the account so far and which Bell thinks provides an answer to Q. This is the claim that aesthetic understanding – and thus judgment – involves characteristic aesthetic experience. But, as I will argue in this section, whilst this strand may reinforce Wittgenstein's account of aesthetic judgment, it provides no support for Bell's Kantian claim.

Wittgenstein suggests a central role for experience both in his discussion of musical understanding in the first part of the *Investigations* (quoted earlier) and in his discussion of aspect perception in the second part. The key idea in the former is that aesthetic appreciation of a musical theme, for example, involves appreciating it in some characteristic way. It is this which enables Wittgenstein to say that one can 'know what it is about'. In this, musical understanding resembles linguistic understanding. But unlike linguistic understanding, the way in which one grasps a musical theme cannot be put into other words. In characterising it, one must instead deploy comparison and contextualisation. 'One says „Don't you see, this is as if a conclusion were being drawn” or „This is as it were a parenthesis” etc. How does one justify such comparisons? – There are very different kinds of justification here.' (Wittgenstein 1955, § 527). Ultimately, however, if another person fails to see the point of such a comparison then no mistake need be involved. That simply means that they do not experience the theme in that way, whether or not they understand that it might be so experienced. Thus the failure of cognitive command discussed above stems from the fundamental role of experience in aesthetic understanding.

Wittgenstein's discussion suggests that there are a number of dissimilarities between aesthetic and linguistic understanding. Firstly, and I think least convincingly, aesthetic understanding cannot be paraphrased. (I say least convincingly because Wittgenstein does give examples of beginning to put such understanding into words and, as he also argues, the resources available for informative paraphrase of any understanding soon come to an end). Secondly, aesthetic judgments lack cognitive command. Thirdly, unlike aesthetic understanding, linguistic understanding need not involve any particular underlying experience. This last key difference, to which I will return shortly, is explored in passages in which Wittgenstein considers limit cases of language without grammar and language without soul:

It would be possible to imagine people who had something not quite unlike a language: a play of sounds, without vocabulary or grammar. ('Speaking with tongues.') (Wittgenstein 1953, § 528).

„But what would the meaning of the sounds be in such a case?” – What is it in music? Though I don’t at all wish to say that this language of a play of sounds would have to be compared to music (Wittgenstein 1953, § 529).

There might also be a language in whose use the ‘soul’ of the words played no part. In which, for example, we had no objection to replacing one word by another arbitrary one of our own invention (Wittgenstein 1953, § 530).

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein comments that he wants to call musical appreciation a form of understanding (Wittgenstein 1953, § 532), and, as will become clear, this is not merely a metaphorical use of that term. It is, he suggests, partly constitutive of the overall concept of understanding.

Bell (rightly) takes the connection which Wittgenstein draws here to demonstrate that he is not hostile to the philosophical discussion of aspects of our subjectivity. But Bell diagnoses the difference between aesthetic and non-aesthetic understanding as a difference between an intransitive and non-conceptual and a transitive and conceptual form:

Wittgenstein himself provides a host of examples of such ‘intransitive’ understanding – understanding a picture, a face, a piece of music, a poem, an attitude or posture – and his conclusion is always this: it is legitimate to talk here non-metaphorically, of meaning and understanding; but these notions must be distinguished from the corresponding transitive ones, where something is understood in terms of something else, where one thing means another... [S]ense or meaning, grasped non-conceptually in the case of such an intransitive understanding cannot be put into words (Bell 1987, pp. 242-243).

This supposedly intransitive understanding is what characterises our ‘feeling at home with’ something or ‘grasping it from the inside’. Bell then goes on to suggest that intransitive aesthetic understanding underpins transitive understanding. It is a form of understanding which precedes conceptual, rule-governed understanding or judgment. As a first grasp of the world it can serve as a model for an answer to Q which treads a middle path between whimsical subjectivity and full objectivity. To see whether this is a plausible suggestion I will turn to Wittgenstein’s development of this discussion in the second part of the Investigations. Here he discusses the connection between aesthetic understanding, experience and aspect perception.

According to Mulhall, Wittgenstein’s discussion of aspect perception attempts to characterise the phenomenological immediacy with which we experience the significance of pictures, themes, words and the world more generally (Mulhall 1990). The point of the discussion of cases of changes in aspect is to illustrate the nature of continuous aspect perception. The

latter characterises our normal immediate response to the world. Forging a link with the Heideggerian notion of the ready-to-hand, Mulhall suggests that our experiences of the world are usually immediately charged with significance. They do not await subsequent interpretation. We do not first hear speech as a sound and then interpret its meaning. Rather, what we hear, if we understand the language, is always already meaningful. This account appears to suggest appropriate materials for Bell's purpose. According to Mulhall, the kind of immediate significance we find in aesthetic judgment is widespread in our experience of the empirical realm and may be thought to ground it by answering Q. But it does not.

Although this kind of immediate experience of the significance of sounds or images is not called 'understanding' through a metaphorical use of that word, it is nevertheless a secondary use (Wittgenstein 1953, § 216). Similarly the claim that we can immediately and directly experience the meaning of sounds or pictures relies on a secondary sense of 'meaning'. These examples are compared by Wittgenstein to the claim that Wednesday is fat or the letter e is yellow. In these last cases, 'fat' and 'yellow' are also used in secondary senses. These differ from their primary senses. Wednesday is not fat in the way that person might be. Nor could the example be used to teach the meaning of 'fat'. But to understand it does presuppose that primary use. Nor is a secondary sense metaphorical. Nothing else would serve to justify the appropriateness of the claim other than, perhaps, a synonymous claim. Unlike metaphors, no underlying similarities or comparisons can be unpacked. It is just that, for some people at least, it is appropriate to call Wednesday fat.

Thus, although we wish to say that something can be immediately experienced as bearing a meaning in isolation, this does not contradict Wittgenstein's general claim (roughly) that meaning is use. The concept of meaning is used in its primary sense in the latter defining context and only in a secondary sense in the former. This distinction is important because Wittgenstein claims that although, as a matter of contingent fact, it is not true of us, it would make sense to ascribe to someone understanding in the primary sense unaccompanied by the secondary aspect. He calls such a person 'aspect blind' (Wittgenstein 1953, § 213).

There is some difficulty in clarifying just what someone who was aspect blind would lack without fallaciously impinging on the primary sense of meaning. Such a person could not see the aspects change in the duck-rabbit although she could recognise that the same picture could be classified as a duck or rabbit. She could not, according to Wittgenstein see a cube 'as

a cube', but nevertheless could recognise a cube. Likewise she could not experience a word as bearing a meaning in isolation but could nevertheless learn its technique of use because blindness to the secondary sense of meaning is not blindness to the first. She would, in other words, never have the experience of a repeated word seeming to lose its meaning. By contrast, most speakers can, contingently, experience this, although they do not actually forget how to use the word in question when it happens.

Despite the difficulty in expressing them, the moral of these distinctions is clear. Whatever the experience characterised as immediate understanding of meaning or significance consists in, since it is possible to understand and apply a rule without having it, it is not a precondition of judgement, thus cannot provide an answer to Q, and Bell's claim fails.

Consider the case of someone who is, apparently at least, aspect blind, looking at a line drawing of her beloved. Her attitude to the drawing of the face is akin to our attitude to, and ability to recognise, an electrical circuit diagram. She is able quickly to determine that some of the lines designate the eyes and nose and on the basis of this can deduce the meaning of any problematic larger or smaller features (as we know the symbols for wires, batteries and resistors and can work out how the electrical circuit works). Now the counter argument runs thus. Her recognitional ability must depend in turn on some ability to take in the lines and circles which ground her overall interpretation of the picture without the need to interpret them. If not, there would be a regress with respect to the input to her interpretation. Thus although aspect blind at the level of the whole picture of her beloved, she cannot be aspect blind all the way down. There must in all cases be some foundational immediate grasp of meaning or significance to which Bell can appeal in answering Q.

This thought, however, does not in fact support the counter claim. What it helps illustrate is the familiar Wittgensteinian point that understanding cannot be explicated in terms of interpretation. That in turn shows that aspect blindness must not be explicated in terms of a need to interpret pictures because an interpretational picture of understanding is incoherent. If aspect blindness is to act as a meaningful contrast to some more immediate phenomenological description of our relation to the world then it must be described in some other way.

The apparent force of the counter argument relies on just what is captured by the right account of the primary sense of understanding meaning. To understand a meaning is to master a technique of application unmediated by interpretation. Thus the full characterisation of the direct experience

of meaning or significance which underpins aesthetic understanding cannot simply repeat that. What makes the difference between the two cases is that aesthetic understanding (and judgment) rests on a characteristic subjective experience. No such experience is necessary or sufficient for understanding in its primary sense. Wittgenstein tries to capture this experience in his description of the way aspects can dawn in visual perception. But the moral of that case is supposed to be quite general and apply also, for example, to experiencing a musical theme in a particular way. Since, however, such contingent experiences are independent of understanding in its primary sense, aesthetic understanding cannot answer Q.

This diagnosis also highlights a problem with Bell's terminology. He equates aesthetic with intransitive understanding. In fact the moral of the rule-following considerations is that quite generally, transitive understanding is a special derivative case and intransitive is basic. Intransitive is a precondition of transitive understanding. But this does not show that aesthetic understanding is either basic nor that it provides an explanatory model. It provides no answer to Q.

V. Wittgenstein rules and Q

Although I think that aesthetic judgment cannot be invoked to solve Q I also think that when properly interpreted, Wittgenstein undermines the need to answer it. Reiterating some of the negative lessons of his discussion of rule following also suggests how Wittgenstein can also shed light on McDowell's conceptualist account of experience. Wittgenstein begins the rule-following considerations with a number of questions:

When someone says the word „cube” to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole use of a word come before my mind, when I understand it in this way? Well, but on the other hand isn't the meaning of the word also determined by this use?... Can what we grasp in a flash accord with a use, fit or fail to fit it? And how can what is present to us in an instant, what comes before our mind in an instant, fit a use. (Wittgenstein 1953, § 139).

Consider one of these questions which I will call W:

W Given that meaning is determined by use, how can the whole use of a word come before my mind when I understand it?

W differs from Q both in its temporal perspective and what it takes to be unproblematic about understanding. Q assumes that I am already in pos-

session of a general concept, and asks how I can know when to apply it on particular occasions. W asks how I can come to grasp, in a flash, the general understanding which is identified with a subsequent ability to make particular applications. But Q and W ask fundamentally the same question about the link between what we grasp and our ability to apply it. Given this relation, I suggest that we should learn how to respond to Q from Wittgenstein's response to W.

Two aspects of Wittgenstein's account of rule-following are crucial. Firstly, negatively, Wittgenstein considers various substantial and explanatory answers to W and shows that all are all flawed. The answers take the form of postulating things which could be grasped in a flash and which would also deliver the correct subsequent applications but on the assumption that the explanation is couched in terms that do not have to be characterised in terms of the outer ability.

Wittgenstein shows, however, that none of these intermediaries can work. I read the now very familiar conclusion of the negative arguments – 'What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation but which is exhibited in what we call „obeying the rule" and „going against it" in actual cases' (Wittgenstein 1953, § 201) – very broadly. Interpretations stand for all intermediaries between what is grasped when one grasps a rule and the ability to apply it. All are ruled out because if any intermediary is interposed then the normative connection between a rule and its correct application breaks down. The correct conclusion is that nothing mediates between successfully grasping a concept and being able to apply it, not even an aesthetic judgement or experience.

Positively, Wittgenstein identifies the two features that have to be linked – in W – as a single ability to make applications. The ability is, however, basic. It is not explained as the outcome of a state, process or sign that could be characterised in more basic terms. That is, he rejects the assumption that grasp of a concept is an inner state, or grasp of an inner mental object or template, which stands in further need of connection to its application in thought or experience.

Thus although there must still be a gap between the standard that constitutes correctness and each judgment, this is not a motivation for an answer to Q. Clearly if judgment is to be objective, if there is to be a distinction between correctness and incorrectness, then there must be a conceptual distinction between the standard of correctness for a given judgment and that judgment itself. But this is not to say that there is a gulf between a judging individual and the normative practice that constitutes the standard. It is

a basic datum of Wittgenstein's account that we are able to grasp the demands of the practice given by examples. This is precisely what is grasped when one understands a rule.

On this account both Kant and Wittgenstein consider what can bridge the apparent gap between what is presented in experience and the concepts one has mastered but each draws a very different conclusion. Kant thinks that this is a substantial question which might be answered by appeal to aesthetic understanding. Wittgenstein also draws parallels between aesthetic and empirical judgment but not as an answer to the question which he instead rejects as a symptom of a flawed account of understanding. Thus, far from substantiating Kant's middle ground solution to his own problem, Wittgenstein shows how no solution is needed.

What light does this shed in McDowell's conceptualist account of experience? I began by sketching his main argument for the idea that experience is always already conceptualised but suggested that this prompts the question of how the right concepts are selected to play a constitutive role within experiences? Now, of course, one familiar aspect of *Mind and World* is re-emphasised by discussion of Bell's principle of spontaneity. No account can be given that begins with neutral intuitions and then attempts to explain how particular concepts are the right ones that does not violate McDowell's basic argument for conceptualisation and against the Myth of the Given. But that restriction alone does not undermine the temptation to ask Q.

Rejecting Bell's suggestion, however, helps provide one further diagnostic move. Part of the source of the tension here is construing the grasp of empirical concepts in a way that leaves open their application in empirical judgements, akin to McDowell's 'master thesis' (McDowell 1998, p. 270; Thornton 2004, pp. 40-42). If concepts are construed in a way that makes them free-standing then Q is a pressing question. But Wittgenstein's response to W suggests that this starting point is mistaken. Acquiring empirical concepts goes hand in hand with acquiring a view of the world in which those concepts play a role. Having an empirical concept and seeing the world a certain way go hand in hand. The world both serves to discipline empirical judgement – since it is the world rather than, say, a community that acts as a normative standard but also to guide it.

This context also helps shed light on the disagreement between McDowell and his fellow Pittsburgh neo-Hegelian Robert Brandom. Whilst McDowell's demystification of intentionality places experience at the centre of the account, Brandom has no role for it in the index of his substantial *Making it Explicit* which develops instead an account of semantics in terms

of a communal linguistic practice or 'deontic scorekeeping' (Brandom 1994). But this means that, on Brandom's account, the source of normative standard for empirical judgement is distanced from judging subjects and thus has no resources to ease Q. Now Brandom himself seems to have no difficulty here: he seems to see no need to involve experience in an account of intentionality. But if one is concerned to know how judgement can be guided Brandom's account appears to start too late, once judgements are already in play. McDowell's account, by contrast, does have something to say in reply. Once one has a Wittgensteinian understanding of empirical concepts then one can see how guidance in judgement, as well as discipline, is provided by the world.

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