

Naturalism—Week 11: McDowell's "Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind"

- 1) "In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says." Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", Section 36.
- 2) "I have just suggested that knowledge and intentionality can be in view only in the framework of the space of reasons. When Sellars warns of a naturalistic fallacy, he is implying that the structure of the space of reasons is *sui generis* by comparison with the kind of structure that the natural sciences find in nature." [93]
- 3) "This liberal naturalism enables us, like the medieval Aristotelians, to take in stride the idea that our capacities to acquire knowledge are natural powers. But unlike the medieval Aristotelians, we can combine that idea with a clear appreciation of the *sui generis* character of the conceptual framework within which the concept of a capacity to acquire knowledge operates. Similarly, when we generalize Sellars's point, for the concepts of propositional attitudes, we can acknowledge a genuine achievement of the modern scientific revolution, in firmly separating natural-scientific understanding from the sort of understanding achieved by situating what is understood in the space of reasons." [95]
- 4) "I have stressed that a clear conception of the realm of law was a modern achievement. What underlies a familiar philosophical anxiety about knowing and thinking is the ease with which this conception can be equated with a conception of the natural." [97]
- 5) "This is the result of a familiar trade-off; the price of discarding Cartesian immaterialism, while staying within restrictive naturalism, is that one's singled-out part of nature is no longer special enough to be credited with powers of thought. But Millikan's conception, for all its freedom from immaterialism, is like the original Cartesian conception in threatening the sane belief that a *res cogitans* is also a *res dormiens*, a *res ambulans*, and so forth. Millikan's "intact mind" does not exercise rationality, and the "head-world system," which does exercise rationality, is not the thing that sleeps and walks. The rational animal finds no place in the picture." [104]
- 6) "But 'externalism' is a grotesque if it implies that exercising semantic rationality is an activity of a "head-world" system—as if the environment of what we ordinarily conceive as thinkers is partly responsible for doing the thinking that gets done." [103]
- 7) "Of course there is a relevant organ, the brain, and none of what I have said casts doubt on investigating how it works. But on pain of losing our grip on ourselves as thinking things, we must distinguish inquiring into the mechanics of, say, having one's mind on an object from inquiring into what having one's mind on an object is." [104—penultimate 'graph of the essay]
- 8) "If the only respectable intellectual orientation toward rationality is inquiry into how it is 'effected' in a mechanism, we lose our grip on rationality as something exercised in the activities of an animal." [104]
- 9) "The proper home of the idea of 'grasping senses' is in *describing* patterns in our lives—our mental lives in this case—that are intelligible in terms of the relations that structure the space of reasons.... Liberal naturalism needs no more, to make the idea of 'grasping senses' unproblematic, than a perfectly reasonable insistence that such patterns shape our lives." [103] Emphasis added.