John McDowell deplores what he calls "bald naturalism". Bald naturalists like me believe that intentional states arise in organisms that have been programmed to respond with linguistic utterances to, among other things, the impact of environment upon their sense organs. Beliefs, as Peirce suggested, are just habits of making such responses. "Appearings" (contrary to what McDowell says at pp. 140-142) are just a certain class of non-inferential beliefs.

I was led into bald naturalism by Sellars' attack on the Myth of the Given and Davidson's on the dualism of scheme and content. I was perplexed, therefore, to find that McDowell heartily endorses the former. I had thought that once one follows Sellars in distinguishing between the causal antecedents of a belief and its place in the logical space of reasons, McDowell's questions about the relation between Reason and Nature no longer need asking. I was equally perplexed by the fact that McDowell combined an indebtedness to Davidson with a willingness to take Kant's distinction between receptivity and spontaneity--that paradigmatic scheme-content distinction--with entire seriousness. McDowell says that Davidson aims "to accommodate the point of Kant's talk about spontaneity", and that Davidson "is not tempted by a bald naturalism that would opt out of this area of philosophy altogether, by denying that the spontaneity of the understanding is sui generis in the way

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1I am grateful to Bjorn Ramberg for valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.
suggested by the link to the idea of freedom." (p. 67) As McDowell reads him, Davidson thinks "that we cannot understand the idea of spontaneity naturalistically". (p. 72)

As I read him, Davidson thinks that we can understand everything naturalistically, and has no use whatever for a notion like "the spontaneity of the understanding". One of his major contributions to naturalism had always seemed to me to be the doctrine, stated most clearly in his "Mental Events", that the difference which Kant saw between noumenal freedom and empirical determination was simply a contrast between two ways of describing the same events: events which were themselves neither mental nor physical. The line of argument in "Mental Events" seemed to me to lead to the following, baldly naturalistic, view: reality does not have an intrinsic character, but can be described in any way (e.g., as obedient to norms, as serving purposes, as blindly mechanical) that language-users find useful. None of these ways is more faithful to what is described than any other, nor are there philosophical problems about how these various descriptions mesh. On my reading, the anti-essentialism which Davidson inherited from Quine thus culminates in a naturalistic pragmatism.

After some correspondence with McDowell, I realized that he prized "Mental Events" as much as I did. But there was an interesting difference. What he prized most were precisely the pages of that essay about which I had always had qualms: pp. 219-223 (in Davidson's Essays on Actions and Events). It was in those pages, it turned out,
that he found evidence for the claim that Davidson thinks that there is something called "spontaneity" which cannot be understood naturalistically.

I had always found those same pages to be marred by an acceptance of Quine's thesis that the indeterminacy of translation is somehow distinct from the ordinary underdetermination of theory. This suggestion had always struck me as dubious, because it seemed to repose on nothing more than the claim that a great gulf yawns between descriptions of events in terms of elementary particles and intentional descriptions, but not between the former descriptions and descriptions of those same events in, for example, neuro-physiological or bio-chemical terms. I had never been able to see why these two gulfs were not equally wide, and of the same sort. So I realized that a passage in Davidson which I had always read as a unfortunate step backward from bald naturalism had been read by McDowell as a step forward--a step in the direction of something like McDowell's own "naturalized platonism".

Exegesis of Davidson will seem an oddly indirect, quaintly scholastic, way to comment on McDowell. But I think it may be profitable. For McDowell and I are both therapeutic, rather than constructive, philosophers. (See Mind and World, p. 95). We both want the same thing: to give philosophy Wittgensteinian peace by producing a situation in which we shall "no longer be faced with problems that call on philosophy to bring subject and object back together." (p. 86) Yet McDowell sees my baldly naturalistic form
of pacification as leading to the "intolerable" consequence that "how things are...cannot be independent of the community's ratifying the judgment that things are thus and so" (p. 93), and as likely to produce "continuing philosophical discomfort" (p. 142n.)

I see his more Kantian way of encompassing our common end as leading us down a garden path at the entrance to which Sellars and Davidson have posted warnings—a path at the end of which philosophical discomfort will become as acute as it was (or should have been) for the first readers of Kant's first Critique. Conversely, McDowell's attitude toward my own peace proposals is Tacitus': *Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. The big broad issues between us can be settled only by prolonged experiment, aimed at measuring the degree of discomfort caused by our respective proposals. Within the exiguous space available, it may be best to stick to something quite narrow, our shared admiration for Davidson's "Mental Events".

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In the pages cited above, Davidson draws a distinction between homonomic and heteronomic generalizations. A homonomic generalization is one that "could be improved by adding further provisos and conditions stated in the same general vocabulary as the original generalization", whereas a heteronomic generalization could not. Heteronomic generalizations may "give us reason to believe that there is a precise law at work, but one that can be stated only by shifting to a different vocabulary." ("Mental Events," p. 219)
Notice that to figure out which sort of generalization we have got we need a criterion for sameness and difference of vocabulary. We need to be able to answer questions like: do biology and chemistry share the same (physical) vocabulary? Do psychology and biology? These questions become urgent when Davidson goes on to say that "Within the physical sciences we do find homonomic generalizations, generalizations such that if the evidence supports them, we then have reason to believe they may be sharpened indefinitely by drawing upon further physical concepts".

This passage raises the question: which physical sciences? Does biology supply homonomic generalizations? Does it promise perfect predictability as a result of sharpening? Or is the promise only there if the sharpening is done by switching from a biological to a chemical, and then to a microphysical, vocabulary? The latter alternative seems much more plausible. But then biological generalizations, and of general statements linking the biological and the chemical, will be homonomic only if we take the vocabulary of biology-plus-chemistry-plus-microphysics as one big vocabulary: that of "the physical sciences".

Let it be so. Then what about the vocabulary of psychology, the one in which we ascribe intentional states? Does this get to join biology, with its promise of perfection through sharpening, as part of a single vocabulary, that of psychology-plus-biology-plus-chemistry-plus-microphysics? Apparently not. For, Davidson tells us,
The heteronomic character of general statements linking the mental and the physical traces back to the central role of translation in the description of all propositional attitudes, and to the indeterminacy of translation. Nor is the irreducibility due simply to the possibility of many equally eligible schemes, for this is compatible with an arbitrary choice of one scheme relative to which assignments of mental traits are made. The point is rather that when we use the concepts of belief, desire and the rest, we must stand prepared, as the evidence accumulates, to adjust our theory in the light of considerations of overall cogency: the constitutive ideal of rationality partly controls each phase in the evolution of what must be an evolving theory...[N]omological slack between the mental and the physical is essential as long as we conceive of man as a rational animal. (pp. 222-223)

This explanation may still leave us wondering whether there is really a big difference between attempts to find a strict law lurking beneath "Swans are, ceteris paribus, monogamous" and attempts to find one lurking beneath "People who believe that S entails P, and that S, also believe, ceteris paribus, that P". Is there any more possibility of, for example, finding chemical predicates co-extensive with those designating relevant features of swans and of monogamy, than for finding such predicates designating relevant features of belief-states?
Recently, in his "Three Varieties of Knowledge", Davidson has looked back at "Mental Events" and said that he was wrong to rely on the indeterminacy of translation for the purpose of drawing the homonomic-heteronomic line. In this later paper he says that the distinctive thing about psychological explanation is the use of normative concepts, concepts which presumably are not used when deciding that one has found a confirming instance of the monogamy of swans. In this paper Davidson says that

If we were to drop the normative aspect from psychological explanations, they would no longer serve the purposes they do. We have such a keen interest in the reasons for actions and other psychological phenomena that we are willing to settle for explanations that cannot be made to fit perfectly with the laws of physics.

But are we not equally willing so to settle when explaining why the widowed swan dies alone? Davidson seems to grant that we are, when he continues

Much of what I have said about what distinguishes mental concepts from the concepts of a developed physics could also be said to distinguish the concepts of many of the special sciences such as biology, geology and meteorology. So even if I am right that the normative and causal character of mental concepts divide them definitionally and nomologically from the concepts of a developed physics, it may seem that there must be something more basic or
But what Davidson goes on to say there is is not, as far as I can see, relevant to the availability of strict laws, or of co-extensive predicates—nor, consequently to the availability or unavailability of homonomic generalizations. For he says that the "ultimate springs of the difference between understanding mind and understanding the world as physical" lie in the fact that we depend on our linguistic interactions with others to yield agreement on the properties of numbers and the sort of structures in nature that allow us to represent these structures in numbers. We cannot in the same way agree on the structure of sentences or thoughts we use to chart the thoughts and meanings of others, for the attempt to reach such an agreement simply sends us back to the very process of interpretation on which all agreement depends...A community of minds is the basis of knowledge; it provides the measure of all things. It makes no sense the question the adequacy of this measure, or to seek a more ultimate standard.

Everything Davidson says in this passage seems to me true and important. But still, granted that a community of minds provides the measure of all things, how does that help show that there is a bigger gap between rationality and elementary particles than between avian monogamy and those particles? Why does it show that...
teleology may be erasable from biology in a way that normativity can never be erased from psychology?

I cannot work my way back from this last-quoted passage to the one quoted earlier about the resemblance of biological, geological and meteorological concepts to psychological ones. Granted that you cannot fill in the "ceteris paribus" clauses in psychological generalizations, can you fill them in in biological generalizations any better, free from norms as they may be? And why, after all, should it matter whether we can or cannot? Why should we let intuitions about what degree of strictness lawfulness may turn out to be available in various areas of inquiry create philosophical problems for us--problems about, e.g., how thought bears on reality?

McDowell takes the passages I quoted earlier from "Mental Events" as a sort of Haupttext, one which shows that Davidson believes that "we cannot understand the idea of spontaneity naturalistically." Why spontaneity? Because, as far as I can figure out, spontaneity is what is not governed by laws, and hence can be understood naturalistically only if we replace bald naturalism with a "naturalized platonism" (Mind and World, p. 95). Spontaneity is what we are faced with once we see that the constraints of what Davidson calls "the constitutive idea of rationality" are not just the familiar constraints of holistic explanation.

Davidson, I suspect, may think that McDowell milks more out the relevant passages of "Mental Events" than he intended to put there. I think that there is something wrong with those passages,
something which led McDowell down the garden path that leads to naturalized platonism, something that is not remedied by the second thoughts put forward in "Three Varieties of Knowledge".

My hunch is that what Davidson thinks of as the irreducibly distinct constraints which the idea of shared rationality places on psychological explanation are simply the familiar constraints of holistic explanation--and thus not interestingly different from the holistic constraints on our biological explanations. I should think that what Davidson calls "definitional and nomological irreducibility" is just one more example of the banal, Wittgensteinian, philosophically pacifying, fact that no two ways of describing anything can ever do precisely the same jobs.

Because of this hunch that the holism involved in psychological explanation is not much different from that involved in biological explanation, I am inclined to think that temptation to make a big deal out of the psychological-physical distinction is a hangover of a early, pre-Darwinian epoch in the history of philosophy--the epoch of Kant. As I read the history of philosophy, Brentano distilled the essence of Kant's grandiose scheme-content distinction into his criterion of the psychical, and Quine and Davidson swallowed the resulting poisoned pill. The dangers of doing so seem to me plain when one watches what McDowell does with Davidson--namely, fastening on the passage from "Mental Events" under discussion as a way of getting back to "the insight that Kant spoils by putting in the framework of his talk of the supersensible," namely that "empirical
thinking is rationally answerable to the reality that it aims to be about" (McDowell, p. 82).

I think that unless we adopt a naturalism which is perhaps balder even than Davidson's, we shall keep thinking both that Kant had some such insight, and that Brentano was right that the intentional-nonintentional distinction has a special, unusually interesting, philosophically pregnant, kind of irreducibility. We shall remain in awe of the normative-descriptive distinction, instead of saying that that distinction, like the swan-cell and cell-molecule distinctions, is indeed definitionally and nomologically irreducible, but is nonetheless philosophically sterile.

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