



**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**

**Picture Hooks:**

**Prelude to an Aesthetic Epistemology**

**by**

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**Yet all experience in an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.  
Alfred Lord Tennyson**



## Abstract

One cannot see the impoverishment of theories of concepts presented in the fractured subdivisions of contemporary philosophy without recognizing the need for a non-question-begging view of concepts by which to start an investigation. I choose the metaphor of hooking onto the world, with the concept as the hooking mechanism, opening the investigation to linguistic, metaphysical, psychological and epistemological views. I consider Kant's project in the first Critique and Wittgenstein's inquiries through this metaphor. My exploration raises essential issues about the objectivity of concepts and the ontological commitments entailed thereby. I take the lessons learned from Kant and Wittgenstein (with contemporary additions) to begin to build an understanding of concepts. Two projects inform this investigation: my belief that artworks have epistemological efficacy for which any correct epistemology must account and my own personal exploration, attempting to understand the tradition within which I find myself working.

## Acknowledgements

There seem to me to be two sorts of people to be acknowledged, those without whom I would not have continued (or perhaps started) in philosophy and those who have influenced my thought, much of which is reflected (if not presented) in what lies below. Of this first group, my parents are perhaps the most culpable, making it impossible that I should be anything other than a philosopher (regardless of what I do professionally). While I might have been molded into a philosopher anyway, I would not have pursued it academically were it not for Dr. G.E. Simpson, who showed me kindness and had confidence in my academic ability at a time when I most desperately needed it. The members of the University of Calgary Philosophy Department have also helped me greatly, faculty, grad students and staff. Maggie Kohl especially has been a true guiding force and a great emotional support. Outside the department, my friends have given me both perspective and joy and have made life in general bearable. Finally, I owe the greatest debt to Andrew who, despite all his neuroses, has really kept me sane for these last two years.

As for those who have influenced my thought, Andrew also holds an important place, a balance to the foundationalist and rationalist views instilled in me by my parents. I think my father has influenced my views so that I sometimes do not know where his ideas start and mine end; he has also given me the privilege of influencing some of his. My mother has also deeply influenced me, though in rather different ways (I do know where her ideas start and mine end) and I owe her special thanks for proofreading my thesis (I thank her on behalf of my committee also) and putting up with me at my very worst. I owe a debt to my committee who had the patience to get through *all* of my thesis (or so I suppose) and were kind enough in my oral defence to ask me about what I've really wanted to talk about all along, i.e., art. A special thanks to Dr. Brian Grant who has pushed me and guided me with his own charming mixture of profanity and kindness—a truly nice guy.

I must also acknowledge the profound influence that the University of Calgary, both as an institution and through the actions of the upper echelons of the administration, has had on my thought. It has given me a deep appreciation of the efficacy of persuasive definitions and shown me that, in practice, language-game communities injected with a sufficient amount of deceit break down. Without its influence I might never have realised how terribly wrong Nietzsche was, for whatever doesn't kill you does not necessarily make you stronger. Lastly, it has also taught me how essential freedom of speech is to personal dignity and that without a feeling of security one can never be truly happy.

**For Puss  
(August 1974 - January 5, 1997)**

**the cat of a lifetime**

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### **In Broken Images**

**He is quick, thinking in clear images;  
I am slow, thinking in broken images.**

**He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images;  
I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images.**

**Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance;  
Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance.**

**Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact;  
Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.**

**When the fact fails him, he questions his senses;  
When the fact fails me, I approve my senses.**

**He continues quick and dull in his clear images;  
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.**

**He in a new confusion of his understanding;  
I in a new understanding of my confusion.**

**Robert Graves**

## Preamble

### What's Art Got to Do with It?

On the wall by the coffee area in the University of Calgary Philosophy Department in February of 1997 was posted a heated debate, conducted through the Globe and Mail. The bone of contention at the centre of this collection of articles and letters to the editor was Tom Hurka's claim that the movie The English Patient is morally bankrupt.<sup>1</sup> As one of his regular columns Hurka compared the moral choices of the characters in Casablanca with those of this other highly acclaimed movie, maintaining that Casablanca advocated making moral decisions for the greater good, whereas The English Patient expressed the immoral and maudlin notion that love is more important than anything else in the world (even than keeping from the Nazis maps crucial to the invasion of north Africa). The most striking aspect of this dispute was the reams of mail produced by this claim when, after all, it is only a movie. Consider, this is a time of social upheaval, when there is no lack of social and political issues to be debated, yet what really upsets people is criticism that they feel is unwarranted about a favorite movie. Such debates do not raise eyebrows, rather they are very much a part of our society and history. After the premiere of the Rite of Spring people rioted, Barnett Neuman's Voice of Fire still inspires controversy as regards its million dollar price tag and Marilyn Manson concerts have been sold out and shut down across North America. There are several alternative (though not contradictory) conclusions that can be drawn from these examples. It could be that we are extremely trivial and we are sufficiently cynical about

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hurka, "The Moral Superiority of Casablanca over The English Patient," (Globe and Mail, January 25, 1997), D5. Letters to the editor: Diane Goldsmith, "Casablanca," (Globe and Mail, January 28, 1997) A16. Paul Anderson, Philip Castleton, Seymour Hamilton, "In the blue trunks, Casablanca..." (Globe and Mail, January 29, 1997) A11. Catharine E. Warren, E. J. Bond, Tim Conley, Derek Markham, Martin Cook, "Round two: The English Patient rallies," (Globe and Mail, February 1, 1997) D9. John Russell, Raymond Peringer, "Love's sanctuary is a perilous place," (Globe and Mail, February 5, 1997) A15. Editorial: "When loyalty and friendship collide," (Globe and Mail, February 1, 1997) D8. Political cartoon: Gable, "Choose One," (Globe and Mail, February 4, 1997) A14.

and tired of politics to crave being passionate about something else, or art<sup>2</sup> is a central part of human lives. In this thesis I assume that this final option is true and I consider how mainstream analytic philosophy, particularly epistemology, might make room for the idea that humans are not merely rational animals, but are and should be artistic animals. Indeed, these are not separate aspects of humanity, but are rather intimately entwined.

There is more than simply anecdotal evidence for the central role art plays in our lives. After all, some of the oldest *distinctly human* artifacts we have are artistic artifacts<sup>3</sup>. Art is not just a part of every society in the world today, but it is part of our natural history<sup>4</sup>, and as such a part of our psychology. Indeed, professional psychology is presently investigating this area, evidenced by the widening interest in the new area of art therapy. What is more, research into the relationship of cognitive science and art, a type of neuro-aesthetics<sup>5</sup>, is starting to create interest. The most highly publicized of such investigations is probably Shaw's experiments correlating success in spatial reasoning with listening to various types of music<sup>6</sup>. While in our century Susanne Langer laid some of the conceptual foundations for such investigations, arguably the intuition has been around and clearly articulated since the Pythagoreans placed the study of music next to the study of mathematics. From here the question is, how do we understand the role art

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<sup>2</sup> I use 'art' as broadly as possible at this point. Most theories of what art is can be used and still express my point.

<sup>3</sup> The caves discovered a couple of years ago by Jean Marie Chauvet near Avignon, France, offer some of the best examples of early artistic efforts (17 000-18 000 B.P.), although arguably artistic artifacts can be traced back 40 000 years. See Robert Hughes, "Behold the Stone Age," *Time*, (February 13, 1995) 40-47 and Michael Lemonick, "Odysseys of Early Man," *Time*, (February 13, 1995) 50-52. The consideration of tools as examples of distinctly human artifacts is less impressive as many animals, especially higher primates, use tools. Art, however, seems a more especially human endeavour. The one type of non-human artworks I have heard of are those pieces by the elephant at the Calgary Zoo. Plausibly crows filling their nests with shiny objects and the abundance of examples of animals at play is tangentially related to aesthetic experience, but this is sufficiently tangential for it not to concern us at this very preliminary point in the investigation.

<sup>4</sup> I intend all Wittgensteinian overtones.

<sup>5</sup> A term coined by Christine P. Watling.

<sup>6</sup> Watling describes the experiments in detail, see Christine P. Watling, "Art and Neuroscience: Evidence for Art's Cognitive Role," (presented for the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics Rocky Mountain Division, July 12-14, 1996) 10-18.



plays in our minds, our lives and our natural history? Does it have a central conceptual role, a communicative role, a contemplative role or an imaginative role? Does it belong in epistemological discussions?

Analytic philosophy has had a love, but mostly hate, relationship with art. There are two main reasons for this, which are in fact closely related: art is, supposedly, both subjective and, worse yet, irrational (or at best a-rational). It is not really surprising that art is seen this way simply because of its association with the emotions, which are also subjective and supposedly irrational. As such, the emotions have not generally been considered a central issue to a perfectly rational, objective pursuit like philosophy. This is especially true in epistemology, where science has been used as a paradigm for rational knowledge gathering. Such attacks, however, appear less potent when one considers the extraordinary plurality of notions of the rational. In "Existentialism, Emotions, and the Cultural Limits of Rationality" Robert Solomon lists thirty-three different accounts of rationality.<sup>7</sup> In recent years feminist thinkers have criticized the idea of rationality to the point of questioning perfectly rational knowing itself. Although the myth of the perfectly rational knower is mostly no longer accepted, we are left with the task of investigating the nature and extent of rationality in knowledge gathering and how the emotions fit in.<sup>8</sup> An alternative feminist criticism questions whether the radical demarcation between emotion and rationality was ever valid and attempts to reconstruct both feeling and knowing so as to show the relation between them.<sup>9</sup> It seems we may find that the optimally rational knower is also an emotional knower. An investigation into art may

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<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Solomon, "Existentialism, Emotions, and the Cultural Limits of Rationality," Philosophy East and West, vol. 42, no. 4, (October, 1992) 605-9.

<sup>8</sup> I discuss these ideas at greater length in "Emotion, Epistemology and the Feminist Agenda," Proceedings of the Gender Research Symposium, (1996) 62-67.

<sup>9</sup> In neuroscience, Antonio Damasio's work seems to support this type of maneuver, although he does not appear to have feminist motivations. See Antonio Damasio, Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain, (New York: Avon Books, 1994). Alison Jaggar, among many others, has investigated this in "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" in Gender/Body/Knowledge, eds. Allison Jaggar and Susan Bordo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 145-170.

help us to envision what this might mean. If we can understand how a work expresses both rationally and emotionally at the same time, each by virtue of the other, this may shed some light on the connection of emotion and knowing through the rest of our lives.

The other aspect of art and emotion which has been distasteful to the analytic palate is the extreme subjectivism displayed by both. It has been accepted that in order to be rational we must be objective. We can tell sociological stories as well as psychological stories in support of the subjectivity of art. The idea that beauty (or at least aesthetic importance) is in the eye of the beholder is justly dominant. Indeed, there are trends (in fact I fear it may be the majority view) in aesthetics and literary criticism where it is maintained that one cannot properly understand a work if one is situated outside the cultural and aesthetic tradition in which the artist completed the work. While there may be *some* truth in this, the extent to which it is true is still an open question and the type of answer we can expect to find will depend in part on what we take understanding to be. Such understanding appears yet more complex in the light of the fact that the means by which we reflect upon and share our reactions to artworks (i.e. language), testing their objectivity, is sometimes not adequate for expressing our response to the work. Invariably, when we are faced with an artwork that 'really does it for us,' we are at a loss to say what exactly it is that 'does it for us' or even what is being 'done'. Conversely, there is the experience of thinking a work is not quite right, but being unable to say how it is not quite right. Wittgenstein relates these reactions to works as the feeling of 'discontent'<sup>10</sup>. At the other end of the spectrum sits the aesthetic experience where it is beyond us to do anything other than gasp or utter, 'tremendous'<sup>11</sup>.

Interestingly, this ineffable aspect is not only discussed by philosophers, nor only by viewers but, in some cases, *guides* the artistic process. In other words, individuals fulfilling every role in understanding an artwork are informed by the work's ineffable

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<sup>10</sup> See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, ed. Cyril Barrett, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

aspect. One striking example of this can be found at the renowned Théâtre du Soleil, headed by Ariane Mnouchkine (arguably one of the top five theatre directors alive). This company, comprised of artists with a wide range of ethnic and national backgrounds, rehearses by improvising around a given text and discovering the moments of theatre. Their very mode of working subverts both the idea that understanding art depends on immersion in the relevant tradition and the notion that art appreciation is entirely subjective. While an artwork's achievement may be in the eye of the beholder, subjectivism tends to presuppose that the eyes of each beholder will come to different judgements. Why should we accept this? The Théâtre du Soleil offers an alternative vision of the relationship between the subjective and the objective. As Mnouchkine's assistant puts it,

It is very, very rich because everyone brings her or his own tradition and culture, the shape of his or her imagination. Through all of this, we put into practice the search for the expression of feelings that are common to everyone, or as we say, universal....When a minute of theatre is born, that is a moment of truth, life, in a form that *everyone* sees. Benches tremble!<sup>12</sup>

Here we see that subjectivity collapses into objectivity. This is not quite objectivity as intersubjectivity, for the process is non-reflective. The members do not come to an agreement about when and where the moment of truth is recognised; the recognition itself is the agreement. Hand in hand with this subjective objectivity is the call to truth, so common in artistic dialogue and so infuriating to philosophers. This talk of truth is often paired with clarity<sup>13</sup> and completeness which are, interestingly enough, words that often occur in discussions around understanding and knowledge.

Irrespective of the subjectivity of the appreciation of artworks, the language by which we appreciate them is also interesting. The tradition of aesthetical enquiry has

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<sup>12</sup> Sophie Moscoso, "Théâtre du Soleil—A Second Glance," an interview by Josette Feral in The Drama Review, vol. 33, no. 4, (Winter 1989) 98. (my italics) Note: To clear up any possible ambiguity, the actors sit on benches while they rehearse; Moscoso is not referring to any supernatural event.

<sup>13</sup> Even in such media as dance, clarity is extremely important. Martha Graham in Dancer's World talks about dancing, "clearly, beautifully, with inevitability."

focused long and hard on notions of expression and representation. Regardless of how different the treatments may be, these concepts are also of central concern to the philosophy of language. The main difference in the treatment is that philosophy of language is about words and sentences and how they express and represent--or alternatively how and what they mean--whereas art represents, expresses and, arguably, means without words, centrally and importantly without words. Even novels find their artistic expression beyond the surface meaning of words, through images, metaphors and tricks of word choice and metre.<sup>14</sup> The subjects of philosophy of language are subject to formal logic (or so it goes for the majority of the analytic discussion); those of art *prima facie* are not.

Where does the above discussion take us? Well, I don't mean it to take us very far. Indeed, many of the more interesting areas alluded to above will occur as shadows, or not at all, in what lies below. I simply want to convince the reader to be open-minded regarding the possibility of art being essentially an epistemological tool of a kind that has

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<sup>14</sup> There may be objections against my including verbal works, indeed entirely verbal works, such as novels and poetry, in my analysis given that what I am pointing to suggests a kind of non-propositional expression. After all, novels are nothing but propositions. However, this is not the only way in which they operate, thus while not exactly non-propositional, they are not-entirely-propositional. Watling discusses Miall and Kuiken's studies which "have found that foregrounding--the stylistic devices used in literature such as metre and rhyme, grammatical inversions, metaphor, etc.--affects all readers, regardless of their training, the quantity of their reading, or the quality of the reading material. *And the use of these devices in literature crosses cultures, ages, and gender.*" (4, italics hers). She goes on to quote Miall and Kuiken's understanding of how foregrounding operates: "1. The linguistic novelty, 'defamiliarization,' draws the reader's attention and interest. 2. Defamiliarization forces the reader to slow down the pace of his or her reading, 'allowing time for the feelings created by the [foregrounding techniques] to emerge.' 3. 'These feelings guide formulation of an enriched perspective...' (5) (Kant, perhaps innocently, makes a distinction between the letter and the spirit of his work, which, if plausible, suggests a tool for poetry--working against the letter through the spirit. See page 42, note 21, below.)

Of course, my reader may again object that under such a description any piece of well written prose should count as art (a problem that Watling also considers). I think the response to this centres around how and what a work is about, but this is a whole thesis in itself. For verbal artworks all we must admit is that they sit in the realm of the not merely propositional, and that what is left over from the propositional is the arty aspect of the work. As it stands, we should perhaps remember Nietzsche, the great artist philosopher, and consider that perhaps the line between art and non-art is as blurry as the line between the north and south of England. This does not mean that we cannot say what is good or bad art, but this question, again, must wait for another time.

not generally been included in epistemic models. Clearly there is a trivial interpretation of this. After all, it is widely accepted that we can gain knowledge from works of art in one sense. People will mostly agree that *Guernica* screams that war is Hell and that Jane Austen tells us things about the manners and pretensions of the middle class in Regency England. It is equally widely accepted, however, that art offers more than this type of insight. The question is 'Is this peculiarly artistic type of insight epistemological in character?' The position I espouse maintains that artworks are capable of offering epistemological insight in as much as they can inform our concepts and even help us reform our concepts. However, we need a theory of concepts which will in turn inform an epistemology which allows art epistemological efficacy.

I believe the primary way in which art has its efficacy is through reconceptualization. A minimal account of reconceptualization is where one moves from understanding a thing in the world under one concept<sup>15</sup> to understanding it under a different concept. Reconceptualization also demands that the first concept remains in the awareness of the cognizer; otherwise the thing is merely conceptualized again, as if it were another separate entity, or brought under a new concept without revision of the old and not reconceptualized. Such a position suggests the subjectivity of concepts in as much as two people may reconceptualize the same thing to understand it under the same concept, but still have a slightly different understanding due to the previous concept under which each initially held the object.<sup>16</sup> For instance, imagine two people who reconceptualize a black woman as a person.<sup>17</sup> We can hardly imagine that both

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<sup>15</sup> I recognise the difficulty, indeed the absurdity, of using a term which I already recognise as problematic, the proper use of which I have already brought into question. I beg the reader's patience, but such difficulties are unavoidable in a discussion of this sort. At the moment, 'concept' should be understood in a loose sense.

<sup>16</sup> Such a view is perhaps not dissimilar to the Freudian notion that you never simply leave the past behind you, but rather it always informs the present through the ever present unconscious memory.

<sup>17</sup> I encourage the sceptical reader to put the example into a historical context. Women were not legally considered persons in Canada until 1929, and no doubt conceptual changes among individuals in our society both pre-dated and ante-dated this change. As to black people being considered persons, I take it that Jefferson's self-evident truth that all men are created equal

individuals will apply the same concept in as much as understanding the same things of the object reconceptualized, if the first person is a black man and the second a white woman, both of whom consider themselves persons but neither of whom are enlightened enough to consider the black woman a person, until something prompted this reconceptualization.<sup>18</sup> The astute reader may counter that this shows a confusion between concepts and conceptions, but this presupposes that a clear demarcation between the two can be made. If we are to make any headway, we must try to understand the variant uses of the term 'concept' as well as come to our own understanding of what 'concept' means and perhaps on this journey conception will reveal itself.

To some extent this is an effort pointed at finding the referent of the word 'concept'; ontologically, we want to know what a concept is. Because the term 'concept' is right at the centre of many philosophical discussions, what a particular philosopher means by the word tends to vary as to the area of philosophy in which she locates her argument. What the philosopher of language, the philosopher of mind and the epistemologist mean by 'concept' tends to be very different.<sup>19</sup> There is nothing wrong with emphasizing different aspects of 'concept' disproportionately in particular contexts to reflect the nature of the debate in the discipline. However, if all 'concept' users are

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being consistent with his pro-slavery attitudes is due to his understanding that black males were not men, a position that sounds quite nonsensical today.

<sup>18</sup> These types of reconceptualization are sometimes indicated by new distinctions people make in certain discussions. Although such distinctions can simply articulate intuitions already held, they can sometimes offer insight. Consider the insight of a first year ethics student when she realises that the distinction between 'person' and 'human' can and should inform her view of the moral issues surrounding abortion.

<sup>19</sup> Bradshaw has commented on the contemporary confusion, although he aims his criticism at the lack of clarity in discussions by particular theorists. He writes: "During the last few years, there has been an increase in interest in the role of concepts, in conceptual schemes, and in conceptualization. This has been evident in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of science, as well as in the current debate between the realists and the so-called irrealists or anti-realists. Yet, what exactly a given theorist means by 'concept' or 'conceptual scheme' – and especially what his or her ontological commitments are in accepting concepts – is often left unclear." (D. E. Bradshaw, "The Nature of Concepts," Philosophical Papers, vol. XXI, (1992) 1.) Obviously, lack of clarity in particular theorists' works when multiplied by the lack of clarity in philosophical schools is bound to leave the present situation terribly confused. R.X. Ware also notes the variety of uses of the term in an unfinished, unpublished paper, "Concept and Conceptions," 1.

talking about *some* thing (and one would have thought that if it is worth talking about it probably exists in *some* way) and if they are talking about the same thing (and as they use the same word this is *prima facie* plausible), then it behooves any philosopher with a theory of concepts to make sure that her theory captures, or is at least open to, the concept as it can plausibly be thought to exist in the other disciplines. The way we use the term will imply a theory (no matter how unsophisticated), so simply using the term implies that we have a notion of what it is doing for us (no matter how superficial).

Is the project of discovering the nature of concepts really necessary to the project discussed above? Well, if we jump into the subject without firming the conceptual ground beneath us we run the risk of begging the question against ourselves. An acceptance of the wrong sort of basic epistemological structure might make my aesthetico-epistemological investigation a non-starter. Consider the following possible account: knowledge is justified true belief; all beliefs are propositional attitudes and all propositional attitudes are capable of being verbally expressed in a logical way (i.e. conforming to the basic structures of propositional logic as accepted in philosophy). Thus anything that *cannot* be said *cannot* be knowledge. The problem of how to ask the question 'what is the nature of concepts' without begging the question is rather daunting. The following chapter in which I attempt to locate the discussion is very much informed by this concern.

## Chapter One

### The Difficulty of Locating the Discussion

**An Introduction to the Problem.** The problem with using concepts (as opposed to things other than concepts) as a starting place for this type of enquiry is that the contemporary discussions of concepts tend to be hopelessly confused or incomplete, or terribly theory bound.<sup>1</sup> This confusion does not stem, as confusion often does, from the subject sitting in obscurity at the fringes of philosophy, but rather from its being right at its centre. Philosophy of mind, philosophy of language and epistemology frequently use the term 'concept' and often rather loosely. To make the confusion worse, whatever the use to which a particular philosopher puts concepts and the concept thereof, it invariably begs a number of metaphysical questions. The concept of concept is so widely used, especially in the analytic tradition, that its transparency is all too often assumed. What is rarely taken into account is the nature of concept as it exists in all the fields mentioned above. Clearly, this is no short order. These are not small or trivial fields and the possible addition of aesthetics promises more confusion. Yet, if our investigation is to be done in good faith and if we are to make any discovery about concepts as understood in all these theories it seems we have little choice.

We cannot expect that looking only to one of the above-mentioned areas (in its relevant aspects) will help us discover what must be said to make allowances for what is required in a broader theory of concepts to contain the area. After all, it might be that the

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. Heath in his encyclopedia entry on "Concept" implies this is necessarily so, writing, "The term 'concept' is...essentially a dummy expression or variable, whose meaning is assignable only in the context of a theory and cannot be independently ascertained." (P.L. Heath, "Concept", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 178.) However, Heath suspects that the whole inquiry is doomed and he betrays a general cynicism towards any project that demands system building. I think first that this cynicism, although understandable, is unduly pessimistic and indeed I question the coherency of philosophy without big systems. Secondly, I worry as to the cogency of the term if there is (as is implied by Heath) no proper way, or at least no better way, to employ the term at all. What other terms might have this disreputable feature? Is it that any complex or theoretical term does?



whole approach of the tradition in a particular area is misguided and the dogmas of the tradition might not be translatable to a bigger picture. In this way a broader theory may be able to guide the theory as it exists in each particular area. A type of reflective equilibrium method between our broader approach and the narrower theories of each particular area is perhaps the approach that is least likely to fall into conservative dogmatic positions. Unfortunately, this demands that we begin with a fairly general theory, not too heavily defined by a particular interest,<sup>2</sup> and we cannot begin to look for a general theory of the nature of concepts unless we have some idea of what we are looking for.<sup>3</sup> So, the first task is to find an adequate non-question-begging description to operate as a kind of wanted poster which potentially encompasses what is required by plausible theories of concepts in all of the areas above. This will allow us to begin the search.

**Stipulation?** The faint of heart may shy away and ask why we do not simply stipulate a definition of ‘concept’ as we find it useful. Frege is perhaps the paradigm case of a philosopher who makes this sort of move, but it is followed in many contemporary works too. Peacocke follows suit writing:

I will be using the term “concept” stipulatively as follows:

Distinctness of Concepts. Concepts C and D are distinct if and only if there are two complete propositional contents that differ at most in that one contains C substituted in one or more places for D, and one of which is potentially informative while the other is not.<sup>4</sup>

He admits openly that “This use of the notion corresponds to one strand, but only one strand, in the everyday notion of a concept.”<sup>5</sup> Besides the fact that it begs the question against our inquiry in a manner similar to the example discussed on page 9, above,

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<sup>2</sup> Although reflective equilibrium is supposed to offer an alternative to initiating philosophical discussion with a general theory, if the theory from which we begin our reflection is sufficiently biased or wrong-headed, there is little reason to suppose the method will allow us to get beyond these problematic assumptions.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Fenton has informed me in conversation that this is analogous to Chisolm’s problem of the criterion.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Peacocke, A Study of Concepts, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

stipulation is problematic for the following sorts of reasons. First, we must presume that Peacocke intends his result to be useful in understanding 'concept'. That theory which is most likely to be widely useful is the one that best fits some combination of the facts and the ways in which the term is used. No matter how perfect a system one creates, if it cannot get beyond itself to give us knowledge that is not entailed by the structure of the system, it is of limited use (unless the system is wide enough to encompass a good deal of interesting and important things). This means we need to look at what sorts of interesting and important things concepts, or theories thereof, are alleged to do (which other things do not do (or do not do so well)) and this brings us full circle, back to the path we are already on in our present investigation.

What is more, we cannot be guaranteed that one strand that we analyse in isolation will fit with the other strands. If it does, it is by mere accident and if it does not, then it seems we have concepts<sup>P</sup> (where P stands for Peacocke-style) and at least one other 'concept' which apply to radically different things. In such a situation should he not call it something else, so that at least we may decipher it from the normal use. Perhaps Wittgenstein makes this point best at 5.555 of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (hereafter the Tractatus) where he asks "And anyway, how could I have been concerned in logic with forms that I can invent? Surely I must be concerned with what it is that enables me to invent them."<sup>6</sup> Rhees clarifies Wittgenstein's point in a brief discussion of this passage suggesting that, "If there were anything arbitrary about the introduction of a new form how could it be a logical form? This kind of difficulty might lead one to doubt the reality of logic, as truly as the logical paradoxes could."<sup>7</sup> Now, unless we have a clear idea of the many strands of 'concept' and how they wind together both in our understanding of the term and as they are in themselves (if it is reasonable to think of them so existing), how can Peacocke expect to stipulate a strand non-arbitrarily?

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in R. Rhees, "Miss Anscombe on the *Tractatus*," *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 10 (January, 1960) 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Wittgenstein's point is that when we do such things with logical terms, we are ourselves engaging in a logical experiment where instead of inventing new terms we should be looking at what is going on when we invent a term, because this is more likely to get at what is *actually* going on than any concept I invent or stipulate.

From this follows another point. Part of Peacocke's whole approach to terms such as 'concept' already betrays aspects of a theory of concepts (even if the term 'concept' no longer applies to this theory of 'concepts (in a broad sense)' due to the stipulation), suggesting what it is to hold a concept and how easy it is to change concepts in fundamental ways. This very approach suggests things about human psychology and our use of language that may in fact be false. Since such a move needs to be justified we again return to the original path, suggested above. Of course, here Peacocke and his like have changed the question exactly so they do not have this worry, for they are looking at a theory of the stipulated concept<sup>P</sup>. In the end it seems that although stipulation will invariably help us in asking easier questions, we have no reason to think it will offer useful answers.

The relation of stipulation to concepts is thus called into question. Kant offers an insight related to this point, denying that we can simply assign terms to new thoughts and have them be easily communicable. In a preamble to justifying the use of the term 'idea' in the realm of metaphysical mistakes he puts forth these ideas on the relationships between the concept and language. Fortunately, although his thesis is expressed indirectly through his musing about the philosopher's personal experience, it is mercifully clear. He writes:

Despite the great wealth of our languages, the thinker often finds himself at a loss for the expression which exactly fits his concept, and for want of which he is unable to be really intelligible to others or even to himself.

He adds

To coin new words is to advance a claim that seldom succeeds;...Even if the old-time usage of a term should have become somewhat uncertain through the carelessness of those who introduced it, it is always better to hold fast to the meaning which distinctively belongs to it (even though it

remains doubtful whether it was originally used in precisely this sense) than to defeat our purpose by making ourselves unintelligible.<sup>8</sup>

Kant's advice is that although we can re-coin an old, vague term, it should have some intuitive appeal to the audience at whom it is aimed. We may modify it for our own purposes, but if we go too far we run the risk of being unintelligible. Here we recognise that if the epistemologist frowns and huffs at the definition offered by the philosopher of language, if it is totally counter-intuitive to her, then the coining (at least in this conversation) will not succeed. Argument (in the worst sense) will begin before discussion has a chance to start because people (or at least epistemologists of a certain persuasion) will fail to grasp the stipulated concept. They will have been stipulated out of the discussion.<sup>9</sup> Kant's ideas here imply certain confining lines for a theory of concepts recognising that understanding concepts is a gradual, progressive kind of thing. We build concepts and thus make additions to and subtractions from them. Many of them can be (as it were) renovated, but if we are to attempt too much of a make-over the concept will defy grasping.

Certainly there are some aspects of Kant's claim that smack of implausibility. For instance, we do coin new terms out of the blue, often by playing off the connotations of our associations with older terms,<sup>10</sup> but sometimes these are very distant associations that not everyone who uses the term will grasp. The ease of this doubtless varies from language to language and concept to concept, depending on the type of concept for which the term is coined and how close a subject is to it, or the concept's degree of abstraction or relative complexity. What is more, it is questionable (or so it is for us at this point in our investigation) whether there is always a meaning which *distinctively* belongs to a

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<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929) A312/B368-9.

<sup>9</sup> Similar difficulties sometimes arise between philosophers of language and epistemologists over 'truth' and the proper use of the term.

<sup>10</sup> Consider the terms 'astronaut' or 'mcjob'.

term. We see that even casual remarks in this area are rife with implications for the whole subject. If we divorce the form of a discussion of concepts too far from our medium (indeed, let us say media and leave the way open to including our understanding as well as our words), we are likely to mislead ourselves.<sup>11</sup> Thus, again, our project is necessarily a self-reflective one.

Another interesting suggestion of Kant's which is clearly true, but might again put constraints on any theory, is that one can have a concept in mind while being "at a loss for the expression which exactly fits [it]".<sup>12</sup> There appear to be two ways in which this might be made possible. Either there is a term which must be modified by a number of exact predicates in order to mean what the thinker in question is thinking, or alternatively, there is a whole new flavour to the idea which the thinker cannot quite articulate.<sup>13</sup> Either way, a theory of concepts must make room for whatever happens, just as it must make room for the evolution and renovation of terms and explain why some concepts are so hard to grasp.

Kant and Wittgenstein both genuinely attempt an investigation into (as opposed to a stipulation of) concepts with varying degrees of success. Kant offers a variety of different ways of understanding different aspects of the world, with a list of concepts, categories, ideas, *et cetera* to match. Each of these different types of concepts bares a different relationship to our cognitive mechanism and the world and through a discussion of them Kant draws the limits of our ability to know the world. The concepts that lie beyond these limits (ideas) and beliefs of which they are parts have various peculiar

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<sup>11</sup> I must agree with Thomas Nagel's contention in The View From Nowhere that the preoccupation with the objective has caused a number of philosophers to make outrageous claims about things related to subjectivity and self-examination, especially in the realm of epistemology and philosophy of mind.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to be confused with the case where one knows the 'concept' one wishes to communicate, but is at a loss to remember the word that corresponds to it, though this too is interesting and should be remembered in discussions such as ours.

<sup>13</sup> Consider the terms 'gay' (prior to its denoting sexual orientation) and 'marivaudage'. The best way to understand 'marivaudage' is to see or read a Marivaux play; perhaps, to the attentive eye, some works by Watteau would do as well.

characteristics in that the rules that apply in this realm are not necessarily those of nature and science.<sup>14</sup> Such ideas prove useful for science only dialectically, showing the limits of knowledge and helping us to unify our understanding as it applies to experience.<sup>15</sup>

Wittgenstein draws a similar boundary between what we know and what we do not know in the Tractatus. While he uses a multitude of variables with a number of different roles there are essentially two types of concept. There are the words that in combination apply to states of affairs in the world which are concepts (not that Wittgenstein uses this terms to apply to them) and there are formal concepts which are essentially grammatical and embody the form of our expressions and the nature of the world. Formal concepts mark the boundaries where intelligible discussion stops. One cannot argue for the role a particular formal concept plays; it can only be shown.

Both Kant and Wittgenstein<sup>16</sup> discover their systems by way of reflection on human knowledge and language and the nature of the world. Rather than stipulating or seeing how 'concept' is used either commonly or by various types of experts, they attempt to find out what a concept is which allows it to fulfill at least some of the roles implied by common and expert use of the term.<sup>17</sup> No strand of this exploration is precluded from the start, but the boundaries of the understanding are defined by way of investigation. Interestingly, both appear to be greatly influenced by formal logic. Kant

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<sup>14</sup> Thus Kant explains in the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that neither human freedom and causal necessity nor the existence of a necessary being as a cause of the universe and there existing no such being are contradictory. (Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, trans. Lewis White Beck, [New York: Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1950] 345-8, § 53.) (I follow Beck's advice and cite the page numbers from the Academy edition (Volume IV) and offer the section number also, where applicable.) He writes, "The incompatibility of these propositions rests entirely upon the mistake of extending what is valid merely of appearances to things in themselves and in confusing both in one concept." (*Ibid.* 347-8, § 53.)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 349-50, § 56.

<sup>16</sup> Because I discuss both the early and later Wittgenstein, so as to avoid confusion I refer to them hereon as Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> ('T' for Tractatus) and Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> ('I' for Investigations).

<sup>17</sup> The common uses of 'concept' tend to be rather vague and thus are of limited use in a detailed investigation. As for the technical uses, they vary so greatly from one discipline to another that inevitably one finds oneself forced to accept the assumptions of the discipline. If one attempts to start from all the technical uses, one finds one must choose between various incompatible assumptions. Thus one ends up doing exactly what we wish to avoid, stipulating the nature of that the very nature of which we wish to investigate.

places eighteenth century logic (hardly the golden age of the discipline) at the base of human understanding and Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> offers us a derivative of Fregean (and Russellian) logic as the form of our language (a position that Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> rejects) and the form of the world. Though perhaps formal logic is not the ideal springboard for an investigation in the nature of concepts, what would make a better one? Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> looks to the way we use language as the key to understanding understanding and opens a door to gesture as another player in communication and concept use. He does so, however, at the cost of subjectivity and privacy in an attempt to stave off sceptical problems.

While the reader might imagine that any discussion of Kant and Wittgenstein is bound to spend some considerable time contemplating scepticism, what follows will certainly dash such hopes. Scepticism does not so much underlie the discussion as lie like an abyss, just to the side. As such it might appear that from time to time I teeter on the edge of a full consideration of the sceptical problems that haunted both of these philosophers. I do my best, however, to avoid taking the plunge into scepticism, dabbling in idealism and isomorphism and only fleetingly touching on sceptical points if they lie unavoidably in my path. This is only one way in which my discussion is incomplete and I regret to say, one of many. However, I maintain that the incompleteness of my account, by the very breadth that forces this inadequacy, is preferable to an incompleteness forced by stipulation.

**Why Bother?** If there are those who feel that stipulation is the way to make sense of our question, there are also those who will think that it is a mistake to ask this kind of question at all. These people must also be answered. Minimally, although not exclusively, a concept is the meaning of a word.<sup>18</sup> That this relationship is not exclusive demands that

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<sup>18</sup> See Gilbert Ryle, "Are There Propositions?" Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 30, (1930) 101. Austin says the questions 'What is the "meaning" of a word?' and 'What is *the-meaning-of-a-word*?' are the forms of this question that are generally answered by, among other

concepts be more than simply the meanings of words. Thus non-language users may still be concept users and expression without language may still be conceptual. So, while our project will definitely be informed by asking 'What is the meaning of a word?' any answer by no means completes our investigation. However, it does not seem like such a bad place to start. Probably the most famous response to such an inquiry is Austin's attack in "The Meaning of a Word." Austin writes:

Having asked...and answered, 'What is the meaning of (the word) "rat"?' , 'What is the meaning of (the word) "cat"?' , What is the meaning of (the word) "mat"?' , and so on, we then try, being philosophers, to ask the further *general* question, 'What is the meaning of a word?' But there is something spurious about this question. We do not intend to mean by it a certain question which would be perfectly all right, namely, 'What is the meaning of (the word) "word"?' : that would be no more general than is asking the meaning of the word 'rat', and would be answered in a precisely similar way. No: we want to ask rather, 'What is the meaning of a word-in-general? or 'of any word'--not meaning 'any' word you like to choose, but rather no particular word at all, just 'any word'. Now, if we pause even for a moment to reflect, this is a perfectly absurd question to be trying to ask. I can only answer a question of the form 'What is the meaning of "x"?' if "x" is some particular word you are asking about. This supposed general question is really just a spurious question of a type which commonly arises in philosophy."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps if we take 'meaning' out of its mysterious pivotal position, Austin will better understand the question. What is really being asked is 'What is it about the relationship between a particular word, for instance, "rat" and what is given as the meaning of the word "rat" which makes an account of "rat"'s meaning right?' Alternatively, one might ask 'What is it to understand a word?' If 'What is it to understand?' is a spurious question, then not merely is epistemology *solved*, but so are a great many other problems in other areas of philosophy and psychology. Though Austin might be open to questions about understanding he shows an analytical conservatism by demanding that understanding a word consist of no more than its syntactics and semantics.<sup>20</sup> This approach (especially with the conflation of the meaning of a word with

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things, an appeal to 'concept'. See J.L. Austin, "Meaning of a Word," Philosophical Papers, eds. J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 54-75.

<sup>19</sup> Austin, 57-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 60.



the concept<sup>21</sup> ) is to again beg the question against us, as above.<sup>22</sup> *Prima facie* there is nothing to make us think such a useful and well used term as 'concept' is not suggesting some part of our lives that can be picked out and elucidated.

**Weasel Terms and Propositions.** A final question must be answered before we go on and I sadly admit my own deficiency in adequately answering it. The question is, where do propositions sit in our inquiry into concepts? Although any inquiry such as ours is bound to answer this, it is perhaps more pressing in this case given my appeal to understanding, above. After all, there are those who say that one can only understand propositions, that only propositions have content, and that understanding is not properly applied to concepts at all. It is not uncommon for the type of knowledge that is only accessible via artworks to be called non-propositional knowledge, an idea of which I whole-heartedly approve. Propositions and propositional knowledge are a sort of foil for my position, for I want to allow that artworks have content too, but in an importantly different way from propositions. So, I am obliged to give some clarification as to what I think propositions are and why they cannot offer a complete view of human understanding.

There are some obvious differences between propositions and concepts, but this does not proscribe their working together. Propositions are true, concepts are not. Yet given the role concepts play in propositions, concepts must have something *like* truth, call it accuracy, proper extension, or what have you, in order to facilitate the truth of the proposition to which they belong.<sup>23</sup> Even when concepts are out of the context of a proposition they still have a proper extension so that 'What is the meaning of "book"?' is as sensible a question as 'What is the meaning of "the book is on the table"?' Of course,

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21 *Ibid.* 61.

22 There are similarly prejudiced positions discussed below in greater detail in Chapter 3.

23 In Fregean terms it can be seen as the requirement that the sense fit the referent. Austin suggests something like this also, but he does not put it in Fregean terms.

someone might insist that a concept only has content by virtue of its being attached to predicates (or proper names, as the case may be) and thus gains its sense by virtue of being a part common to a set of propositions. It seems probable, however, that what we are willing to accept as an account of propositions is going to depend on what account of concepts we accept. Thus we are incapable of giving a definition of propositions or a satisfying account of the relationship between concepts and propositions, just as we are unable to start with a satisfying account of concepts.

For the purposes of this thesis, and again, to operate as a kind of wanted poster, I accept the following minimal account of what a proposition is in its relation to concepts. Propositions contain, or are made of, concepts (or minimally, aspects of concepts). Propositions have meaning because they contain meaningful concepts. One does not need a complete account of this relationship to accept that propositions and concepts are very closely linked and that insight into the nature of one will often inform our understanding of the other. This link is made in no small part by virtue of the fact that both propositions and concepts share the mysterious realms of meaning and understanding and the problems that go along with them. Ryle in "Are There Propositions" all but takes this relationship for granted, identifying concepts as "word-meanings" and propositions as "sentence-meanings", so I gingerly follow his lead.<sup>24</sup> However, I depart from Ryle in that I do not believe that concepts are exhausted by word-meanings only. Word-meanings are, however, exhausted by concepts.

The question as to what a proposition is is itself a difficult one, for the term 'proposition' is an example of a weasel term. There is a quasi-spectrum of ontological status upon which proposition talk often slides and thus obscures what is going on. This

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<sup>24</sup> Ryle, 101. Kant appears to take much the same line, assuming the closeness in understanding (in a non-Kantian sense) of the concept (a bucket term including Kant's concepts and ideas) and the proposition (a bucket term for Kant's principles and propositions), as is revealed in the following: "All pure cognitions of the understanding have this feature that their concepts present themselves in experience, and their principles can be confirmed or refuted by it; whereas the transcendent cognitions of reason cannot either, as Ideas appear in experience or, as propositions, ever be confirmed or refuted by it." (*Prolegomena*, 328-9, § 42.)

spectrum starts with sentences at one end (or sometimes even utterances or assertions before that), next in line is the proposition, then there is the fact and then reality. Somewhere along this line we stop talking about words and come to be talking about things. Where this happens varies from philosophical discussion to philosophical discussion and sometimes the slide happens surreptitiously within a particular conversation. When and how words come to be about reality (in other words where ontological status is given) is indicated by what a philosopher considers to be the right application of the term 'truth'. Different philosophers have different views about the type of things that can be true. Indeed I witnessed a prominent logician claim, that on Mondays he thought propositions are true and on Tuesdays he thought that sentences are true.<sup>25</sup> All joking aside, I should rather like to know which can be said to be true and what that implies. Perhaps we can do away with truth altogether. After all, Nietzsche had a deep mistrust of the term 'truth' and yet he appears to have been a realist.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, it is Nietzsche's interest in reality and living life rather than examining it which feeds his distrust of 'truth'.<sup>27</sup> The reality in which Nietzsche is interested is totally subjective, without that precluding it from being objective, but 'truth' is weighed down with requirements for proof and objectivity and it is this objectifying of reality that distances

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<sup>25</sup> This was an assertion of Graham Priest's, a para-consistent logician. Perhaps non-pa-consistent logicians have more consistent views of what is true.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Nietzsche's mistrust of truth appears to be a part of a reaction against idealism and in this way he follows Russell and Frege. In Ecce Homo he writes: "One has deprived reality of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness, to precisely the extent to which one has mendaciously invented an ideal world./ The 'true world' and the 'apparent world' –that means: the mendaciously invented world and reality." (Friedrich Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo, trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 1989]218) Oh, how he would have sneered at Russell and Frege's grasping reality (against the idealists), but with the denial of the self, for what is more real than the self. In Ecce Homo he speaks of the truth he distrusts in the section on Twilight of the Idols. He writes, "What is called *idol* on the title page is simply what has been called truth so far. *Twilight of the Idols*—that is: the old truth is approaching its end." (*Ibid.* 314)

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, 256.

one from living.<sup>28</sup> But whether or not we avoid 'truth' there is the question of the nature of existence held by that which we use to describe reality.

Now, clearly sentences exist, because here is one right now, and clearly reality exists because here it is right now (whatever the details of its nature might be), but what about the rest of it? For some there is only one mysterious step to be negotiated, for facts are nothing other than true propositions. If we add to this that facts are simply particularized bits of reality, then in order to understand the nature of reality we must understand the nature of facts. If facts are essentially propositions and every statement exactly picks out a proposition, then reality comes to us as entirely speakable (even if not to us, now, at least to someone eventually) and our language, or at least our meta-language, is essentially perfect in its ability to get at reality. We do not only see into the mind of God, but we also have, if not His dictionary, then His grammar book. Of course, unlike God, we cannot get at everything and we cannot get at large amounts of things at one time. If when we investigate a particular area we have the tools, our language, to describe exactly the state of affairs in this area (even if it takes us generations to come to this understanding), we have (as opposed to a God's eye view) a God's visual cone view. What is weaselly about this whole process is that at least a potential for a perfect view of the world is allowed to us by the structure of our language and that this is not argued for, but is presupposed by the structure of our philosophical dialogue. It would certainly be very nice if true, but why would we suppose that we do, by virtue of our language and its structure, have this kind of perfect access to reality? It may be that we do very well in gaining access to the world as it is, but that is a substantially different, a substantially more modest,<sup>29</sup> claim.

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<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche also touches on those who live these lives full of reflection rather than living in Thus Spake Zarathustra in his section "On Scholars."

<sup>29</sup> I agree with Quine and Ullian that modesty helps to confer plausibility. See Web of Belief, (New York: Random House, 1970, 1978) 68-9.

Another weaselly aspect of the proposition is that it is not very clear what it is. If it is not the sentence and it is not the thought and it is not reality itself (as sometimes facts are interpreted to be), then what is it? Frege is famous for being a believer in the third realm between mind and world that facilitates access between them, but this is hardly helpful when the problem itself is how the first two realms touch. If we are to add any magical third element (a sort of metaphysical semantic escalator) why not add God and we can add moral objectivism into the bargain as a bonus prize. In an effort to get away from such metaphysical peculiarities something has been made of truth conditions and rule following. Again we might raise a sceptical eyebrow as to whether such a use of truth, situated as it is in the analytic tradition, will presuppose something of a necessary linguistic nature (i.e. a sayability) which will entail the above criticized God's visual cone view. If we take truth-conditions out of the picture then it is difficult to imagine what rules (like grammar) are *doing* in our language and how they are to aid communication. Clearly, I have opened up a couple of vats of worms in this brief discussion, but my main point is only to show the nature of weasel terms through example with the term 'proposition'. Certainly, some of these concerns seep into what lies below. This is in part due to the weaseliness of the proposition and, given its symbiotic relationship with concepts, what infects discussions of propositions tend to infect discussions of concepts, too.

The reader might have guessed that 'concept' is another weasel term. Its weaselly nature can be seen in any discussion of it (and I fear mine is in no way an exception). Peacocke's weaseliness is particularly amusing given both his stipulative definition (mentioned above, page 11) and his attack on the 1950's style of linguistic philosophy. He makes the commendable claim that, "We need to be clear about the subject matter of a theory of concepts"<sup>30</sup> and goes on to the equally sensible claim that, "The term 'concept'

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30 Peacocke, 1.

has by now come to be something of a term of art.”<sup>31</sup> From here we become a little more worried, for he begins to narrow down his account rather than opening it up. He continues, “The word does not have in English a unique sense that is theoretically important,”<sup>32</sup> which is itself a theoretically important point. The anecdotal proof for his position is fair enough but it does not offer a justification for his reaction to this fact. He suggests

Those who think it does [have a unique theoretically important sense] should consider the contribution made to our subject by Woody Allen, when in his film, *Annie Hall* he has one of his characters in the entertainment industry say, “Right now it’s only a notion, but I think I can get money to make it into a concept, and later turn it into an idea.” This quotation suggests that we would not make progress by undertaking an analysis of the word ‘concept’ in the style of the 1950s linguistic philosophy.<sup>33</sup>

He goes on to stipulate his use of the term as is discussed above (page 11). Almost immediately after that he goes on to write about his notion of a concept. I suppose he cannot talk about *his* concept of concept as he has already stipulated a specific use for ‘concept’ that *prima facie* makes it non-subjective. But it is interesting that after stipulating what ‘concept’ is, he should almost directly make use of a vague term (if not weasel term), ‘notion’.<sup>34</sup> Does this not say something about the way he understands concepts and their usefulness? Are we to take Peacocke as having stipulated concepts out of being able to refer to things like concepts? Well, probably not, or at least I cannot imagine he meant to do so. Rather, what we are seeing here (and indeed elsewhere, for many of those who consider concepts refer to notions, ideas and understandings of them) is a weaselly maneuver based in part on stylistic concerns and perhaps a certain self-consciousness that arises from the seeming absurdity of the phrase ‘the concept of

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31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.* 1-2.

34 The following passage follows the stipulated definition quoted on page 11, above: “This use of the notion corresponds to one strand, but only one strand in the everyday notion of a concept.” Shortly after in distinguishing between his use of ‘concept’ he writes: “As I use the notion, concepts may be of any category: singular, predicative or of higher levels.” (Peacocke, 2)

concept'. It feels like it should be an infinite regress, but there is no reason to so regard it. We can stop right here; it does not go further back. It is interesting that such stylistic (perhaps aesthetic) concerns should inform what we say—for in this area of inquiry, how we say things is what we say.<sup>35</sup> This is nicely illustrated by the final set of weasel terms that I wish to touch on which (as the reader will see) operate around the very heart of the discussion.

In the discussion on page 23 above, I mentioned, facetiously, a semantic escalator that brings together the mind and world. If we take back the semantic bit, we still have the question of the link between mind and world. Clearly, this is not simply a problem for the proposition, but is a problem for concepts too. Between the sentence, or the word, or thought and reality there is some *correspondence* which allows the intentionality of one in respect to the other. The nature of this *correspondence* is problematic. Much work has been done on, and in fact the history of logic and language in the twentieth century is in part made up of, attempts to show how the structure of language *represents* the structure of the world. This has meant looking at formal concepts, types of terms, and seeing how their roles in sentences show the nature of what is *indicated* by that type of thing.

Now, all the terms I have italicized in the above paragraph are weasel terms, and they cover up a rather problematic area, understanding. That all of these terms, 'indicating', 'corresponding' and 'representing', should be able to do what is essentially the same work may tell us something about understanding, for, as we have already decided, it is the search for understanding that defines our search for concepts (not just because it is as good a place as any, but a better place than most). Anyone who freely uses these terms or any like them must be aware, one, that they are pointing at the area in a more vague manner (which I am far from saying is a bad thing) and, two, that this

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<sup>35</sup> Bradshaw also avoids referring to concepts of concepts, but in a less blatant manner, considering "views of concepts" (1) or accounts of concepts (2) or the "sense of concept" (5).

vagueness has consequences, not just at a metalevel, but inasmuch as the concept of concept is a concept too.

**The Contemporary Landscape of Concepts.** Ideally, I would here give a generic sketch of the contemporary conceptual landscape regarding concepts. But, to attempt to do so presupposes that there is one. To show the variation in views of the conceptual landscape I shall sketch some of what is drawn by some of the few who attempt such a task. For starters, P.L. Heath in his Encyclopedia of Philosophy article, "Concepts," divides the area into entity theories, both Platonist and mental representationalist, and dispositional theories.<sup>36</sup> Here a commentator like Weitz might complain that Heath conflates abstractionist and dispositionalist theories, where abstraction is the ability to pick out one given feature in direct experience<sup>37</sup> whereas dispositionalist theories tend to look solely at how our concepts dispose us to act. Heath assumes (and I think correctly) that both are needed in a plausible theory<sup>38</sup> and adds that all theories of concepts sit within and are shaped by a broader metaphysical, logical or epistemological views.<sup>39</sup>

Bradshaw has a slightly different approach (though no worse for that). He claims contemporary theorists view concepts as classificatory devices (some with, some without explicit or rigid ontological commitments regarding such classifications as operating in the world). Such theorists differ as to whether necessary and sufficient conditions, paradigm cases, or something in between<sup>40</sup> are the things by which the classification

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<sup>36</sup> Heath, 177-9.

<sup>37</sup> Weitz explains that Geach's Mental Acts is written against an abstractionist thesis, in which concepts are understood as recognitional capacities acquired by attending to a particular feature in direct experience, abstracting it from its surroundings. (Morris Weitz, Theories of Concepts: a history of the major philosophical traditions, (London: Routledge, 1988) 251.

<sup>38</sup> This is clear from his discussion of dispositionalist theories, in which recognition is included as a capacity or disposition. Heath, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Heath, 177. See also note 1 on page 10, above.

<sup>40</sup> This something in between is what Bradshaw calls the probabilistic view. He writes of this view "that concepts are again understood as conditions for the correct classification of an object, but these conditions are held to be less rigid—that is, meeting the relevant conditions is not strictly necessary or sufficient for an object to be classified as falling under a given concept." (6)



operates, but Bradshaw declares all involve comparison (a claim for which he gives little, if any, justification). He too recognises that some of these theorists consider concepts to be mental representations, and within this group he distinguishes between those who consider such representations to be words, images or something essentially computational in character. Bradshaw's account betrays both his interest in philosophy of mind and his particular interest in concepts as explanatory devices for recognition.

Indeed, it is his interest in recognition and his thesis that comparison theories do not adequately explain recognition that appear to inform his assertion that contemporary theories are mostly comparison theories. He writes:

According to all of the contemporary views of concepts that we have considered--concepts understood as universal or properties, as involving words or images, or as some other type of mental representation--recognition would seem to involve a process of comparison. It would, in effect, involve a process of comparing the current sensory data with the relevant universals, properties, meanings of words, images, or whatever, until a 'match' is found, whereupon recognition is achieved. This account of recognition, I shall argue, is untenable. Recognition neither does nor could involve such a process.<sup>41</sup>

He credits Wittgenstein with raising two difficulties with comparison theories: firstly, that "recognition does not involve a number of experiential elements"<sup>42</sup> and secondly that "recognition does not involve a conscious comparison of sensations and, for example, memory images."<sup>43</sup> He suggests that although contemporary AI (artificial intelligence) theorists would reject the idea that the subject must be "consciously aware of the relevant comparisons or computations,"<sup>44</sup> still a homuncular subsystem appears to be required. Bradshaw thus effectively drops any discussion of the varieties of theorists previously mentioned and takes on his real opposition, computational or AI theorists. His account of the contemporary landscape reveals more of his own particular view and the associated axes awaiting grinding than the issues and perspectives on the concept in its entirety.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 7. He attributes this view to Aaron Ben-Zeev.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

Fodor takes a quite different approach again, giving a historical account. As with Bradshaw, his area of interest, "concept-centred psychological theory"<sup>45</sup> directs the account<sup>46</sup> and he openly accepts the dominant view in this area that "Concepts are the least complex mental entities that exhibit both representational and causal properties."<sup>47</sup> Both the historicity of the discussion and the fact that he goes into greater detail than Bradshaw makes his account more satisfactory and it deserves a more careful analysis. Fodor takes twentieth century accounts to be predominantly dispositional, due to their roots in behaviourism which in turn was born out of a reaction to idealism. This is of particular interest as the twentieth century reaction against idealism comes out in the discussion below. This move betrays a fundamental choice between two radically different approaches which dictate the basic nature of any particular theory of concepts.

Rather than adopting Kantian roots (which form the base of my approach), Fodor suggests that the classical theory to which behaviourists reacted is found in the thought of the British Empiricists.<sup>48</sup> He offers

a stripped-down version of a Classical Representational theory of concepts:

Concepts are mental images. They get their causal powers from their associative relations to one another, and they get their semantic properties from their resemblance to things in the world. So, for example: The concept DOG applies to dogs because dogs are what (tokens of) the concept looks like. Thinking about dogs often makes one think about cats because dogs and cats often turn up together in experience..., any Idea can,

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 3

<sup>46</sup> Fodor openly admits this. He offers the following "Terminological footnote:...in this paper, I follow the psychologist's usage rather than the philosopher's; for philosophers, concepts are generally abstract entities, hence, of course, not mental. The two ways of talking are compatible. The philosopher's concepts can be viewed as the types of which the psychologist's concepts are tokens." (Jerry Fodor, "Concepts; A Potboiler" *Philosophical Issues (Content)*, vol. 6 [1995] 5.) (Aspects of this type/token relationship in discussions of concepts comes out, though not perhaps explicitly, in the discussion of concepts, conceptions and Polanyi in Chapter 4, below.)

<sup>47</sup> Fodor, 2.

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting that W.H. Walsh in "Schematism" suggests that Kant and the Empiricists had similar problems in accounting for the connection between the subject's thoughts (for Kant the categories) and *phenomena*. W.H. Walsh, "Schematism," *Kantstudien*, vol. 49, (1957) 101-2.

in principle, become associated to any other, depending on which experiences one happens to have had.<sup>49</sup>

Fodor warns us against taking his account to be historically accurate, which makes one wonder the extent of its usefulness for explaining the contemporary scene, though he adds, “it may be that Hume held a view within hailing distance of the one I have sketched.”<sup>50</sup> This is only one of the troubling ways Fodor draws the boundaries of this discussion. Another example is his claim that “Generally speaking, if you know *what an X is*, then you also know *what it is to have an X*. And ditto the other way around. No doubt this applies to concepts.”<sup>51</sup> He continues, “If, for example, your theory is that concepts are pumpkins, then it has to be part of your theory that having a concept is having a pumpkin; and...it has to be a part of your theory that pumpkins are what concepts are. I take it that this is just truistic.”<sup>52</sup> It seems to me, however, that there are a number of situations where this is *not* the case and given the mysterious nature of concept possession, such an assumption should not be made. For instance, many people know what heart attacks are and yet fail to recognise that they are having a heart attack when this misfortune befalls them. Such people, in a very real sense, do *not* know what it is to have a heart attack. Perhaps I am failing to take Fodor quite the way he intends, but in this context ‘have’ works as a weasel term, so what this truism amounts to is simply unclear. All we can gather from it is that concept possession and concept identification are assumed to be parasitic on each other such that one invariably leads to the other.

Fodor suggests that “Sometimes its clear in which direction the explanation should go and sometimes it isn’t. So, for example, one’s theory about being a cat ought surely be parasitic on one’s theory about having a cat...[and vice versa] with jobs, pains and siblings.”<sup>53</sup> However, “Classical representationalist theorists uniformly took it for

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49 Fodor, 3.

50 *Ibid.* 4.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*

granted that the explanation of *concept possession* should be parasitic on the explanation of *concept individuation*.”<sup>54</sup> Current theories “reverse the direction of the analysis. The substance of current theories lies in what they say about the possession conditions. *Concept individuation* is parasitic.”<sup>55</sup>

Fodor judges this change of direction to have been a terrible mistake, offering three kinds of reason (the last being of greatest interest to us) that prompted this catastrophe. The first reason is that behaviourist views came to the fore and concepts as mental entities went out of fashion with the rest of mentalism.<sup>56</sup> The second reason is the inherent bankruptcy of theories that reduce content to visual resemblance, which is clearly false.<sup>57</sup> The third reason is as old as Cartesian doubt and can also be considered simply as a fear of idealism. Fodor offers the following explanation (which is noteworthy in its display of a scientistic view of the subjective/objective distinction which has held such sway in our century):

What cognitive science is trying to understand is something that happens in *the world*; it's the interplay of environmental contingencies and behavioural adaptations. Viewing concepts primarily as the vehicles of thought puts the locus of this mind/world interaction (metaphorically and maybe literally) not in the world but in the head. Having put it in there, Classical theorists are at a loss for how to get it out again....

There is a 'Veil of Ideas' between the mind and the world, how can the mind see the world through the veil?...

If what we want is to get thought out of the head and into the world, we need to reverse the Classical direction of analysis, precisely as discussed above; we need to take having a concept as the fundamental notion and define concept individuation in terms of it. This is a true Copernican

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54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 I think that behaviourist views were in fact a result of the third, more profound, reason for this change—epistemological worries tied to a horror of idealism—but we come to this shortly.

57 It should be said that if this was given as a reason against Classical theories it is something of a straw person argument. I assume we can consider Kant to be one of these classical theorists and his account of images and their role is far more sophisticated than what is suggested here.

revolution in the theory of mind, and we are still living among the debris.<sup>58</sup>

From this point Fodor gives an account of modern behaviourist and pragmatist theories, pointing to the weakness of all of them. He knocks down Rylean behaviourism on the grounds that if concepts were just sorting capacities, “then co-extensive concepts--concepts that apply to the same things--would have to be identical.”<sup>59</sup> What is more, there arises a problem as to the role of inference, which must surely play a role in the mastery of concepts and the extending the use of a concept from one context to another. “Since inferring is presumably neither a behaviour nor a behavioural capacity, this formulation is, of course, not one that a *behaviouristic* pragmatist can swallow.”<sup>60</sup> He also takes on Definitional Pragmatism, Stereotype and Prototype theories and the holist Theory Theory of concepts with similar *élan*.

While a discussion of the problems Fodor sees in these theories would be by no means uninteresting, all I really hope to do is convince the reader that there is no one view of the contemporary landscape. And, if Fodor is right about the seriousness of the error upon which contemporary theories are based, there is little reason to spend our time revealing this inadequacy further. Fodor has no definite answers, but instead leaves us with a sense both that the contemporary discussions are misguided and that the subject matter is of central importance to philosophy. The need for a wanted poster still stands, however, and in the next few paragraphs I will sketch one with which we will simply have to make do.

**Hooking onto the World.** Taking into account the above discussion and the subject matter in general, it seems three different foci, ourselves, our world and the escalator of meaning in between become apparent. Abstractionist theories look at what the subject

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58 Fodor, 6-7.

59 *Ibid.* 8.

60 *Ibid.* 10.

does when the world first hits her, the dispositionalist theories look at what the subject can do in the world and the mental entity theories look at what is in the subject, while other brands of entity theory seem to look at the world or language and attempt to avoid the subject of the subject altogether. We are going to look at the problem in terms of how we (as language users and/or subjects) hook onto (Fodor says represent, but we already know that is a weasel term (see pages 22-3, above) so we shall refer to the hooking mechanism) the world. We should also direct our focus to the smallest parts of this hooking procedure, as this is so dominant a tendency in all such discussions, but for the moment it is perhaps best not to allow it to be too much of a constraint.

By thinking of our problem in terms of hooking onto the world we allow all three areas, ourselves, the world and the hook, equal status in the explanation. Of course, we know that if we put the issue in terms of language we are likely to beg the question against our inquiry, but before our century, the problem was how human knowledge hooks onto the world. (Kant saw this as his central concern as he began work on his critical philosophy.<sup>61</sup>) I hope the strength of giving a minimal definition of concepts as that which hooks onto the world, is that it remains neutral in terms of linguistic, epistemological, and mental and metaphysical implications of the term and is not overtly guided by any contemporary theory. What we notice about this question (especially once we take it out of the realm of the merely linguistic) is that it is necessarily a metaphysical question, for the nature of the world must be considered in conjunction with our building a theory as to the nature of this complicated lingo-logico-epistemologic-mental thing. After all, if we are to discuss hooking onto the world, we must understand that which hooks, the hooking mechanism and the world it hooks onto.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Immanuel Kant. "[Letter to] Marcus Herz, February 21, 1772," in Kant's Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99, trans. Arnulf Zweig, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 70-6.

<sup>62</sup> While I refer to these three separate areas throughout what follows, I do not intend them to be unduly restrictive. Obviously, in any particular theory, any of the three areas may divide into other parts, or any one can play a comparatively smaller or larger role. They are only the roughest sketch to go by. Made so to allow us to start our investigation. All that is definite is that *some* account must be given of all three areas if the theory is to be adequate.

Kant and Wittgenstein are the two thinkers whose theories of concepts I discuss at length. Kant gives a comprehensive theory of concepts; his system is marvelously complete. He offers us a metaphysics, an account (that is explicit, if not entirely clear) of the world that is hooked onto, an account of the self as that which hooks onto experience, and he gives us an account of the hooking mechanism, our understanding, however unsatisfactory it may be. Of course, Kant is also the paradigmatic idealist (although perhaps this characterization is somewhat unfair) and as such he predictably offers an account of concepts as mental entities. Thus he nicely illustrates the complaint that Fodor claims prompted the dispositionalist reactions against mental entity theories.

The same (or at least a similar) anti-idealism inspired the thinkers who informed Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s Tractatus, a work in which a number of attitudes basic to analytic philosophy first reached quasi-maturity. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s theory of concepts is not as explicit as Kant's, but he does offer us a relatively clear view of the hooking mechanism, the picture theory, and views about that which hooks and the world. This mechanism is as problematic as Kant's, but no less interesting for that. The hook is language, but there is some debate as to the nature of that to which the language belongs. One is forced to choose between two interpretations, one realist and the other defying any brief description that might be here offered (I do, however, discuss both on pages 81-4, below). The realism that has been adopted in the analytic tradition is very much in the image of one interpretation of the Tractatus and the desperate desire for objectivity at all costs wedded to it has come at the price of the tyranny of logic and language with the resulting marginalization of art. If, however, the fundamental mechanism for expression of the nature of the world, the concept, and its hooking mechanism appear to defy these bounds, the tyranny must come to an end.

At the end of his history of theories of concepts, in the last paragraph of his chapter on the twentieth century Morris Weitz finishes with the claim that "the affirmation of concepts as distinct from apprehension of or engagement with them need

not lead to any metaphysical theory of their status.”<sup>63</sup> I intend that this thesis should suggest quite the opposite. Any theory of concepts will *imply* a metaphysics, as any theory of concepts suggests how language hooks onto the world, or how knowledge divides experience and will thus imply something of the nature of said world (or realm of possible experience). I suspect that a twentieth century disdain for metaphysics is in part to blame for Weitz’ assertion. I hope to show that both Kant and Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>’s theories of concepts do and must assume a metaphysics. Neither theory is wholly satisfactory, both falling prey to deep problems, but they do help to show what is at stake in giving a theory of concepts and both offer insights that seem to be intuitively sound. Interestingly, they further open the self-reflexive nature of our discussion of understanding by both (especially Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>) using analogical appeals, offered to us, their readers, as hooks for *our* understanding.

Before entering into our discussion of Kant, it is worth emphasizing that the path taken below, through the metaphysical realms of Kant and Wittgenstein, is only one of many that I might have taken given my initial concerns with concepts, reconceptualization and art. That Fodor sees a quite similar discussion as operating between the British Empiricists and Pragmatists bears sufficient witness to the multitude of alternatives open to us. As such, the path also seems to be a reflection of myself and my ways of understanding, not just how I hook onto the world but how I hook onto the philosophical tradition within which I am working. This reflection on my own understanding informs my views of understanding (I am unsure as to whether this is the best or worst of armchair philosophy). These issues run beneath much of what lies below, occasionally rising to the surface (especially in the final chapter), but go quite unresolved. Such issues might help the reader to understand why hooking onto the world takes the form it does below.

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<sup>63</sup> Weitz, Theories, 255.



## Chapter Two

### Kant

**Introduction.** It has been said that all philosophy since Kant has been a “series of corollaries” to his thought<sup>1</sup> and certainly philosophy of our century is where it is today because of Kant’s influence. Kant is thus an excellent thinker with whom to start our investigation into the nature of concepts. Unlike a number of contemporary philosophers, Kant cannot be accused of neglecting one aspect of concepts in favour of discussing concepts in the context of a particular specialized area of philosophy. His theory has wrapped within it a metaphysics, a theory of logic, an epistemology and a theory of mind and even glimmerings of a philosophy of language. Indeed, Kant declares in the Preface to the first edition of the Critique of Pure Reason (hereon the Critique), “In this enquiry I have made completeness my chief aim...”<sup>2</sup> The completeness sought after in his project is now rarely attempted, in part due to the hyper-specialization so common in today’s philosophy. This is perhaps a result of, but is certainly linked to, a pessimism in the analytic school as to the possibility of success for the big system builders’ projects--a pessimism supported by Kant’s own failure to avoid idealism in the building of his own system.

Completeness, in various different manifestations and applications, is a notion that recurs throughout Kant’s thought and also relates to our questions about the nature of concepts. In some forms completeness is the enemy of Kant’s system; indeed, he blames metaphysics and other such mistakes on our tendency to extend our concepts and inferential structures in an effort to complete our knowledge of the world in areas where in fact it cannot be completed. There is also the issue of completeness of understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ess and Walter B. Gulick, “Kant and Analogy: Categories as Analogical Equivocals,” Ultimate Reality and Meaning, vol. 17, no. 2 (June, 1994) 89. John McDowell also suggests that “Kant should still have a central place in our discussion of the way thought bears on reality.” John McDowell, Mind and World, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 1996) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Kant, Critique, Axiii.

concepts--if one is to have knowledge at all, must one grasp or master the constituent concepts so as to be justified in asserting the truth of a particular sentence? Questions regarding grasping versus mastering lie at the fringes of Kant's project, but they clearly have a role in ours and, as we shall see, Kant's system readily allows for this kind of distinction. Lastly, it is the motive of completeness that encourages him to tie together as a first philosophy the huge central problems of epistemology, metaphysics and, to an extent, philosophy of mind, and this as much as anything else leads him to idealism.

Although in the Critique Kant does not consider concepts as ontologically basic,<sup>3</sup> they are central to his philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Because concepts are the things by which we understand and reason, any critique of reason, pure or otherwise, will inevitably, at least tacitly, focus on concepts.<sup>5</sup> Kant, however, overtly offers the categories (a.k.a. the synthetic *a priori* (or pure) concepts of understanding<sup>K6</sup>) as central to his project and weaves them together with logic and our perceptual and cognitive apparatuses. Although synthetic *a priori* concepts are the most important type of concepts in the Critique, they are only one among many offered by Kant. These other types of concept play different

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<sup>3</sup> As, for instance, it appears Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> does; perhaps any logical atomism would fall under such a description.

<sup>4</sup> Weitz, Theories, 147.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Weitz has given us good grounds for accepting that the nature of concepts, even if not explicitly given in a philosopher's system, will invariably be implied. He suggests that theories which offer "criteria for naming objects, discriminating among them, giving reasons for something being what it is and not something else," (Weitz, Theories, 18.) but do not actually use 'concept' (or a translated term) are still implicit theories of concept.

<sup>6</sup> A number of terms are technical terms for Kant. Sometimes they are particularly Kantian and at other times they simply reflect the usage common in his time. 'Intuition' is perhaps the most obvious example, where the modern use of the term bears almost no resemblance to the way in which Kant uses it. Terms such as 'understanding' or even 'concept' are also technical terms for Kant, although they bear more resemblance to the contemporary concepts (indeed, Kant's use occasionally appears to mirror contemporary use). Where the Kantian use of a term is particularly important I follow the term with a superscripted 'K'. The following terms are so treated: understanding, reason, intuition, judgement, Nature, object, appearances, idea, principle, knowing, opining and believing. I exclude the following terms as there is no non-Kantian use of them in what lies below: category, synthesis, transcendental, transcendental idea, transcendental deduction, transcendental analytic, transcendental aesthetic, *phenomena*, *noumena*, things in themselves, thing in itself, apperception, schematism, inner sense and outer sense. Where I have capitalized terms, this is to suggest the corresponding part of the text of the Critique. I fear the reader will find this to be rather annoying; however, I think the alternatives would be more irritating and confusing, so this is the lesser evil.

epistemological roles depending upon their objects and all of them are important in explaining how we hook onto the world.

In this chapter, I will briefly outline my reading of Kant's project in the Critique<sup>7</sup> as it pertains to his concept of the concept and to the problem of hooking onto the world. I also look at the paths in his project which lead to idealism, and show that, though some of his positions that have simply been refuted by progressions in science or philosophy, there are still lessons to be drawn from them. It must be recognized, however, that all the different parts of the Critique, the many pieces involved in understanding, are intimately interwoven and any attempt to view the parts separately risks misrepresenting both his ideas and the over-arching system.<sup>8</sup> Also, a flaw in one area might totally undermine Kant's whole project. As flaws are certainly apparent we must dredge the Critique, drawing what we can from this fascinating system which has so influenced philosophy today.

**The Paths from Space and Time to the World.** In order to understand the choices Kant makes it is important to recognise the goals of Kant's project. Although Kant's commentators have offered many different accounts of the central concerns of the Critique, and indeed, Kant himself waxes poetical about the starry heavens above and his

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<sup>7</sup> While the reader might think that our current project with our interest in aesthetics should lead us to the Critique of Judgement, I have chosen not to address this text. Primarily, this is because our interest is in opening our theory of knowledge to aesthetics. As such, addressing that which my reader will most likely agree *is known*, the empirical (the realm of common sense and science), and exploring this realm is clearly expedient. Also, for better or worse, the Critique of Judgement is not so widely read and is less respected in the analytic tradition and thus is less persuasive as a text for those who are most likely to be my readers. Also it does not play the major role in our tradition that the Critique does.

<sup>8</sup> Kant himself alludes to this problem in his Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (hereon the Prolegomena): "...pure reason is a sphere so separate and self-contained that we cannot touch a part without affecting all the rest....the validity and use of every part depends upon the relation in which it stands to all the rest within the domain of reason. As in the structure of an organised body, the end of each member can only be deduced from the full conception of the whole. It may, then, be said of such a critique that it is never trustworthy except it be perfectly complete down to the most minute elements of pure reason." (262-3)

dogmatic slumbers,<sup>9</sup> one approach is to consider it as explicating the relationship between three epistemological areas<sup>10</sup>: what we know<sup>11</sup> (the empirical<sup>K</sup>), what we must know (albeit tacitly) to know the things we know (the Transcendental Aesthetic, Transcendental Analytic and Transcendental Deduction), and the things we *think* we know, but don't really (the Transcendental Dialectic).<sup>12</sup> Certainly, this seems to be a good start; arguably, any epistemology must account for what we truly do know and for mistaken knowledge. It is the remaining area that gives Kant's system its unique quality, abstracting from the actuality of experience to what is necessary for experience to be possible.<sup>13</sup> To apply our hooking metaphor, the empirical<sup>K</sup> shows us *that* we hook onto the world and the transcendental investigation is an investigation into that which hooks (the transcendental

<sup>9</sup> Kant wrote in the Critique of Practical Reason, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more seriously reflection concentrates upon them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me." So famous is this phrase that it may be found in the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (3rd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 1987] 288:8). In the Prolegomena Kant thanks Hume for waking him from his dogmatic slumbers and putting him on the path of his critical philosophy. (260)

<sup>10</sup> I use this name, the three epistemological areas, to refer to these three particular concerns, throughout this chapter.

<sup>11</sup> 'Know' should be read in a strong epistemological sense, so that truth and objectivity and awareness thereof are implied.

<sup>12</sup> J. J. MacIntosh has been known to dissect the Critique in a similar manner. Professor MacIntosh teaches the Critique by starting at the end and working backwards, on the grounds that one can better understand the system Kant builds through understanding the mistakes he wishes to avoid (the Paralogisms, the Antinomies and the Ideal of Pure Reason). Kant himself highlights the distinction between these three areas in "The Division of Transcendental Logic into Transcendental Analytic and Dialectic." A62-4/B87-8. This division also reflects Strawson's principle of significance and the interest in the limits of reason, see Strawson's The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (London: Methuen and Co., 1966, 1976) 16. Strawson's distinction between the transcendent and transcendental (18), maps onto the difference between the first and last of the above epistemological areas.

<sup>13</sup> See discussion of synthetic *a priori*, pages 44-5, below.

The following chart gives a break down of the three different epistemological areas and shows the faculty associated with each as well as the mode of representation used by each. These areas will be further clarified through the following discussion, but the basic structure may be referred to as a guide, throughout. The reader is warned, however, that Kant's use of terminology tends to be infuriatingly inconsistent and the same idea represented in the chart may be attached to various different terms in the text.

		faculty of	representation	it enables us
what we know	empirical	understanding	concepts (notions)	to understand
what we must know	Transcendental Analytic	understanding	categories	to understand
what we wrongly think we know	Transcendental Dialectic	reason (inference)	transcendental ideas	to conceive

subject), the hooking mechanism (the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic) and the world that is hooked (perhaps *phenomena*, perhaps Nature<sup>K</sup>).

Kant thinks the solution to our problem lies in recognising that our reasoning tends to stretch beyond the realm of what we can know. Thus the challenge is to apply our understanding<sup>K</sup> to the empirical<sup>K</sup>, using reason<sup>K</sup> only for its proper ends, not wasting our efforts in useless speculation.<sup>14</sup> He reveals through the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic, that the bounds of sense (meaning both sensation and logically sound understanding<sup>K</sup> of the world) are derived from objective experience which is the proper synthesizing of perception (called by Kant intuition<sup>K</sup> which is that by which appearances<sup>K</sup> (or *phenomena*) are received) into concepts<sup>K</sup> and judgements<sup>K</sup>. By thus defining what we *do* know he offers a negative definition of what we *don't* know, the realms of transcendental ideas and the *noumena*.

***Phenomena, Noumena and Idealism.*** The *noumena*, according to Kant, should really only have a negative definition as that which is not intuited<sup>K</sup> through *phenomena*,<sup>15</sup> but he offers a positive definition anyway, calling *noumena* things in themselves.<sup>16</sup> He is, fortunately, less coy about the nature of a transcendental idea which is:

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<sup>14</sup> Russell points out that the Transcendental Dialectic shows that "The purely intellectual [sic] use of reason leads to fallacies; its only right use is directed to moral ends." Thus for questions of science and first philosophy, 'reason' has no place. (Bertrand Russell, "Kant," in A History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1946, 1979] 682.) Kant makes a distinction between the practical<sup>K</sup> use of reason which is the proper moral use and the speculative<sup>K</sup> use of reason which is the improper metaphysical use.

<sup>15</sup> Kant writes, "The concept of a *noumenon* is thus a merely limiting concept, the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility, and it is therefore only of negative employment." (Critique, A255/B310-11.)

<sup>16</sup> Kant writes: "the word appearance must be recognised as already indicating a relation to something, the immediate representation of which is, indeed, sensible, but which, even apart from the constitution of our sensibility (upon which the form of our intuition itself is grounded), must be something in itself, that is, an object independent of sensibility. There thus results the concept of a *noumenon*." (Kant, Critique, A252.) This positive definition allows him to make way for the soul, freedom, God and morality. Thus my body is the empirical me accessible through *phenomena*, but my soul is the *noumenal* me, the home of 'the moral law within'. Of course, given that the negative definition and the positive definition may be co-extensive, the *noumenal* rock may have just as much angst as I do; we just don't know it.

something to which all experience is subordinate, but which is never itself an object of experience--something to which reason leads in its inferences from experience, and in accordance with which it estimates and gauges the degree of its empirical employment, but which is never itself a member of the empirical synthesis.<sup>17</sup>

These ideas<sup>K</sup> are born by pushing concepts to apply to objects, or aspects of objects, which do not occur in experience. In the case of metaphysics, this is done to explain the world in its completeness. It is an effort to find completeness and absolute certainty where necessarily none can be found.

It seems that here we feel the first strong pull in Kant's metaphysics, with its epistemological focus, to hold onto a realist ontology. He wants to associate *phenomena* with particular things that are independent of our perception and conception of them, but his argument for the position is extremely weak. He claims that since *phenomena* are equivalent to appearances and appearances must be *of* something, the *noumena* must exist. This, as many commentators have pointed out, simply does not follow. What is more, conceptually, the notion of the *noumena* falls apart. Being a negative concept, it cannot have content, yet, if it is co-extensive with things in themselves, it does. This is clearly a *reductio ad absurdum* of the notion.

There may, however, be a way to save the *noumena* if we dissociate it from things in themselves and thus weaken the notion somewhat. Our problem with giving an account of the *noumena* is it cannot be done--logically, one can say nothing about a negative concept as the set of objects (and concepts, too) that fall under this concept must be empty. Thus any predicate attached to the *noumena* will lead to a *reductio* in the same way that it does in the case of its association with things in themselves. Given this situation, how can we give any kind of account of the *noumena*?

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<sup>17</sup> Kant, *Critique*, A311/B367. He continues this passage, "If, none the less, these concepts possess objective validity they may be called *conceptus ratiocinati* (rightly inferred concepts); if, however, they have no such validity, they have surreptitiously obtained recognition through having at least an illusory appearance of being inference, and may be called *conceptus ratiocinates* (pseudo-rational concepts)" (*Ibid.* A311/B367-8.) These two types of concept map onto practical<sup>K</sup> and speculative<sup>K</sup> reason, mentioned in note 14, above.

I think we can only do so with arguments from analogy<sup>18</sup> of the sort where we imagine what kinds of things might exist, of which we could have no experience. We then point to these things and say, 'Like this, but unintelligible too' or 'Like this, but unimaginable.' For instance, while we have experience of three dimensions of space, it is possible we are extended in another forty-one dimensions which do not impinge on the three we experience except in as much as what makes us successful in our three makes us successful in the others. The nature of our cognitive equipment means that we cannot have experience of these extra dimensions; indeed, we cannot really imagine what it would *be* to experience them. As the possible content of the *noumena*, these dimensions are unacceptable as they are intelligible (no matter how superficially) and although we may not have access to them, it is possible that another intelligent species might. However, might there not be something that would be as far beyond our perceptual powers and would *also* be unintelligible for *all* other intelligent species? We are surely unable to preclude the possibility that there are (or are not) such things.

While any particular concept<sup>K</sup> applied to a thing beyond experience is a transcendental idea and as such a mere fiction, a metaphysical error, the mistake is not to say that *something might exist*, but rather that we know<sup>K</sup> *a particular thing does exist*. Kant courts metaphysics, suggesting that a claim made in this realm of transcendental ideas can, in fact, be properly used, but only in opposition to another metaphysical claim.<sup>19</sup> Thus while such claims may sometimes move philosophical discussion forward, they do so only by showing what is *not* known. This suggests we should take a position of humility as regards understanding the world. When we take on our opponent, "What

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<sup>18</sup> The reader will note that analogical appeals are scattered throughout this thesis. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> depends on them more than anyone else here discussed, but he is by no means the only culprit. I suspect that analogical appeals are essential to any metaphysical discussion; however, an investigation or proof of this must wait until a later date. Nonetheless, I invite the reader to reflect on the interesting role analogy plays here and below, even though I only give the subject the most fleeting mention.

<sup>19</sup> Kant writes, "...in the speculative [as opposed to practical] employment of reason hypotheses, regarded as opinions, have no validity in themselves, but only relatively to the transcendental pretensions of the opposite party." (*Critique*, A781/B809.)

we are doing is merely to show [sic] that it is just as little possible for him to comprehend the whole field of possible things through mere 'laws of experience' as it is for us to reach outside experience, any conclusions justifiable for our reason."<sup>20</sup> Keeping the empirical<sup>K</sup> and transcendental realms entirely separate is not as easily done as Kant at times suggests (discussed in Appendix A), though he does occasionally show an awareness of this.

One might ask why we should not simply grant that, not merely is *noumena* as a negative concept necessarily conceptually empty, but that it is actually empty. Yet it would surely be a leap of faith simply to assert as much. Kant takes on this very position in a brief defence of his transcendental/critical idealism in the Prolegomena. He writes:

My protestation, too, against all charges of idealism is so valid and clear as even to seem superfluous, were there not incompetent judges who, while they would have an old name for every deviation from their perverse though common opinion and never judge of the spirit of philosophic nomenclature, but cling to the letter only,<sup>21</sup> are ready to put their own conceits in the place of well-defined notions, and thereby deform and distort them. I have myself given this my theory the name of transcendental idealism, but that cannot authorize anyone to confound it either with the empirical idealism of Descartes...or with the mystical and visionary idealism of Berkeley, against which and other similar phantasms our *Critique* contains the proper antidote. My idealism concerns not the existence of things (the doubting of which, however, constitutes idealism in the ordinary sense), since it never came into my head to doubt it, but it concerns the sensuous representation of things to which space and time especially belong. Of these [namely, space and time], consequently of all appearances in general, I have only shown that they are neither things (but mere modes of representation) nor determinations belonging to things in themselves. But the word "transcendental" which with me never means a reference of our knowledge to things, but only to the cognitive faculty, was meant to obviate this misconception.<sup>22</sup>

He ends his defence by turning the tables

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, Critique, A780/B808.

<sup>21</sup> I bring this distinction between the spirit and the letter of philosophic nomenclature to the attention of the reader as it suggests that language and understanding should not be conflated. That Kant seems to think that the 'spirit' of his work can come through the words, in spite of the words, seems suggestive of one of the ways in which poetry might work. I think this is a common intuition that has not been explored as perhaps it ought to be by analytic philosophers. However, for the time being, I regret to say that I am going to follow my tradition and push this interesting subject aside.

<sup>22</sup> Kant, Prolegomena, 293-4, § 13. Editing parentheses are Beck's.



But if it be really an objectionable idealism to convert actual things (not appearances) into mere representations, by what name shall we call him who conversely changes mere representations to things? It may, I think, be called “dreaming idealism,” in contradistinction to the former, which may be called “visionary,” both of which are to be refuted by my transcendental or, better, *critical* idealism.<sup>23</sup>

We see his point, for if we deny the *noumena* and say there is nothing but appearances we are indeed idealists. However, given the way that I have characterized (Kant might say butchered) the concept of *noumena*, we might be unable to intuit<sup>K</sup> all aspects of an object, leaving nothing else to be *noumena*. Thus the *phenomena* might still be things intuited<sup>K</sup> by subjects, but it could be that there is nothing beyond that which is in principle intuitible<sup>K</sup>, and thus no things in themselves (except in as much as the objects continue when they are not intuited<sup>K</sup>).

While Kant demarcates his position from idealism which “consists in the assertion that there are none but thinking beings, [all perceptions] being nothing but representations in the thinking beings, to which no object external to them in fact corresponds,”<sup>24</sup> he has no *proof* for the position. He writes that “things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves.” But to assert their independent existence is simply a leap of faith. He gives us no argument. This is why, no matter how much Kant wants to hold onto a mind-independent reality, he cannot defend himself from charges of idealism.

What is more, by the phrase things-in-themselves he points to the essential nature of things, implying we cannot know the essences of things. In our discussion above, we showed the plausibility of there being aspects of things of which all rational beings will always be ignorant, but there is no reason to suppose this will relate to any kind of essences. Beneath Kant’s appeal to essences lies another agenda. By opening this transcendental realm and attaching the *noumena* to essences, Kant is quite clear that he

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 293-4, § 13 (his italics).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 288-9, § 13.

means to make room for our minds and faith.<sup>25</sup> Our moral and religious lives operate in this realm. Mistakes occur when we attempt to extend scientific knowledge into this area which is why, according to Kant, metaphysics is full of errors and does not tend to progress. Thus Kant appears to be at the crossroads of modern philosophy, making room for the peaceful coexistence of the God of Christianity and the god of science, placing morality and the inner life in the hands of the former and science and the outer life in the realm of the latter, and handily getting rid of most of metaphysics.

It is worth noting at this point the ambiguity of the term 'transcendental', for this adjective is applied both to the realm of that which we must know to know the things we know and to the realm of what we think we know, but don't really. The ambiguity of the term is in fact revealing, for it can be difficult to tell the objects of these areas apart. Kant is, of course, conscious that he is doing metaphysics (which is transcendental) but for Kant the distinction between good (i.e., his) and bad metaphysics is clear. What we must know is composed of the synthetic *a priori* concepts,<sup>26</sup> the most important concepts in the Critique, and the only subjects about which metaphysics is truly possible.

**Synthetic *A priori*, Intuitions<sup>K</sup> and the Transcendental Aesthetic.** Kant clearly explains his reasons for inventing the notion of synthetic *a priori* concepts in the Prolegomena. Because he wants a system which is logically deduced and metaphysically complete, he must start with that which is given *a priori*. Traditionally, *a priori* judgements were associated with analytic judgements where the concept of the object is contained within the concept of the subject; thus analytic judgements fail to offer any new information, nor can they be derived from and thus justified by anything. Essentially, they have no connection with experience, and so it is impossible to rest a science upon a metaphysics composed of such concepts and judgements. Kant's move is to look at what makes experience possible--that which is necessarily prior to experience, but is not

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<sup>25</sup> See notes 14 and 16 above.

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Kant said that the fundamental question behind his writing the Critique, 'How is knowledge possible?' could be rewritten, 'How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible?' (B19)

entailed by the concept of experience and thus is synthetic *a priori*. The forms of experience, sensibility<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup>, and their synthesis in apperception, are given as that which makes experience possible and thus are reflected in experience and so can be abstracted from experience.

As necessarily sensibility of experience must come before the understanding of experience (for we cannot judge without something to judge), Kant begins with the Transcendental Aesthetic as the foundations of the Analytic and the bed in which the three epistemological areas (see note 13, page 38, above) lie. Here we are introduced to the idea that of the two separate faculties of sensibility<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup>, the former necessarily has (or exists through) the form of space<sup>27</sup> and the latter necessarily has (or exists through) the form of time.<sup>28</sup> So far, so good. After all, it is surely impossible to experience an object in the world without it being extended in space and time. We might, in our science fiction mode, think of a place where spatial extension is radically warped and time does not pass (a black hole, for instance), but the second we imagine experiencing such a thing we need a length of time and some spatially extended physical medium by which to do it. Equally, imagine considering<sup>29</sup> something (perhaps this very sentence) without any time through which to do so. It cannot be done.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> One might say that sensibility's forms are space and time, for intuition must be combined in the mind of the experiencer to be sensibility. However, either way of considering sensibility is quite acceptable.

<sup>28</sup> Because of the synthetic nature of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant can derive from the forms of intuition<sup>K</sup> the grounds for mathematics, arithmetic accessible to the understanding<sup>K</sup> by time (which embodies and implies succession) and geometry (which embodies and implies spatial relation in two and three dimensions) through space. Thus Kant gives mathematics *a priori* certainty. Thus it is a thoroughly objective tool for scientific use, entailed by the nature of the empirical world, by virtue of existing through the sensibility<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup> of the empirical world rather than coming from things in themselves.

<sup>29</sup> I use 'considering' here, as opposed to some other term of mental action, to emphasize the role consciousness and so, I hope, undermine any ideas the reader might have of suggesting unconscious thoughts as a counterargument. While I would maintain that unconscious thoughts also take time, the nature of their intentionality is quite different from conscious thoughts and there would be a burden, if not of proof, certainly of explanation, to justify the necessity of passage of time in the realm of the unconscious. Indeed, Freud himself held that "The processes of the system *Ucs.* are *timeless*; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all." See Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious" in The

**The Role of Logic.** Although intuition<sup>K</sup> in one sense must logically precede understanding<sup>K</sup> and be kept separate from it, in another sense the two are entirely co-dependent. As Kant famously says, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”<sup>31</sup> He continues:

These two powers or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise. But that is no reason for confounding the contribution of either with that of the other; rather is it a strong reason for carefully separating and distinguishing the one from the other. We therefore distinguish the science of the rules of sensibility in general, that is, aesthetic, from the science of the rules of the understanding in general, that is, logic.<sup>32</sup>

We see here the centrality of logic to the understanding<sup>K</sup>, indeed the “science of the rules of the understanding is logic”<sup>33</sup> (a position reflected in Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> and one that late in the twentieth century we are struggling to understand or get beyond). The relationships between intuition<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup> and logic give us the first clues as to how the world is intelligible to us through the application of logic in judgement<sup>K</sup>. Kant distinguishes many types of logic through their application, but it appears that the basic types of judgement afforded by logic remain the same throughout this variety. The particular brand required to derive the categories is pure general transcendental logic.<sup>34</sup> The distinction drawn between transcendental and formal logic

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Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. XIV, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957) 187.

30 Strawson makes an argument of this sort. (Strawson, 48)

31 Kant, Critique, A51/B75.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.* A52/B76.

34 Logic in general which “contains the absolutely necessary rules of thought” (Kant, Critique, A52/B76) is demarcated from “logic of the special employment of the understanding [which] contains the rules of correct thinking as regards a certain kind of object [which]...may be called the...organon of this or that science.” (*Ibid.*) General logic divides still further into pure and applied, the latter being “the rules of the employment of understanding under the subjective empirical conditions dealt with by psychology...[having] therefore empirical principles, although it is still indeed in so far general that it refers to the employment of the understanding without regard to difference in the objects. Consequently it is neither a canon of the understanding in general nor an organon of special sciences, but merely a cathartic of the common understanding.” (*Ibid.* A53/B77-8.) It is pure general logic, however, which “abstracts from all content...and deals with nothing but the mere form of thought” (*Ibid.* A54/B78), in which we are particularly interested. Kant also claims “it does not...borrow anything from psychology, which therefore has

draws a line between abstracting from all content and abstracting from experience to discover what gives the *possibility* of thought of objects. This is reminiscent of the Transcendental Aesthetic giving us the possibility of perception (through the forms of space and time).<sup>35</sup> Thus,

This other logic, which should contain solely the rules of the pure thought of an object would exclude only those modes of knowledge which have empirical content. It would also treat of the origin of the modes in which we know objects, in so far as that origin cannot be attributed to objects.<sup>36</sup>

In order to gain access to these modes we must glean what does not belong to any object in particular but to objects in experience in general.

Kant redefines truth to situate it in the framework of logic. Although the path Kant takes to his conclusion is very much his own, the placing of truth in the realm of logic as opposed to the world is very close to the approaches of Frege and Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> and has thus trickled down into contemporary philosophy. In “The Division of General Logic Into Analytic and Dialectic” Kant attacks the fundamental question, “What is truth?” by objecting to the position that considers it to be agreement between knowledge and its object. He writes, “If truth consists in the agreement of knowledge with its object, that object must thereby be distinguished from other objects...”<sup>37</sup> Kant states that “a general criterion of truth”<sup>38</sup> is required which applies to “each and every instance of knowledge, however their objects may vary.”<sup>39</sup> The variety of objects (implied by the

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no influence whatever on the canon of the understanding. Pure logic is a body of demonstrated doctrine and everything in it must be certain entirely *a priori*.” (*Ibid.* A54/B78.) There is one more distinction to be made to get us back on the path of the synthetic *a priori*, that between formal and transcendental logic. Kant’s argument for this final distinction in pure general logic rests on an analogy with the Transcendental Aesthetic which “has shown there are pure as well as empirical intuitions.” He continues, “a distinction might likewise be drawn between pure and empirical thoughts of objects. In that case we should have a logic in which we do not abstract from the entire content of knowledge.” (*Ibid.* A55/B79-80.)

<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Kant offers what appears to be an analogy to explain the demarcation of formal and transcendental logic. Kant does not so much as give a reason for the split as appeal to our intuitions about the relationship between two concepts, intuition<sup>K</sup> and understanding<sup>K</sup>, that he himself has introduced—an oddly illogical way to talk of logic.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* A55-6/B80.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* A58/B83.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

variety of logics he distinguishes (see note 34)) and types of knowledge of objects makes a general criterion of truth an impossibility; therefore Kant rejects the notion of truth as it had been traditionally understood.<sup>40</sup>

This leaves a void, for what is objectivity or knowledge when there is no truth? Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately), logic comes to the rescue, for, says Kant, “as regards knowledge in respect of its mere form (leaving aside all content), it is evident that logic in so far as it expounds the universal and necessary rules of the understanding, must in these rules furnish criteria of truth. Whatever contradicts these rules is false.”<sup>41</sup> This part of logic which “yields what is at least the negative touchstone of truth” is called the analytic.<sup>42</sup> In reasoning in the analytic we take apart claims<sup>43</sup> and areas of knowledge so as to see how separate claims fit together logically. Because the analytic works only as a negative criterion and is not equipped to stop the non-contradictory but false from slipping into the understanding, the Transcendental Dialectic is also postulated.

It is worth noting how Kant’s notion of truth moves him to idealism. The problem is the nature of logic itself which, like the nature of space and time, according to Kant, is locked firmly within us. We should certainly give Kant credit for his honesty, placing logic at the basis of our judgement and at the basis of the criterion by which we apply ‘truth’, for though logic is philosophy’s favorite tool, its pedigree is rarely questioned. However, it seems that transcendental logic comes from nowhere. It is not to borrow anything from psychology, nor may it take anything from the world (as that would be to take it from things in themselves (or, perhaps, *phenomena*)). As that which makes all judgements and concepts possible, it must surely exist prior to such judgements and concepts. Rather than placing logic in the empirical subject, in the world, or in God, Kant

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<sup>40</sup> This approach to truth is clearly consistent with Strawson’s claim that Kant “is concerned...to curb the pretensions of sensibility to be coextensive with the real.” (Strawson, 22.)

<sup>41</sup> Kant, *Critique*, A59/B83-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* A60/B84.

<sup>43</sup> This is, of course, the partner of the synthetic which, as we shall see below in the section on ‘The Unity of Apperception and the Subject’ (pages 56-65, below) draws things together.

places it in the transcendental subject (or transcendental unity of apperception). Logic is the subject's very form of thought. If truth is founded on logic, then the form of the subject's understanding<sup>K</sup> defines the world and we have idealism. Even though this is explicitly a non-psychological subject, a non-subjective subject, this does not save Kant from idealism. <sup>44</sup>

**The Judgements<sup>K</sup> and the Categories (with a Detour into Common Sense and Objectivity).** The links between logic and concepts for Kant sit in the relationship between the judgements<sup>K</sup> and the categories. The judgements<sup>K</sup> are nothing other than logical demarcations, such as universal, particular and singular,<sup>45</sup> and the categories are nothing other than the concepts that make these judgements<sup>K</sup> possible, in the case of the above judgements<sup>K</sup>, unity, plurality and totality.<sup>46</sup> The judgements<sup>K</sup> are applied by the understanding<sup>K</sup> to our intuitions<sup>K</sup> so as to make concepts<sup>47</sup> themselves depending on a special species of concept, the category.

The biggest hurdle to accepting the Kantian system in any detail is that the eighteenth century logic of the judgements<sup>K</sup> is so unsophisticated and hopelessly out of date that it is quite ridiculous to claim it shows the necessary rules that our understanding<sup>K</sup> follows. What is more, as Strawson points out, Kant offers very little in the way of argument to support some of the less intuitive links between particular judgements<sup>K</sup> and their corresponding categories.<sup>48</sup> One can, however, blur the position

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<sup>44</sup> Whatever separates this transcendental subject from the psychological one we must beware that the demarcation not be entirely *ad hoc*, placing that which we call objective in one and that which we call subjective in another. Though Kant might be tempted, to do so does not help him with his troubles with idealism. Even if the transcendental subject conceptualizes the world according to rules, it is still the subject creating the world quite separate from reality. To make truth a construct of logic turns truth into what we make it. Whether this happens through conscious choice, or whether the subject has no choice of the rules she applies does not really matter. (This subject comes up again on page 59, below.)

<sup>45</sup> Kant, *Critique*, A70/B95.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* A80/B106.

<sup>47</sup> The faculty of judgement, discussed below, pages 63–4, is that which works between our concepts, such as in the formation of beliefs (though clearly such things are not entirely separable).

<sup>48</sup> Strawson, 76.

and accept that, whatever they are, there are some basic types of judgement<sup>K</sup> that rational agents must make to have experience at all. We might even go so far as to say that logic should be a formalization of such judgements, but given the growth in logic and the variety of interpretations within the discipline today, psychology and cognitive science might be an important corrective and guide to logic, so conceived.

Certainly, the effects of this suggested blurring will trickle down throughout the entire system so that the neo-Kantian system at the end of this process will only resemble Kant's. Also our optimism as to getting a remotely complete theory without delving into psychology, cognitive science (and who knows where else) must be dashed. Nonetheless, if we accept that there are basic judgements, Kant's next step, that there must be concepts behind these judgements, *by which* we judge, appears a wholly reasonable move. For example, in order to make a universal judgement--such as 'all men are mortal' or 'no mice are mortal'--one must have a concept of unity and in order to make a particular judgement--such as 'some men are Greek' or 'some mice are not Greek'--one must have a concept of plurality.<sup>49</sup> If these judgements really are necessarily how we judge before we have actually judged anything they are *a priori*, as are the concepts, the categories, which sit behind them.<sup>50</sup>

Another aspect of Kant's categories is his choice of dividing them into four sets of three. Each set is put forth in terms of thesis, antithesis, synthesis (a demarcation that seems to have had some influence on Hegel). This can be related thematically, if not logically, to Kant's notion that judgement<sup>K</sup> is essentially a unifying function, a synthesis

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<sup>49</sup> The connecting of universal with unity and particular with plurality is Kant's and are, as Strawson suggests, perhaps not entirely intuitive.

<sup>50</sup> This link between concept and judgement is remarkable for its implications. If it is a necessary part of human knowing that every judgement reveals a concept against which the judgement is made, then might not non-linguistic or non-human judgements also reveal concepts behind them so long as they follow some rational agent judgement form. Thus the baby who puts his arms up when he sees his parent, or the cat who notices her owner and yowls for food are operating with concepts against which they judge and then act. These may not be complex judgements or concepts, but neither are Kant's. If we have already accepted a loosening of the judgements<sup>K</sup> so as to get beyond eighteenth century logic, how will this effect the concepts that follow?



among representations, be they representations of intuitions<sup>K</sup>, concepts or images of non-present objects. He offers the following example:

Thus in the judgement, 'all bodies are divisible', the concept of the divisible applies to various other concepts, but is here applied in particular to the concept of body and this concept again to certain appearances that present themselves to us. These objects, therefore are mediately represented through the concept of divisibility.<sup>51</sup>

In other words, every intuited<sup>K</sup> and then conceptualized body is linked by the understanding<sup>K</sup> to all others through its divisibility, or rather the concept of divisibility, which, no doubt has some sort of empirical<sup>K</sup> support in the *phenomenal* world (i.e., occurrences of bodies dividing that have been intuited<sup>K</sup>, which has led to this particular generalization 'all bodies are divisible'). Kant believes the representations<sup>K</sup> mediated by this unifying function of the understanding<sup>K</sup> create a higher representation<sup>K</sup>, presumably the move from the intuitions<sup>K</sup> of unlike objects in space, to viewing them as spatial, and then placing them under the scientific concept of a body which is connected with particular properties (properties being a type of concept). This unifying, synthesizing tendency, this move toward completeness, is the same tendency that if taken too far and too sloppily in the wrong directions would lead to bad metaphysics.<sup>52</sup> Kant claims, however, that if deduction alone is followed from the categories, although our synthesizing tendencies may not be fully satisfied, we will avoid falling into making metaphysical claims for which we have no justification.

While we saw idealism creep onto the scene in the previous sections, it is worth noting that Kant still has a key interest in objectivity, which he works through the categories and which (as he rightly says) distinguishes his idealism from that of

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<sup>51</sup> Kant, Critique, A68/B93.

<sup>52</sup> The reader might note that to make such a move requires analogical reasoning extending concepts that apply to things in experience to things beyond experience (see Kant, Prolegomena, 357-8, § 58 and 361-2, §59).

Berkeley's.<sup>53</sup> In the Prolegomena in the section "How is Pure Science of Nature Possible" he broaches objectivity in the following way:

The sum of the matter is this: the business of the senses is to intuit, that of the understanding is to think. But thinking is uniting representations in one consciousness. This union originates either merely relative to the subject and is accidental and subjective, or takes place absolutely and is necessary or objective. The union of representations in consciousness is judgement. Thinking, therefore, is the same as judging or referring representations to judgements in general. Hence judgements are either merely subjective, when representations are referred to a consciousness in one subject only and united in it, or objective, when they are united in consciousness in general, that is, necessarily. The logical functions of all judgements are but various modes of uniting representations in consciousness. But if they serve for concepts, they are concepts of the necessary union of representations in [any] consciousness, and so are principles of objectively valid judgements.<sup>54</sup>

To understand this passage properly we must first read the 'concept' to be Kant's technical term that applies only to the representations of the empirical or the categories; thus the ideas of the Transcendental Dialectic are not implied. From here we must ask what will count as subjective once we ignore the transcendental realm. Trivially, mistakes which might result from not attending to appearances carefully or applying the wrong type of judgement to appearances must be subjective, as objectivity and correctness of judgement are linked. Here is perhaps where an individual's psychology comes into the picture as the mere opinions<sup>K</sup> and mere beliefs<sup>K</sup> she holds she mistakes for knowledge<sup>K</sup>.<sup>55</sup> There is also the question of what Kant means by 'consciousness in general' within which representations are united when we are objective. It seems we have four choices. The first, which Kant would definitely reject, is the Leibnizian option of connecting all rational agents (as monads) through the mind of God, so that

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<sup>53</sup> Kant writes in the Prolegomena, "as truth rests on universal and necessary laws as its criteria [i.e., logic, see pages 47-8, above], experience, according to Berkeley, can have no criteria of truth because its *phenomena* (according to him) have nothing a priori at their foundation, whence it follows that experience is nothing but sheer illusion; whereas with us, space and time (in conjunction with the pure concepts of the understanding) prescribe their law to all possible experience a priori and, at the same time, afford the certain criterion for distinguishing truth from illusion therein." (374-5)

<sup>54</sup> Kant, Prolegomena, 304-5, § 22. Editing parentheses are Beck's.

<sup>55</sup> This is, of course bound up with Kant's ideas on knowing, opining and believing, which are touched on, below, page 72.

consciousness really is general. The Kantian system, however, depends upon science being justified without God,<sup>56</sup> so this is not a viable option. The second equally unpalatable choice is a naïve idealism where we never truly make mistakes but where a new understanding of the world is an actual change in the world. The final two choices are more plausible, the first being intersubjectivity where ‘consciousness in general’ stands for general agreement among subjects in the way something is understood<sup>K</sup>. The second makes the categories more central, suggesting that because the categories are absolute and pure such that everyone shares them, everyone will apply them with the same result if they apply them properly to the same *phenomena*. This, of course, will result in general agreement, and thus intersubjectivity.

This combination of categories and intersubjectivity becomes both more interesting and more complex when we bring into the analysis the passage about divisibility quoted on page 51, above. Here we see that the same judgement applied to many different concepts brings them all under the concept corresponding to the judgement. If we imagine this process as it extends and repeats itself through all experience, we see that a web of interconnected concepts, a conceptual framework, will be manifest. Given this, it is plausible that the intersubjectivity of “consciousness in general” may be satisfied by judgement that coheres with the conceptual framework shared by “consciousness in general”, and thus a single subject may still judge objectively.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Kant appears to have this sort of picture in mind in the Logic. He writes:

An *external* mark or an *external* touchstone of truth is the comparison of our own judgement with those of others, because what is subjective will

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<sup>56</sup> In “The History of Pure Reason” Kant points with pride to the fact that in the infancy of philosophy men began where we should incline to end, namely with the knowledge of God.” (Kant, Critique, A852/B880.)

<sup>57</sup> This characterization corresponds with Strawson’s remarks about the Principles. Strawson writes, “that any particular ‘unruly perception which fails to cohere with the general course of experience as articulated in judgement embodying these concepts is rated as merely subjective, an illusion or a ‘seeming’, not a true representation of how the world objectively is.” (Strawson, 89.)

not dwell in all others alike; thus semblance may be cleared up by comparison. The *irreconcilability* of the judgments of others with our own is therefore an external mark of error and to be considered as a hint that we should examine our procedure in judgments, without however immediately disregarding it. For one may well be right in *re* and only wrong *in the manner*, i.e. in presentation.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike simple intersubjectivity, this more complex version is consistent with Kant's misgivings about common sense. He attacks Hume's critics on the grounds that their criticism was based upon appeals to common sense which he early on in the *Prolegomena* rejects as essentially arguments *ad populum*. The place for common sense he claims can only remain sound when restrained by critical reason "which keeps common sense in check and prevents it from speculating, or if speculations are under discussion, restrains the desire to decide because it cannot satisfy itself concerning its own premises."<sup>59</sup> Thus it is only in speculation<sup>K</sup> where we are inclined to make appeals to common sense in general that common sense is truly pernicious.<sup>60</sup> Common sense "may be used justly and with advantage, but on quite special principles, the importance of which always depends on their reference to practical life."<sup>61</sup> As for the empirical<sup>K</sup>, our own common sense as dictated by the categories should naturally tend to agree with others and should be sufficient.

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58 Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, trans. Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz, (New York: Dover, 1974) 62-3 (italics his).

59 Kant, *Prolegomena*, 259.

60 Even here there may be proper appeals. We may properly appeal to common sense "when we are forced...to renounce all speculative knowledge which must always be theoretical cognition, and thereby under some circumstances forego metaphysics itself and its instruction for the sake of adopting a rational faith which alone may be possible for us, sufficient to our wants, and perhaps even more salutary than knowledge itself." (Kant, *Prolegomena*, 371-2.)

Beck in his Introduction to the *Prolegomena* connects this notion of "rational faith" to James' "will to believe" or Hans Vaihinger's "fictions", saying that they "[do] not give us 'constitutive' knowledge of objects but [are] of 'regulative' use in directing our scientific inquiries and our moral conduct." *Prolegomena*, xix. The commonness of common sense and its relation to ethics fits in with Kant's claims that it takes minimal rationality to act morally and thus stupid people are perfectly able to be moral.

61 *Ibid.* 371-2.

The above account of objectivity demands that we account for what happens when whole groups of people make mistakes.<sup>62</sup> In such cases, the entire group must be applying the wrong types of judgement and extending their claims to knowledge beyond experience. Perhaps there are certain mistakes we tend to make because of neural functioning, or ways of thinking or communicating, which usually work optimally, but sometimes work against us. In this picture, the conceptual framework of a group might have to evolve to a point where the mistake begins to stand out from the rest of the framework due to an inconsistency. Alternatively, a framework might become gradually more sophisticated, prompting a breakthrough. Thus the mathematical advances that preceded Galileo, the post-Scholastic openness to criticism of the ancients and the scientific method, based on observation and calculation, that he applied to problems of motion in general formed a background against which Aristotle's notion of the motion of arrows came to be seen as clearly mistaken.

We can avoid problems with objectivity altogether by pushing Kant's idealism to its logical end, i.e., in Berkelean style, denying all but subjective appearance. By doing so we cannot get beyond our own experience to judge the stories of other's experiences as that of other minds. Instead, their testimony is simply appearances (as of Cartesian-style automata). In this case we must content ourselves with taking the categories themselves and the unity of our experience (i.e. that nothing represented in experience fails to fit with the rest of our experience), as the source of objectivity. As Strawson puts it:

Hence the fact that my experience is of a unified objective world is a necessary consequence of the fact that only under this condition could I be conscious of my diverse experiences as one and all my own. And hence

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<sup>62</sup> This is easily explained in something like the heliocentric versus geocentric views of the universe, as sufficiently precise observations to correct this mistaken belief in a geocentric universe were unavailable until the writing of the Rudolphine Tables (although why the geocentric view should be accepted as preferred is worth consideration), but not so easily explained with Aristotelian motion *qua* arrows. (Aristotle thought that violent motion applied to an object must totally be spent and then natural motion would take over, restoring the object to its proper place. This implies that arrows do not fly in parabolas, but rather should move in a straight line in the direction they are shot and then (when this violent motion runs out) fall to the ground under the power of natural motion.

also, Kant concludes, we are ourselves the source of whatever general order and connexion in Nature is necessary to satisfy this requirement of objectivity and unity.<sup>63</sup>

Kant's notion of objectivity seems to swing from a Strawsonian account (depending on the individual's conceptual framework) to the intersubjectivity which plays such an obvious and important role in science. However, these two positions are not incompatible and, indeed, this swinging between dependence on others' testimony (even if we must take their existence as minds on faith) and on our own conceptual frameworks looks, from my armchair, to be a fairly good account of how I do judge the objectivity of my beliefs.

**The Unity of Apperception and the Subject.** The above accounts both depend on the unity of consciousness. Kant takes on this issue in the Transcendental Deduction and Schematism of the categories, attempting an account of the way in which judgements<sup>K</sup> and concepts<sup>K</sup> hook onto the world of appearances<sup>K</sup>. He starts by showing us how experience is unified. Perhaps here, more than anywhere else in the Critique, terminology is multiplied beyond clarity and utility and some of the ideas are particularly confused. The confusion is exacerbated by the fact that Kant is more than usually repetitive which, in combination with the multitude of terms applied to each concept, makes the demarcation of repetition from new information most challenging. Indeed, the muddle is such that Kant totally rewrote his chapter on the Transcendental Deduction for the second edition (although whether this is an improvement is debatable). In the Prolegomena, famous for its comparative clarity as a Kantian text, there is virtually nothing on the subjects discussed in this chapter. However, the Transcendental Deduction is right at the heart of how knowledge fits onto Nature<sup>K</sup>, so though we may feel faint-hearted, into the Transcendental Deduction we must go.

I should again emphasize that Kant's method is to see what *must* be the case for experience to be possible, specifically, in the Transcendental Deduction, what makes the

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<sup>63</sup> Strawson, 94.

application of the categories possible. He tells us that there is a “three fold synthesis which must necessarily be found in all knowledge; namely [1] the apprehension of representations<sup>64</sup> as modifications of the mind in intuition, [2] their reproduction in imagination and [3] their recognition in a concept.”<sup>65</sup> Area 1 is where we find the transcendental subject. It is the realm of inner sense where all intuitions<sup>K</sup> occur. Here the awareness of the manifold<sup>66</sup> of intuition<sup>K</sup> is unified as that which belongs to a subject. Area 2 is where Kant’s ideas are most muddy and one struggles through the obscurity of the schematism of the categories and the role of the imagination<sup>K</sup>. The third area is where particular empirical<sup>K</sup> concepts are derived by the application of the principles<sup>K</sup>. The principles<sup>K</sup>, formed to conform to the Table of Judgements so that each of the twelve corresponds to a particular judgement<sup>K</sup>, suffer from the deep inadequacies of their ancestor (see pages 49-50, above). While the Principles can be both important and interesting in particular instances (such as Kant’s discussion of causality and the rest of the Analogies of Experience), they are beyond our interest, except in the most general aspects of their nature, so our exegesis of Kant’s system ends with the schematism from which they follow. Although the first area, the unity of apperception, is our present focus, by virtue of all three areas being functions of synthesis, there is an implicit discussion of all three.

In my account of the Transcendental Aesthetic (see pages 44-5, above) I defended the plausibility of Kant’s thesis that if we are to experience anything we must do so in time and/or space. Kant also claims we need synthesis for experience. If we are to have

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<sup>64</sup> There is an ambiguity in Kant’s use of this term as it appears in places to apply to intuition<sup>K</sup> pre-conceptualization (as it does here) and elsewhere post-conceptualization.

<sup>65</sup> Kant, *Critique*, A98.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Manifold’ is perhaps a misleading term for it implies a number of things (be they points in space, moments in time, or whatever) and, at a pre-perceptive point, one cannot assume such multiplicity. It is analogous to the mistake of discussing the noumenal as things in themselves. To be fair to Kant’s idea, I think we must consider that the manifold can just as well be a blur, in which we separate aspects, as a collection of points which we synthesize into wholes, or relations. Indeed, it is perhaps best to see both things going on at once in the subject’s unifying the manifold.

any experience, moment must be added to moment and each intuition<sup>K</sup> must correspond (in *some way*) to previous and succeeding intuitions<sup>K</sup>. Otherwise, not merely do we have intuitions<sup>K</sup> presented to us that we cannot understand--for as already stated, they do not fall into any pattern--but we also lose ourselves as the subjects of experience. The subject *is* that which understands<sup>K</sup> intuition<sup>K</sup>, it is that through which the synthesis happens, and reciprocally, without synthesis there is no subject. Kant recognises that his reasoning (if such a term is properly applicable) is circular. He writes

Although this proposition makes synthetic unity a condition of all thought, it is... itself analytic. For it says no more than that all *my* representations in any given intuition must be subject to that condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as *my* representations, and so can comprehend them as synthetically combined in one apperception through the general expression '*I think*'.<sup>67</sup>

This relatively simple notion of the unification of experience in the subject which allows experience is the basic claim of the Transcendental Deduction. It does, however, get somewhat more complicated in the details.

The 'I think' forms the foundation of the unity of apperception, preceding intuition<sup>K</sup> and thus understanding<sup>K</sup> also. This Kant calls "the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception."<sup>68</sup> He offers the following example

To know anything in space (for instance, a line), I must *draw* it, and thus synthetically bring into being a determinate combination of the given manifold, so that the unity of this act is at the same time the unity of consciousness (as in the concept of the line); and it is through the unity of consciousness that an object (a determinate space) is first known. The synthetic unity of consciousness is, therefore, an objective condition of all knowledge. It is not merely a condition under which every intuition must stand in order *to become an object for me*. For otherwise, in the absence of this synthesis, the manifold would *not* be united in one consciousness.<sup>69</sup>

Of course, the act of drawing the line and the line itself are not of the 'original synthetic unity'; rather the act is 'synthetically bring[ing] into being a determinate combination of the given manifold [i.e., the line].' This given manifold is in space only when we are

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<sup>67</sup> Kant, *Critique*, B138 (italics his).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* B137 (italics his).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* B137-8.



perceiving, synthesizing appearances in outer sense, but it is in time and the inner sense always. It combines moment with moment, for myself, just in the way consciousness combines point with point on the line.

Time plays an important role in this synthesis, as the “formal condition of the inner sense”,<sup>70</sup> to which all our representations<sup>K</sup> (i.e. our conceptualizations), *qua* being modifications of the mind, belong. In the inner sense our knowledge is “ordered, connected and brought into relation.”<sup>71</sup> These are the acts of judgement<sup>K</sup> by which we decipher things in the manifold (which is intuition<sup>K</sup> prior to understanding<sup>K</sup>) so that moments neither sit by themselves, disconnected from each other, nor flow into an endless blur. This initial synthesis of the self in time makes possible intuition<sup>K</sup> through outer sense, bringing it into the inner sense as representations<sup>K</sup>. Thus there appear to be at least two levels of synthesis, the first being the self in time and the second that which judges and thus makes and applies concepts.

Kant claims the transcendental subject must be kept separate from the empirical<sup>K</sup> subject, which is the I by which I experience and, as my consciousness, being the representations of my inner sense, is constantly changing.<sup>72</sup> He writes

Only the original unity is objectively valid; the empirical unity of apperception, upon which we are not here dwelling, and which besides is merely derived from the former under given conditions *in concreto*, has only subjective validity. To one man, for instance, a certain word<sup>73</sup> suggests one thing, to another some other thing; the unity of consciousness in that which is empirical is not, as regards what is given, necessarily and universally valid.<sup>74</sup>

Now we see that Kant has linked objectivity with the transcendental I, which is why he must demarcate it from the empirical I. The transcendental I is the I of the categories, whereas the empirical I is the I of psychology (and all the other various non-pure logics,

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* A98.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* A99.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* A107.

<sup>73</sup> Kant says very little about language in the *Critique* and when he does, as in this case, epistemological points are being made; they are not, for Kant, distinguished from the linguistic.

<sup>74</sup> Kant, *Critique*, B140.

referred to in note 31, above). Also the empirical I is connected to my eye and thus to my particular perspectival experience, so it cannot be the seat of the objective.

In my discussion of objectivity above (pages 52-6) I linked it to the conceptual framework that exists in and is derived from the categories through their application in experience. A framework so acquired has a consistency that makes objectivity possible and allows us to distinguish the empirical from illusion. Illusion is recognised as that which cannot possibly fit the framework. (This depends on illusion occurring less frequently than objective experience.<sup>75</sup>) The subjectivity of experience, however, is constant and yet through it we may still acquire objective knowledge as we apply the categories, so the empirical subject as the source of the transcendental subject is what allows us objective knowledge.

Kant touches on the problem of going from the subjective point of view to objective claims in his discussion of causality in the Second Analogy. In causal events, an effect is necessitated by its cause, objectively. Succession, however, is essential to the very nature of synthesis and the subject's experience in the manifold of time; thus Kant distinguishes subjective and objective succession. The former is ever present and he uses an example of perceiving a house to illustrate the nature of this succession:

my perceptions could begin with the apprehension of the roof and end with the basement, or could begin from below and end above; and I could similarly apprehend the manifold of the empirical intuition either from right to left or from left to right. In the series of these perceptions there was thus no determinate order specifying at what point I must begin in order to connect the manifold empirically. But in the perception of an event there is always a rule that makes the order in which the perceptions (in the apprehension of this appearance) follow upon one another a *necessary* order....Since the subjective succession by itself is altogether arbitrary, it does not prove anything as to the manner in which the manifold is connected in the object. The objective succession will therefore consist in that order of the manifold of appearance according to

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<sup>75</sup> A similar point is made by Quine and Ullian when they suggest that if people lied all the time we would find it impossible to gain understanding of language (Quine and Ullian, 53). Similarly, if our perceptions were primarily illusory we would find it impossible to gain understanding of the world, unless, of course, our illusions were very consistent. But in this case they would form patterns and therefore be intelligible and arguably, by Kant's standards, not illusions.

which, in conformity with a rule, the apprehension of that which happens follows upon the apprehension of that which precedes.<sup>76</sup>

Thus causality as a principle<sup>K</sup>, a rule that is nothing other than the application of a category, stays in the realm of the objective while the integrity of the subject's subjectivity is retained. Objective laws do not exist in themselves, but only as relative to the subject that experiences them with understanding<sup>K</sup>,<sup>77</sup> but this does not entail that different subjects will recognise different laws, for the categories are the *a priori* laws of understanding<sup>K</sup>, common to everyone.

One more thing is required for objectivity and again we are given it through synthesis. The thought must apply to an object<sup>K</sup> in order for the thought to be an example of knowledge and not a mere thought.<sup>78</sup> The unity of apperception both joins the points in time in our experience and lets us apply the categories, thus pulling appearances<sup>K</sup> under concepts. Together they give us an object<sup>K</sup>, an aspect of appearances<sup>K</sup>, a representation<sup>K</sup> onto which, due to its continuing in our intuition<sup>K</sup> and its fitting into our conceptual frameworks, we project object<sup>K</sup> status. In Kant's words, "knowledge consists in the determinate relation of given representations to an object; and an *object* is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is *united*."<sup>79</sup> This is why the existence of an object<sup>K</sup> must be discovered through appearances; it cannot occur through the inner sense alone. Kant himself applies the terms that were later taken up by Frege, sense and reference. The sense is made, as it is for Frege, by the list of predicates applied to the concept, and the reference is the projection of the thing that corresponds to the object<sup>K</sup> in intuition<sup>K</sup> (which is not so Fregean, although certainly he attaches reference to the object, but without Kant's epistemological baggage). As for the categories, given that they do not correspond to particular objects of intuition<sup>K</sup>, they have no application for "yielding knowledge of *things*...save only in regard to things which may be the objects of possible

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<sup>76</sup> Kant, *Critique*, A192-3/B238-9 (italics his).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* B164.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* A104.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* B137 (italics his).

experience....Only our sensible and empirical intuition can give to them body and meaning.”<sup>80</sup>

Now we appear to have four levels of synthesis. The first is the foundational synthesis of the subject in time. The next is the synthesis of appearances in space and time. The third is the synthesis of the appearance<sup>K</sup> with a concept. This happens through the application of the categories (and, indeed, lesser logics) and the production of predicates.<sup>81</sup> The fourth and final synthesis is the projection of a concept onto the appearance as an object<sup>K</sup>, thus making the thought into knowledge and the awareness of the objective.<sup>82</sup> How exactly the synthesis happens, the actual order or whether they all happen together, as Kant’s haphazard use of ‘spontaneity’ sometimes suggests, is not entirely clear. However, obviously there is a cyclical aspect, for these syntheses happen over time, attaching moment to moment at all four levels.

When we have a grasp of what synthesis is synthesizing, we find ourselves asking ‘what *is* synthesis?’ J. Michael Young suggests that there are some who interpret Kant’s synthesis as “a rather crude theory of mental manufacture.”<sup>83</sup> Young dismisses this notion, instead defending the idea that “Kant’s theory of synthesis is best interpreted...as an account of what it is for concepts, and in particular pure concepts, to have representational content.”<sup>84</sup> Perhaps Young errs in considering these two things to be mutually exclusive, no doubt a reflection of the tradition within which he is writing. To

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* B147-9. Here ‘body and meaning’ are translations for ‘Sinn und Bedeutung’, which have been systematically translated in the Fregean tradition as ‘sense and reference’.

<sup>81</sup> Such relationships are the basis of the states of affairs of which Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>’s world is comprised (see Chapter Three, below)

<sup>82</sup> It is, I believe, these four different syntheses and their close relationship with each other combined with Kant giving various lists of three different syntheses which leads to Bennett’s exasperation with the whole concept especially as it pertains to imagination<sup>K</sup>. The confusion is exacerbated by Kant tending to write about the same things at each different level, for each higher level is abstracted from the lower ones and each lower level is made possible by the higher ones. See Jonathan Bennett, *Kant’s Analytic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) 134-8.

<sup>83</sup> J. Michael Young, “Synthesis and the Content of Pure Concepts in Kant’s *First Critique*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 32, no. 3 (July, 1994) 333.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 354.

be sure, both readings emphasize different interests, but one must remember that Kant's project includes metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind and logic. His theory of concepts, which is intimately tied with synthesis, need not exclude a theory of mental manufacture; indeed, this could be seen as merely an aspect of his commitment to concepts as some kind of entity. Certainly, it is unlikely that Kant should offer a sophisticated theory of mental manufacture, for his only interest is to show as much as must be the case for experience to be possible.<sup>85</sup>

Before we leave the subject of synthesis, a word about judgement<sup>K</sup> as discussed in the Schematism is perhaps worthwhile. Here the faculty of judgement<sup>K</sup> is still the application of understanding<sup>K</sup> but occurs between objects<sup>K</sup> rather than simply bringing appearances under concepts. Judgement<sup>K</sup> has to do with rightly applying the rules of logic that live in the understanding<sup>K</sup> to objects, thus understanding situations as complexes of objects<sup>K</sup>. This is another level of synthesis, number five, by which we judge the relationship between objects<sup>K</sup>, in effect choosing both the right categories in the right order to apply to objects<sup>K</sup> and synthesizing the relations between objects<sup>K</sup>. Kant admits that this faculty is utterly mysterious and something that, for the most part, cannot be learned. He suggests "Deficiency in judgement is just what is ordinarily called stupidity, and for such a failing there is no remedy."<sup>86</sup> He also associates judgement<sup>K</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, it is not always clear that Kant is consistent in what he takes as the relationship between logical and actual necessity which the following passage reveals. Kant writes: "The synthetic proposition, that all the variety of *empirical consciousness* must be combined in one single self-consciousness, is the *absolutely* first and synthetic principle of our thought in general. But it must not be forgotten that the bare representation 'I' in relation to all other representations (the collective unity of which it makes possible) is transcendental consciousness. Whether this representation is clear (empirical consciousness) or obscure, or even whether it ever actually occurs, does not here concern us. But the possibility of the logical form of all knowledge is necessarily conditioned by relation to this apperception *as a faculty*." (Kant, *Critique*, A117 note a.) In this passage one is struck by Kant's implication that "the bare representation 'I' in relation to all other representations...[i.e.] transcendental consciousness" is not of particular interest to us in as much as it may be real (I think it is fair to read 'occur' as meaning 'manifest in the empirical/Nature' (indeed, how else can one read it?)). After all, we are trying to sketch the bounds of sense and one would rather like to know if one does experience the transcendental as an experience.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* A134/B172, footnote a.

with open-mindedness<sup>87</sup> and “the specific quality of so-called mother-wit”<sup>88</sup> and an ability to apply theory to practice. He offers the following analogy for illustration:

A physician, a judge, or a ruler may have at command many excellent pathological, legal, or political rules, even to the degree that he may become a profound teacher of them, and yet, none the less, may easily stumble in their application. For, although admirable in understanding he may be wanting in natural power of judgement. He may comprehend the universal *in abstracto*, and yet not be able to distinguish whether a case *in concreto* comes under it.<sup>89</sup>

Now, this is rather important as, of course, the predicates which we apply to a concept will differ according to how we apply the categories, their order and their centrality to the concept. Whether we see a sheet blowing in the wind as an effect of the wind or as part of the wind process depends on how we apply the categories and will dictate how we might proceed in a scientific investigation thereof. There may sometime be a better or best way of judging<sup>K</sup> a particular event, but at other times there will not be a best way. Although I doubt that Kant would have been pleased with such a suggestion, certainly the inborn ability to judge well or badly allows (if not implies) this. After all, the stupid are not so utterly incapable as to kill themselves off. Their judgement is good enough, even if often essentially wrong. In fact, alternative applications of the categories may sometimes give us alternative ways of looking at the situations all of which have their usefulness and all of which describe the world truly. This is not to say that there is not one object<sup>K</sup> being described, for the order of application may not matter. Our perceptual apparatuses as a species are almost certainly sufficiently similar that certain things will stand out and be recognised as objects<sup>K</sup> by all of us. In the above example, the sheet is a sheet, but the relationships of the sheet to other objects<sup>K</sup> present in intuition<sup>K</sup> is in question.

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87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.* A133/B172.

89 *Ibid.* A134/B173. Interestingly, Damasio discusses the case of a man simply referred to as Eliot, who suffered a brain injury which left him incapable of applying his knowledge in practical situations. While he was quite capable of deciphering the most rational action in a situation in discussion, in practice he could not hold down a job due to ineptitude (Damasio, 34-43).

While we may be able to abstract five levels of synthesis from what Kant gives us, we must remember that there might be more distinctions of synthesis and, indeed, there might be situations which appear to invoke fewer types of synthesis. In this light Kant's confused account does not simply reflect ineptitude, but rather a desperate attempt not to misconstrue the intricate character of synthesis.

**The Schematism of the Categories and the Role of Imagination.** It is fitting that we should go from the mysterious faculty of judgement<sup>K</sup> to the yet more mysterious faculty of imagination<sup>K</sup> in the Schematism. Some of Kant's commentators throw up their hands at the discussion of imagination<sup>K</sup>, regarding it as the obscure climax of the deeply problematic Transcendental Deduction. Strawson in The Bounds of Sense avoids it altogether and Bennett ends his brief and rather ungenerous discussion by declaring "...it may...be possible to discover precisely and in detail what thoughts lie behind the neurotically inept exposition of the Transcendental deduction. Such a discovery would probably not be worth the trouble."<sup>90</sup> However, Kant himself considered the imagination<sup>K</sup> to be central to his project as the link that brings understanding<sup>K</sup> and sensibility<sup>K</sup> together and this is reason enough to take it seriously ourselves.<sup>91</sup>

The faculty of imagination<sup>K</sup> produces schemata and together they are the last tools Kant introduces for attaining knowledge. They pull understanding<sup>K</sup> and sensibility<sup>K</sup> together and "ground the relation of that in us which we call 'representations' to their objects."<sup>92</sup> They give the categories application, subordinating appearances<sup>K</sup> to universal rules of synthesis and restricting the categories to the conditions of sensibility<sup>K</sup>. Thus "the schema is properly only the phenomenon or sensible concept of an object in agreement with a category."<sup>93</sup> This is essentially the fleshing out of the third level of

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<sup>90</sup> Bennett, 138.

<sup>91</sup> Perhaps there is a disdain for the project of bringing content and mental images together (in such a way that mental images might have more or different content from predicates and that which is expressible by propositions) which may have discouraged analytic philosophers from applying themselves to the elucidation of this area.

<sup>92</sup> Kant, "Letter," 71.

<sup>93</sup> Kant, Critique, A146/B186.

synthesis (and sometimes the fourth)<sup>94</sup>, but we see that by the application of the imagination<sup>K</sup> more than simply predicates go into making a concept. The question of how we hook onto the world has been refined to, “How...is the *subsumption* of intuitions under pure concepts, the *application* of a category to appearances, possible?”<sup>95</sup>

Kant conceives his problem as there being a need that a concept must contain something represented in the object<sup>K</sup> that is to be brought under it. The schema is then proposed as something ‘homogeneous’ with the category and the appearance<sup>K</sup>; thus it is pure, intellectual and sensible. The schemata achieve this homogeneity through time. With the help of the unity of apperception, they determine the inner sense’s form (the form for all intuition<sup>K</sup>), time.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Kant claims that schemata are nothing other than the *a priori* determinations of time in accordance with rules (loosely, what can happen in time). These rules are determined by the categories to which they relate yet apply to the intuitions<sup>K</sup>. They define the nature of intuition<sup>K</sup> by virtue of the fact that they are the rules that define the functioning or “modes” of time in which all appearances are manifest (and which synthesis simply brought together (level two, on page 62). Although they are deduced from the categories, because time does not exist without intuitions<sup>K</sup>, schemata, in as much as they are *the way time runs*, do not exist abstracted from time, and thus not *a priori*. Thus the schemata both depend upon the understanding<sup>K</sup> and the intuitions<sup>K</sup> for their existence and also join the two.

Hidden in the Schematism are two issues, one being the joining of the category to appearance<sup>K</sup>, and the second being the joining of concept<sup>K</sup> and object<sup>K</sup> through the application of the categories. The first issue revolves around how the categories apply and thus the universal rules are under scrutiny. The second issue is particularized, asking how

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<sup>94</sup> See the levels described on page 62, above.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* A138/B177.

<sup>96</sup> It must be remembered that understanding<sup>K</sup> exists through the form of time (see page 45, above) so the schemata break up the stream of time into acts of judgement that are homogeneous with intuition<sup>K</sup>.



the categories' application creates empirical<sup>K</sup> concepts and relates them to their objects<sup>K</sup>.

Sadly, Kant is not terribly forthcoming about these issues, writing:

This 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, and to have open to our gaze. This much only we can assert: the *image* is a product of the empirical faculty of reproductive imagination; the *schema* of sensible concepts, such as of figures in space, is a product and, as it were, a monogram, of pure *a priori* imagination, through which, and in accordance with which, images themselves first become possible. These images can be connected with the concept only by means of the schema to which they belong. In themselves they are never completely congruent with the concept.<sup>97</sup>

It appears that the details of the application are to be left to someone else to sort out, perhaps a combination of psychologists and neuroscientists (although we might suspect that a psychological investigation using artworks could be particularly useful, stretching the bond between schema and concept). We would invite philosophers too, of course, to keep everyone metaphysically honest, for it appears that metaphysical assumptions are bound to work their way into such investigations. This approach suggests that Kant put his investigation the wrong way around and rather than *starting* with the categories one might do better to derive them from the imagination<sup>K</sup>. It can surely do no worse than eighteenth century logic as a foundation.

As the schemata are products of the faculty of imagination, the question arises as to the relationship between schema and image<sup>K</sup>, for both categories and concepts. In the case of the application of schemata to pure sensible objects<sup>K</sup> (the objects of mathematics, which are synthetic *a priori*, but not categories (see note 28, above)), nothing corresponds to their appearance. They cannot be imaged:

Indeed it is schemata, not images of objects, which underlie our pure sensible concepts. No image could ever be adequate to the concept of a triangle in general. It would never attain that universality of the concept which renders it valid of all triangles, whether right-angled, obtuse-angled, or acute-angled; it would always be limited to a part only of this sphere.

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<sup>97</sup> Kant, Critique, A141-2/B180-1.

The schema of the triangle can exist nowhere but in thought. It is a rule of synthesis of the imagination, in respect to pure figures in space.<sup>98</sup>

Here it appears that the schemata are nothing other than a guide (built from the categories) for the construction of objects in pure intuition<sup>K</sup>. We must remember that Kant believed mathematics to be derived from and justified by the pure intuitions<sup>K</sup> and that, given that the above example is from geometry, here the rules are followed in the pure intuition<sup>K</sup> of space. While the schemata apply the rule, a particular image<sup>K</sup> corresponds to the rule or not. The image<sup>K</sup> is a product of a particular schematization in particular circumstances that defines the aspects of the image beyond its essential triangularity. In Kant's words, "This representation of a *universal* procedure of imagination in providing an image for a concept, I entitle the schema of this concept."<sup>99</sup> As he suggests above, the schemata of pure *a priori* imagination<sup>K</sup> (for instance, for triangles) are those things through which 'images themselves first become possible'. Thus objects<sup>K</sup> intuited<sup>K</sup> in appearances<sup>K</sup> are understood<sup>K</sup>, to some extent, in terms of these *a priori* schemata.

The relationship between the schema and image<sup>K</sup> does not change when it is applied to an *a posteriori* concept, or to an object<sup>K</sup>. Kant writes:

Still less is an object of experience or its image ever adequate to the empirical concept; for this latter always stands in immediate relation to the schema of imagination, as a rule for the determination of our intuition, in accordance with some specific universal concept. The concept '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.<sup>100</sup>

We have here what appears to be the subjugation of the image<sup>K</sup> to rules--a striking turn of events, in the faculty of imagination<sup>K</sup>. However, as we shall see below, some wish to reject images in the imagination<sup>K</sup> altogether. While here Kant refers only to schemata as they pertain to our perception, they also apply to our understanding<sup>K</sup>. As such, predicates

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98 *Ibid.* A140/B179.

99 *Ibid.* A140/B179-80 (italics mine).

100 *Ibid.* A141/B180.

that we can apply to a concept or an object correspond with the rules of the schemata which dictate what it is to fall under a concept. However, if the faculty of imagination<sup>K</sup> can be understood purely through predicates,<sup>101</sup> then why introduce imagination<sup>K</sup> at all, for simple synthesis appears to be capable of as much (see level three, on page 62, above).

Young entirely rejects the imaging function of the imagination<sup>K</sup>, yet he does not reject the imagination<sup>K</sup> altogether. Instead, he reinterprets the function, keeping it at the heart of the Kantian system. In “Kant’s View of the Imagination” Young suggests that “If we suppose that Kant conceives of Imagination as the capacity for mental imaging...the task [of making sense of Kant’s claims] is not even worth undertaking.”<sup>102</sup> Instead he claims that “Imagination is the capacity to bring something under a rule, to construe it as the awareness of something manifesting certain general features.”<sup>103</sup> The idea is that it allows the discrimination of objects without actually drawing them under concepts. To illustrate the point he discusses the impoverished mental life of his cat. He distinguishes between the faculties of judgement<sup>K</sup> and imagination<sup>K</sup> in the following way:

It is one thing merely to be able to construe or interpret something sensibly present as an *F* and to discriminate it from things of other types, which is a function of the imagination. It is quite another thing to have the discursive representation of a thing of kind *F*, the *concept* of such a thing, and to be able to judge that what is sensibly present is an *F*, both of which are functions of the understanding....a being [i.e. his cat] might well have sensibility and imagination--the capacity to be sensibly aware of its surroundings, and the ability to interpret or construe that awareness--and yet *lack* understanding<sup>104</sup>

These concepts originate from “acts of reflection, comparison, and abstraction”<sup>105</sup> and knowledge requires judgements formed from such acts.

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<sup>101</sup> Certainly Strawson overtly denies the non-propositional content of concepts. He writes, “To bring an object under a concept involves thinking that a certain proposition is true of the object or is objectively valid.” (Strawson, 74.)

<sup>102</sup> J. Michael Young, “Kant’s View of the Imagination,” *Kant-Studien*, vol. 79 (1988) 140.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 164.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 150.

One problem with Young's position is that the clear line he attempts to draw between imagination and understanding thus characterized is obviously not so clear. To pick out a particular object<sup>K</sup> from the manifold requires abstraction from the manifold and to construe that object as an *F*, unlike other present objects<sup>K</sup> (let alone the best *F* among other *F*'s, as when a cat goes after a favorite toy in preference to others present) requires some sort of comparison. As for reflection, we can only gain introspective knowledge of reflection, or infer it from the products of reflection (books, sound advice, artworks, and so forth). We can perhaps infer it from attention, for when we see an individual attending to something we often suppose she is reflecting on the object, its nature or the type of which it is a token. But cats attend to things also and might in some way reflect on the nature of the object of their attention (i.e., is it chewy or crunchy, fast or fierce?). Really, the only individual with insight into a cat's capacity for reflection is the cat. Young attempts to add credibility to what he takes to be Kant's position by saying:

while a being that lacks understanding [i.e. his cat] may be able to bring its sensible states under rules, combining them in accordance with rules, it cannot subject either those rules or any act of construal or interpretation to reflective criticism. Hence it cannot itself draw a distinction between correct and incorrect combination, or between correct and incorrect interpretation. When Kant says (A293/B350) that there is truth and error only in judgement, his point is not that a being like my cat may not construe its sensible states either correctly or incorrectly. It is rather that such a being cannot itself draw the distinction between correct and incorrect construal, i.e., that it can have no *representation of* truth or error.<sup>106</sup>

With 'representation of' being pretty much a synonym for 'concept of' we must be careful not beg the question for, after all, the question is what is the difference between construing something as a particular object, according to rules, and bringing it under a concept (by application of schemata). Certainly, if he is defending the distinction between these two faculties by claiming that beings such as cats do not know when they have made mistakes, that appears to be obviously false. A cat chasing after a toy that she

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 153.

cannot find (maybe you didn't really throw it or it went into the waste paper basket), or better yet a cat falling into a bathtub full of water, knows<sup>107</sup> that she has made a mistake. She misjudged the situation and acted accordingly; she now rejudges the situation and acts accordingly.<sup>108</sup> (Often, after such situations cats appear to be aware of their mistakes; they exhibit displacement gestures; they look embarrassed.)

I would like to suggest that, rather than two separate faculties, we have a spectrum with knowledge at a high level and imagination<sup>K</sup> at a lower one.<sup>109</sup> There are judgements that operate at a higher level, using a level of abstraction that is necessary for science and scientific comparisons and for reflection that takes the form of formulas and depends on abstract terms. We also have precision and objectivity, the ability to judge the weight of our own judgements and fit them into our projection of the objects in the world accordingly. It is doubtful that even *my* cat can partake in *this* degree of complexity in judgement, but it is equally doubtful that she cannot judge at all.

These degrees of judgement are not only between species, but can be seen within individuals capable of the highest forms of judgement and even take place simultaneously, the lower faculty staying aware of what is passing while the higher faculty is involved in judging something else. This means that we ourselves judge and project objects<sup>K</sup> with varying degrees of complexity all (or at least most) of the time. For instance, invariably that which is in our peripheral vision is not of much interest to us and we project it as such. If it becomes of interest we then project the objects in question in greater complexity as we attend to them ('Oh look, *there's* a pencil sharpener and it's the

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<sup>107</sup> Whether Kant would be willing to say that the cat knows would depend on whether he is willing to allow the cat to have subjective grounds and subjective certainty (see the section on Knowing, Opining and Believing, below, page 72). Certainly, if the cat falls in there is objective certainty and grounds, which is what is also required for knowledge<sup>K</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> Andrew Fenton through his paper, "Why Some Animals May Think: A Reply to Davidson," has drawn to my attention that Davidson bases his rejection of animal minds on the inability to recognise error.

<sup>109</sup> The reader will recognise in chapters below similar demarcations. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> puts this type of demarcation in terms of a proposition versus the sense, the tacit truth conditions, of a number of elementary propositions it implies. We see the demarcation again in our discussion of Polanyi, between concepts and conceptions.

good one'). If we are to demarcate between these two types of judgement it is perhaps better to look not at the judging but the results, picking out those things of which we are merely aware versus those things to which we are attending (or have attended). The syntheses that go into attending to a concept appear to operate in the third, fourth and fifth way (discussed on pages 62-5, above) with awareness mostly excluded from the fifth area and perhaps all use of predicates too (in as much as predicates appear to presuppose that language is necessary for understanding). We can see also that a demarcation between grasping and mastering concepts can be drawn by virtue of this spectrum. The more we are capable of attending to the details of a given concept, the closer we are to mastering (as opposed to merely grasping) it. I think, without going into detail, that Young's account is consistent with if not implicit in Kant. Either way it clarifies the account, making it more palatable.

Interestingly, while knowing<sup>K</sup>, opining<sup>K</sup> and believing<sup>K110</sup> correlate to some extent with the attention fading to mere awareness (for we investigate (i.e., attend to in detail), and thus tend to have knowledge of, the things that we care about) the correlation is far from exact. The distinction between these three areas depends upon subjective and objective sufficiency (grounds and certainty, respectively). For opining<sup>K</sup> one has neither grounds nor certainty, for belief<sup>K</sup> one lacks grounds but has certainty and for knowledge<sup>K</sup> one has both grounds and certainty. Some of the things that I might be said to know, however, are mainly peripheral to my awareness, such as the colour of the door to the room in which I am sitting. Likewise, some of the things that I have considered most diligently, such as my moral convictions<sup>K</sup> (which are beliefs<sup>K</sup>) or even my views of the essential nature of the world and experience (which are opinion<sup>K</sup> and are speculative<sup>K</sup>, lacking objective grounds and certainty) are not knowledge<sup>K</sup>. Indeed, in terms of imagination<sup>K</sup>, it seems that though my opinions<sup>K</sup> and beliefs<sup>K</sup> must be attended to at some point for me to have them at all, most of the objects<sup>K</sup> of knowledge fit comfortably

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110 See Kant, *Critique*, A820-30/B848-58.

into the whole spectrum. What is more, for most objects<sup>K</sup> and concepts<sup>K</sup> of knowledge<sup>K</sup> I can conjure up some image of a particular or individual falling under that concept<sup>K</sup>, for I have met with the object<sup>K</sup> in experience. It has appeared to me and thus I can often remember what such an object<sup>K</sup> looks like.

Young's reasons for rejecting the traditional imagining role of imagination<sup>K</sup> are unsatisfying, suggesting that the door for images is still open. In his argument he offers two interpretations for imagination<sup>K</sup> being a necessary ingredient of perception.<sup>111</sup>

[The first is] that perceiving a house, for example, requires entertaining mental images as it might appear from other perspectives, under other circumstances, etc. Alternatively, and more plausibly, we might take him to mean that perception requires, besides sensible affection, the disposition to engage in mental imaging, so that perceiving a house would involve being sensibly affected in certain ways and having the dispositions to call forth certain mental images (of the house as it might otherwise appear).<sup>112</sup>

The first reading, as Young points out is false. This is simply not something we do. As for the second more plausible reading, he claims that such a faculty would be irrelevant to Kant's purpose as "there would be no difference between (a) merely having certain sensible states and (b) having those states plus being disposed to have certain other such states."<sup>113</sup> He continues:

The disposition to engage in mental imaging is merely a tendency to have one's current sensible states be joined or displaced by other such states. It is not something that figures in the content of the sensible states themselves, nor does it alter the way in which those sensible states are had [or] entertained.<sup>114</sup>

There are a number of problems with this passage. I will begin with what appears to be the most obvious, that a disposition to entertain certain mental images is *not* something that figures in the content of sensible states. Given Kant's interest in synthesis in time this seems a crazy claim. We often see what we expect to see; this is why people will drive through the new stop sign at the end of their road and why people often miss typos,

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<sup>111</sup> Young, "Imagination," 142. See also Kant, Critique, A120n.

<sup>112</sup> Young, "Imagination," 143.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

especially there own. Each moment of perception is combined with the next and as such the disposition to see such and such in the last moment informs the likelihood of my seeing it now. Indeed, the mind makes up part of our visual image all the time, for while we have a blind spot due to the construction of our eyes, we do not experience it except under particular experimental conditions.<sup>115</sup> Contrary to Young, I think that the imagination may have a key role in anticipation in that our past sensible states direct us to expect a particular present state, and so on into the future.

As such, it is certainly plausible to suggest that imagination<sup>K</sup> defines the limitation of the object<sup>K</sup>, e.g., how it can appear from all angles in a particular time frame and order. A dog, for instance, cannot be a dachshund from the left and a Great Dane from the right. To define how an object<sup>K</sup> can appear is also to define what the object is and can do. This explains our shock in certain situations. Something as mundane as cutting oneself and only realising it when one sees the blood is interesting in consideration of the length of time it can sometimes take one to see the blood as blood.<sup>116</sup> In such circumstances, I have completed the possibilities for the object<sup>K</sup> in my imagination<sup>K</sup>, which allows me to project the object<sup>K</sup> into Nature<sup>K</sup>, and something that is not included in the possibility of the imagined projection happens. This is not to hold a particular image before my mind, but rather to be disposed to accept a certain variety of situations.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> The reader may remember being made in grade school to take a sheet of paper and draw a dot and an X at about four inches from each other. Then one was (at least I was) instructed to put the paper at arm's length and, while covering one eye and focussing on the dot with the other, slowly bring the sheet towards one. At some point the X in the periphery disappears. This is due to the gap in retinal receptors where the optic nerve connects with the eyeball. Usually, whatever one eye misses the other sees and, in a pinch our brains makes up for whatever else is missed. Films also depend on such tricks of the mind, for we do not see the gaps in between the images, nor do we notice when one black frame is projected in the middle of a given string of images.

<sup>116</sup> My father tells the following childhood story that seems to be very much of this kind. He was at an afternoon tea, buttering his scones and suddenly wondered why the blob of red jam at the side of his plate was getting bigger and bigger. Then he realised he was bleeding and inferred that he must have cut himself.

<sup>117</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s notion of a negative picture of reality, confining what can be the the case, is a useful way of thinking of such things and is discussed below.



Thus, the imagination<sup>K</sup> acts as a defined openness (both to a situation in general and to particular objects<sup>118</sup>), rather than a particular set of conditions to be met. This account of the imagination<sup>K</sup> seems fully able to account for the ease with which we make mistakes. But also shows how we can recognise them. If we fail to recognise to our satisfaction an object<sup>K</sup> or fully understand a situation, we will try to further open our openness to possibilities. Thus the fact that a portion of jam does not grow in volume under its own power will prompt us to attend to different factors, and imagine<sup>K</sup> other possibilities.<sup>119</sup> Kant brilliantly links such expectation to time, recognising that what happens in the last moment (and indeed, all previous moments, through informing our concepts and our judgements) does define our openness to what happens in the next. This explains the disorientation one feels on waking after passing out, for one feels as if one is coming out of nowhere and one makes the inferences from present sensation to try to make sense of it (i.e., I'm lying down on a hard surface, there are fluorescent lights above me, that's my doctor, and so on).

Although Kant does not explicitly apply judgement<sup>K</sup> (discussed on pages 63-4, above) to the imagination<sup>K</sup>, it seems there is some reason to do so. Why should there not be those who are naturally gifted in imagining<sup>K</sup> and others who are in this way stupid? We can imagine what it would be for people to be this way endowed. They would be more open to picking up subtle aspects of an object and understanding the relation to the concept so that next time an object of this sort appeared they could glean greater understanding of that particular object. These people would have an openness to informing their concepts; they would tend away from conservatism; they would be the question askers. The important thing to remember is that this openness would operate at the level of the concept, at our openness to look at things again and reconceptualize them.

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<sup>118</sup> We can see this openness operating at the fifth level of synthesis as regards the situation (see pages 63-4, above) and at the fourth level as regards the object<sup>K</sup> (see pages 60-1, above).

<sup>119</sup> With the duck/rabbit we see the duck either when we are told it is there (which prompts us to attend to the image differently) or if we are dissatisfied that it is really meant to be a rabbit (which also prompts us to attend differently).

Kant is leery of allowing imagination<sup>K</sup> too much freedom from the categories. Imagination<sup>K</sup>, if it runs too wild, will mistake subjective grounds and certainty for objective grounds and certainty, thus prompting the dogmatic claims of metaphysics which Kant so despises. Openness to the possibilities of an object<sup>K</sup> can become dogmatic assumptions as to the nature of the object<sup>K</sup>. We are, however, drawn to make such judgements. It is a part of human nature, which the application of logic is supposed to keep in control.

There is also the point that, since the imagination<sup>K</sup> is a part of the synthesis of all sensation, there must be room for the other four senses as well as seeing. An imagination<sup>K</sup> mistake of a similar kind to those above is thinking you have ordered tea and finding out when you go to drink it, that what has been served is, in fact, coffee. We take a while to figure out such mistakes, whereas if our dispositions had been more open at the moment of tasting, if we had tasted to find out what the substance in the mug was, we would not have taken so long. Imagination<sup>K</sup>, even if primarily visual, must project a total image of a thing. Cats meow or purr, they do not cluck, recite Shakespearean soliloquies, or sound like tubas.<sup>120</sup> The attention/awareness spectrum is quite at home with this interpretation. Together, with the other acts of synthesis, it offers a feedback loop of that to which our senses and our minds are open.

A final blow against Young's own anti-image interpretation is the historical context within which Kant was writing. Given that imagination, *qua* making images, was a relatively hot topic in Kant's tradition, it seems unlikely that he would have been *so* obscurantist as to use the term, in conjunction with 'image', without intending this meaning.<sup>121</sup> Given that Young has nothing but appeals to plausibility to defend his claim, this does not appear to be enough to outweigh both the historical context and

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<sup>120</sup> Of course, I mean this is a very different way to the way in which the clarinet in Tchaikowsky's *Peter and the Wolf* sounds like a cat.

<sup>121</sup> Howard Caygill offers a brief account of Kant's close predecessors and contemporaries who were writing on the imagination. ( *A Kant Dictionary*, [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995] 246.)

Kant's own frequent use of 'image' and 'imagination' together. If we accept my modified Youngian version of Kant's view, do we have an answer to the original question? Having said all this, has Kant given an acceptable account of how we hook onto the world?

**Spinning the Threads Together: Or What We Can Take from Kant.** Throughout Kant's system we see perception, conception and understanding closely working together. The transcendental method attempts to show how they must work together. While the idea itself, abstracting from experience to the common aspects of all experience, seems the only way to begin the investigation without gross metaphysical speculation, it is not necessary to follow the hierarchy Kant sets with logic defining knowledge and all other reasoning; indeed, the past and present states of the discipline of logic promise to make such attempts futile. However, the remaining choices are not entirely palatable either. I think the solution lies in the recognition that the transcendental subject is importantly derived from the empirical subject. Whereas the transcendental subject's essential function (drawing appearances under categories) does not change over time, the functions of the empirical subject do. While children are not born with a number of the faculties of judgement, they are able to distinguish between certain objects and certain states of affairs at a very young age. Judgements<sup>K</sup>, such as recognising the permanence of substance or that effects require causes, appear to be learned, or at least acquired, at a later age. However, just as one needs a concept against which to judge, one needs a background against which to learn. Thus there appears to be something more fundamental than the categories operating behind the categories for the empirical subject. One cannot imagine that these 'categories' behind the categories disappear or cease to matter when the transcendental subject (the master of categories) comes to maturity.

So, in order to rebuild Kant's project, it appears that a certain amount of investigation into psychology and perhaps neurology<sup>122</sup> needs to be done. We must also look at what shapes a person's understanding, so linguistics, anthropology and perhaps sociology will demand consideration. In the context of such an inquiry the philosopher's area of specialty is as a generalist (and this is perhaps more akin to the roles played by the natural philosophers of the past). We must try to fit together the pieces of a puzzle which are offered by the experts in these various disciplines. Our job is to make a system in which the facts they offer us cohere.

Of course, this takes the discussion entirely out of the discourse set by Kant. My approach is consistent with the question 'How is knowledge possible?' but the question which in Kant's project is equivalent, 'How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible?'<sup>123</sup> sits far less comfortably. The transcendental method of abstracting from experience to find the most basic types of judgement and understanding is still a reasonable approach. However, we are not likely to find the tidy judgements Kant found in logic (apart from anything else, emotions appear to be strong guides in the judgements of small children), nor can we expect to be able to apply them so as to reveal objective truths about the world with absolute certainty.

The philosopher's job as I have described it above still involves engaging in a semi-transcendental pursuit, but in opposition to Kant's approach it is rooted in the transcendental realm of reason<sup>K</sup>. After all, the relations which must be drawn in our effort to complete our understanding are not always going to be manifest in experience. We will make speculations, but only speculations such as to complete the picture from the facts offered. The same faculty of imagination<sup>K</sup> (with the same disposition to go off into the wildly speculative) that makes us infer the shape of one side of a Great Dane from the shape of the other will fill in the gaps of our understanding. Is this not right at the heart of

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<sup>122</sup> The reader's willingness to accept this will depend on her views regarding the nature of mind. I do not here offer any defence as to why a neurological enquiry should help us.

<sup>123</sup> See note 26, page 44, above.

science, and does not induction demand that we go beyond experience?<sup>124</sup> While speculative, such a project still holds within it the kind of objectivity discussed, above (pages 51-6). We are guided by the conceptual framework we already have and by intersubjectivity. We can call on others and ask ‘Given  $x$  and  $y$ , doesn’t something like  $z$  seem to be required for  $xRy$ ?’<sup>125</sup> In order to gain the maximum likelihood of truth, we can broaden the pool of people we ask (being sure we ask those who have attended to the matter at hand). Criteria similar to those we required for a proper investigation of the empirical subject, an array of subjects from different social and linguistic backgrounds, are likely to maximize our intersubjective objectivity.<sup>126</sup>

When we get agreement from such groups we might ask why a given fact is accepted by so many. The answer lies either in the similarity of the subjects’ faculties of understanding (despite cultural and linguistic differences) or in the similarity of the appearances that we perceive. This similarity of appearances can be explained, in part, by the similarity of our perceptual equipment and faculties of understanding, but it can also be explained by that which appears to us. This, of course, takes us right back to the problem of idealism. After all, Kant fails in his attempt to convince us that his system demands that there must be things in themselves beyond appearances and without it, we must make a leap of faith, holding that it is a mind-independent world onto which we are hooking. We find, however, that this particular belief (and it is surely fair to say it is more of a belief<sup>K</sup> than an opinion<sup>K</sup> for most of us) is not only held by many from different backgrounds (thus having a degree of intersubjective objectivity), but also that it has certain explicative value. For instance, while the visual appearance of a ball for a sighted person and the tactile sensation of a ball for a blind person are certainly different (indeed, the anticipatory schema applied to the object by each subject *must* be different), they will

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<sup>124</sup> This is, of course, linked to the difficulty of demarcating the transcendental from the empirical<sup>K</sup>, discussed in Appendix A.

<sup>125</sup> See the passage from Kant’s Logic, quoted on pages 53-4, above.

<sup>126</sup> Harding in Science as Social Knowledge suggests that this large array of backgrounds, especially of the disenfranchised, is more likely to lead to objectivity.

both agree it is a sphere. Thus we may postulate that the same object<sup>K</sup> as perceived by two 'differently abled' people is the same object in mind-independent reality. There is nothing necessary about this connection, but it does seem remarkably plausible.

Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> reveals the problems involved when no such leaps of faith are allowed in the Tractatus, to which we turn in the next chapter.

As it stands, Kant attempts to offer us a certain, objective way of hooking onto the world, but the world he offers is constructed by us with the proviso that there is another world (the noumena) that, while central to our personal experiences, we can only speculate about. As I have attempted to re-shape the landscape, we can both take the central parts of our lives and place them back with the rest of our knowledge and leave to speculation only those things entirely beyond experience, recognising that there is a range of understandings by which we hook onto the world. This range does not affect the ontological status of the things in the world, but only our relationship to them (their relative importance to us). We also lose our certainty, though ironically we still have access to much of the objectivity offered by Kant. While we cannot say what we take to be the world is not informed by us, we make a leap of plausibility and suggest that there appears to be good reason for accepting that we do hook onto, however ineptly, a mind-independent world.

## Chapter Three

### Picturing and Propositions (Wittgenstein's Tractatus)

**Introduction and Issues of Interpretation.** There are two interpretations of the Tractatus, one defending an ontological realism<sup>1</sup> and the other emphatically non-realist (ontologically). Both appear to be anti-metaphysical, but in importantly different ways. In the terms we have set for ourselves in the previous chapters, the two positions may be seen as pivoting around what is taken to be the world that is hooked. In the first interpretation 'the world' is ontologically substantial and the things in it are (or at least very much tend to be) the things we grasp. 'The world' is as we experience it, both as a subject, but more importantly as groups of communicating subjects. This means that our language is perfectly structured for telling us the truth about what is and the nature of the universe. I will call this the metaphysical interpretation (or the realist interpretation--and those who hold it realists) because 'the world' is understood as being importantly ontologically real and this is open to our senses. As such, a facile metaphysics falls out of it and the big metaphysical questions are pushed aside. As with Kant, the empirical defines the bounds of knowledge; however, here there is no place for the *noumena*, or for reason<sup>K</sup>. Such a view is highly compatible with materialism and, to an extent, atheism,

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford Companion to Philosophy offers a useful diagram for separating types of realism (935). By this measure the realism at which I am pointing is realism re the world and realism re perception. In the entry by Timothy Williamson, "realism and anti-realism", it is suggested that realism and anti-realism are "Primarily directions, not positions. To assert that something is somehow mind-independent is to move in the realist direction; to deny it is to move in the opposite direction." (746) He also points out that "since different philosophers take different specifications for granted, the word 'realism' is used in a bewildering variety of senses." (*Ibid.*) He likewise suggests, against Kant, that "realists may deny that the nature and existence of what we perceive (e.g. a tree) depends on our perception of it. Perhaps the dependence is the other way round: my perception of the tree depends essentially on the tree, because I could not have had *that* perception without perceiving *that* tree." (746) I am not interested in stipulating a definition for realism, but rather in indicating the direction in which the term points (as Williamson does). As such, all the term suggests is that the world is mind-independent and we tend to get at it in such a way so as not to distort the facts about a given situation. See Timothy Williamson, "realism and anti-realism," The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, ed. Ted Honderich, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 746-8.

for these positions demand that there are no metaphysical explanations behind appearances.

The second interpretation is what I will call the linguistic interpretation (and those who hold it linguists (not to be confused with academics one might find in linguistics departments)), for 'the world' here is constrained by language. This depends on the impossibility of our getting beyond language to understand 'the world' *as it is* (in the strong sense of the realist), for language is the very form of our understanding and 'the world' is projected from this. 'The world' *is* the collection of our true propositions. It is, in fact, impossible to talk about the world beyond this, so it follows that to discuss metaphysical realism, even in the facile manner displayed above, is bogus. As with the metaphysical interpretation, language is that which hooks, so that our language, as in the other interpretation, perfectly corresponds to the world, even though 'the world' referred to is not the same. Clearly, the difference is in how much the subject (or subjects) that makes a knowledge claim affects the claim by her perception and conception of the thing known. The realist sees this as a non-problem, for the subject in no way affects the knowable claim and its status, which both depend on the world. The linguist sees it as insurmountable, for the subject creates her world through language and cannot see beyond language to question how she might affect her knowledge claims. The anti-metaphysical aspect of the realist interpretation is simply that there is no essential mystery about the nature of the universe that is open to logic (or minds in armchairs) and not science. So, metaphysics is, for the most part, simply misleading and we are much better off not going on about it. The linguistic interpretation holds that metaphysics is senseless, for it tries to talk about the nature of the world beyond language and this is not something to which we have any kind of access. For all intents and purposes, it does not exist.

To apply Kant's distinction (with many provisos), we can see the realist metaphysical view as hooking onto *phenomena* which continue even when they are not



appearing to a subject (added to which they do not hide any things in themselves) as it impinges,<sup>2</sup> and the second as Kant's projected objects<sup>K</sup>, the totality of which is Nature<sup>K</sup>—the empirical world as filtered through us. The first interpretation seems to be the more common, which might be in part a result of the fact that it was taken up by the Vienna Circle, which has, in turn, been highly influential in our century. Hacker uncontroversially claims that "[Wittgenstein's] influence on the members of the Vienna Circle was second to none"<sup>3</sup> and perhaps Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> tends to be read from this bias. Anscombe<sup>4</sup> and Hacker<sup>5</sup> are two commentators who are proponents of the realist view (although they are not connected to the Vienna Circle), two among many. The second view is held by Brian McGuinness, who attacks "The So-called Realism of Wittgenstein's Tractatus" in an article of the same name.<sup>6</sup> McGuinness' view has the great advantage of seeming to make space for the solipsism so rudely introduced in 5.6 of the Tractatus,<sup>7</sup> a section that does not fit easily into the metaphysical interpretation. However 'the world' is interpreted, the

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<sup>2</sup> Obviously, as a realist metaphysics, there is not the break between *phenomena* and *noumena*. It would be considered a bogus distinction. Instead we see things more as they are in themselves, there being nothing, in principle, hidden from us. I think this is best understood as the distinction between the two dissolving (or being essentially dissolvable), for if we say we only get at *phenomena*, we appear to be the worst kind of idealist and if we say we get at *noumena simpliciter* we have said something quite nonsensical.

<sup>3</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 2. He continues the passage, "but to a very considerable degree they misinterpreted the Tractatus." While certainly the metaphysical view laid the groundwork of the Vienna Circle's misinterpretations, they need not have led there.

<sup>4</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, 2nd edition, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> P.M.S. Hacker, "The Rise and Fall of the Picture Theory," in The Early Philosophy--Language as Picture, vol. 1, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (Series) (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 379-404.

<sup>6</sup> Brian McGuinness, "The So-called Realism of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*," in Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed. Irving Block (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> The following passages show how the solipsism fits with the linguistic view as I have outlined it above.

"5.6 The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

"5.61 Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.

"So we cannot say in logic, 'The world has this in it, and this, but not that.'

"For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.

"We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either....

"5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world."

mechanism of the picture theory which does the hooking is much the same. It is the two sides joined by the hooking that differ between the two interpretations. In this chapter I will look at the picture theory as it operates in both interpretations, for both seem to have held an important place in twentieth century analytic philosophy<sup>8</sup>. Also, they exhibit fundamental alternatives to the Kantian approach. Both have their inadequacies and in the end we find that neither are much of an advance from Kant.

**Preliminary Points: No to Epistemology and Yes to Natural Language.** There are some brief points worth noting before embarking on the exegesis of the picture theory, for they help set the scene. Firstly, a central theme of the Tractatus is the rejection of epistemology (in which Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> fundamentally differs from Kant). In most respects Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> follows Frege's philosophy and draws a metaphysics (or meta-philosophy of language) out of it by broadening the scope from philosophy of logic and mathematics to philosophy (and life) as a whole. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> follows Frege's rejection of psychologism, but takes it as the rejection of theory of knowledge in general.<sup>9</sup> He believed, at that time, that epistemology was unnecessary for his project, a potential trap bating the philosopher and promising to "entangle [her] in unessential psychological investigations."<sup>10</sup> Although rooted in their anti-psychologism, the anti-epistemological bent definitely departs from both Frege and Russell. The glimmerings of the way in which Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> saw language as non-epistemological can be seen in part of Wittgenstein's correspondence with Russell in 1919 over a draft of the Tractatus, quoted by Anscombe:

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<sup>8</sup> I am not, however, going to expend much energy on deciding which interpretation is the right one (though the reader will probably suspect that I agree with McGuinness and the linguists, not as offering the most plausible theory, but as offering the theory that Wittgenstein appears to have held).

<sup>9</sup> This anti-psychologism is not so much a rejection of the scientific practice of psychology (which Wittgenstein is very willing to accept in its proper place with the rest of the sciences), but is rooted in Russell's and Frege's rejection of the post-Kantian idealism which so dominated the philosophy of their time.

<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 4.1121.

Russell had asked: ‘...But a *Gedanke* [thought] is a *Tatsache* [fact]: what are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to those of the pictured *Tatsache*?’ To this Wittgenstein replies: ‘I don’t know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have constituents which correspond to the words of language. Again the kind of relation of the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out.’<sup>11</sup>

The assumption that the relation of language to thought is absolute and precise is the very thing that we decided was unacceptable at the beginning of our investigation (see page 9, above). Here Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> assumes that the thought can always be completely captured by language, that “A thought is a proposition with a sense”<sup>12</sup> and nothing more, which is why an analysis of language is sufficient. Anscombe criticizes the view, writing, “That this is fantastically untrue is shewn by any serious investigation into epistemology, such as Wittgenstein made in Philosophical Investigations.”<sup>13</sup>

No matter how misguided it may be, we should consider what can be gained by this rejection of epistemology. To an extent it appears that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> wants certainty about the world (whatever it may be). This means we need firm foundations, we need to be able to *get it right* unequivocally. Language (as that which hooks), the hooking mechanism, and the world must be such as to allow us to *get it right*, and express it without losing any of the rightness. If the world is significantly filtered through separate subjects, then we cannot glean what it is to be right about the way the world is, for we will have no *one* correct picture of any given fact; it will always be informed by a subject’s particular view. We must remember the difficulty Kant had joining thought to the world through imagination<sup>K</sup> and the schematism in his quest for the justification of scientific knowledge and the tradition of idealism that was heir to it. Wittgenstein uses language, not thought, to bridge this gap, as it appears to exist in an objective realm, at

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<sup>11</sup> Anscombe, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

least in as much as it is not subjective but intersubjective and an analysis of it operates in this intersubjective, this objective, realm.<sup>14</sup>

The second point worth noting is his position on natural language in which Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> again departs from Frege and Russell. He claims that “all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.—That utterly simple thing, which we have to formulate here, is not a likeness of the truth, but the truth itself in its entirety. (Our problems are not abstract, but perhaps the most concrete that there are).”<sup>15</sup> This passage is not perhaps perfectly clear and what the ‘utterly simple thing’ is is not, at first glance, particularly transparent. Again, not only do we see hints of the conflation (or isomorphism (the technical term employed by Wittgensteinians)) of thought, world and language, by which we can and must ‘formulate the truth in its entirety,’ but also the anti-metaphysical stance appears to play some part. A few passages above this central thought he writes, “Our fundamental principle is that whenever a question can be decided by logic at all [which means to be decided as true or false] it must be possible to decide it without more ado.”<sup>16</sup> Simplicity is demanded. We should not need to translate what is being said into a complicated formal language showing what *is really* being said, for what is said, *is said*. A proposition picks out, or fails to pick out, a state of affairs *as it is*. We must not get too clever, we must not try to get behind ourselves, behind our language, or we start chasing our tails and we run the risk of talking nonsense (also known as metaphysics). The world and language sit right next to each other and match each other; there is no gap to be bridged. They correspond like the two sides of a Rorschach blot. No, more, they correspond like the two sides of the Rorschach

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<sup>14</sup> This objectivity through intersubjectivity (and from no other source) is, of course, picked up in the Investigations and used in the private language argument. The anti-privacy view appears to be presupposed in the Tractatus, for there is nothing beyond language to understand; everything is speakable and is understood in terms of the speakable.

<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 5.5563.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 5.551.

blot when the paper is folded together. Thus “Logic pervades the world,”<sup>17</sup> and language expresses the relation in its form.

Because what we are interested in is talking about the world in a truthful way, we need to stay as close to the world and language as possible. A formal language takes us away from statements about the world and thus runs the risk of getting the logic of the world wrong. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> clarifies the point, suggesting:

But when there is a system by which we can create symbols, the system is what is important for logic and not the individual symbols.

And anyway, is it really possible that in logic I should have to deal with forms that I can invent? What I have to deal with must be that which makes it possible for me to invent them.<sup>18</sup>

If we abstract into a formal language we are no longer looking at the world as it is presented to us, but instead building a system the nature of which we define in the system itself. Why would we imagine that such a system would completely match the language from which it is abstracted? And if it fails to match it, it cannot match ‘the world’. Why would we imagine that formal systems will get us closer to the truth or sense of a sentence in natural language?

Another side to this passage about natural language is explored by Bogen, who suggests that

The best commentary on this passage (TS 55563) comes from Wittgenstein himself (PI 98): “On the one hand it is clear that every proposition in our language ‘is in order as it is’. That is to say, we are not striving for an ideal, as if our ordinary vague propositions had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense, and a perfect language awaited construction by us.—On the other hand it seems clear that where there is sense there must be perfect order even in the vaguest proposition.”<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to tie in with this the idea that “we express senses without ‘having any idea of how each word has meaning or what meaning is—just as people speak without knowing

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 5.61.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 5.555.

<sup>19</sup> James Bogen, “The Picture Theory and Tractatus Ontology,” in The Early Philosophy—Language as Picture, vol. 1, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (Series) (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986), 278.

how the individual sounds are produced”.<sup>20</sup> This shows that “we produce truth functions of elementary propositions without realizing that this is what we are doing. The enormously complicated ‘tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends’ are conventions for jointly negating sets of elementary propositions (TS 4002).”<sup>21</sup> It appears that language is in perfect logical order (at least in part) because we assume and apply a huge list of logical rules tacitly whenever we employ language and by virtue of this it is in good logical order.

This seems quite contradictory, for while language is in perfect logical order, at the same time the order is opaque to the language users employing the logic. As such, surely Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is constructing a formal language of his own when he points to the form of elementary propositions that underlie natural language. However, if we look more carefully at the passage to which Bogen points, the claim appears in a better light. To repeat passage 4.002 and continue it:

Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense,<sup>22</sup> without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is--just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced.

Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it.

It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is.

Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes.<sup>23</sup>

Amidst the more obvious analogies sits a sentence that slides between a descriptive statement and analogy. I rather suspect its position between two stronger analogies helps to draw attention away from it, so I shall use another stylistic device, repetition, to override this effect: “Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it.” If we take this metaphorically we can build it up and perhaps

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> This is as much to say capable of describing every bit of the world.

<sup>23</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4.002.

indicate how Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s logic differs from the logic he attacks. In as much as language is a part of the human organism, the details of its workings are covered up by skin, so how it works is hidden. This also is the force behind the clothing metaphor in the fourth quoted paragraph. The formal language Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> attacks looks at the faults of the organism and describes what would make it work perfectly. What Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is trying to do is vivisect the organism to see what makes it work, both because it works well enough and because an ideal picture is not a useful one, as it does not actually inform us of anything. Russell, on the other hand, is trying to make a better organism by showing how it should be rebuilt from scratch (not that such a creature would ever survive). If we take the passage less metaphorically, there are things about us and our natural history that dictate the nature of human language. Thus psychological, anatomical, neurological, anthropological, chemical, and various other investigations into the nature of the human organism<sup>24</sup> are likely to reveal things about language. Again, if this is the case, to look at what language *should* be seems remarkably pointless. In brief, the ideal language of logic is within natural language, not something which natural language approaches.

In such a light Frege's and Russell's views of natural language appear both more and less plausible. More plausible for although in perfect logical order, natural languages' order is not on the surface and appears to need some kind of help from formal systems. Less plausible because the formalization is rooted in disdain for natural language, and thus it moves away from it, rather than investigating natural language and trying to reveal how it works.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, both Frege and Russell took a dim view of natural language. Their views on this point link in with their views on thought and its relationship to logic. As Hacker says, "They had held natural languages to be logically defective, both in

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<sup>24</sup> The reader might note that such investigations were suggested in our renovation of Kant's system (our semi-transcendental pursuit) discussed on page 78, above).

<sup>25</sup> Given the fundamental difference of approach, it is striking that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> thought that Frege and Russell were right in so many respects.

containing vague terms and in failing adequately to represent the subject-matter of the truths of logic.”<sup>26</sup> Natural language is seen as full of colour<sup>27</sup>, obscuring sense and closely related to the thoughts of the subject that speaks it, contaminated by emotion and other psychological details.

**Frege and Russell on Logic and Language.** In Begriffsschrift Frege introduces his notation as “a formalized Language of pure Thought modeled upon the Language of Arithmetic.”<sup>28</sup> We have language explicitly involved and a formal language introduced because of its ability to get things, like the groundwork of arithmetic, unequivocally, objectively right. Frege’s motivations can be seen most clearly in his distinction between the idea and the sense of an expression. In “Sense and Reference” he writes, “To every expression...there should certainly correspond a definite sense; but natural languages often do not satisfy this condition...”<sup>29</sup> I take it that it is the typical subjectivism of sentences in natural language that hides or replaces a definite sense. He continues, “It may perhaps be granted that every grammatically well-formed expression representing a proper name always has a sense.”<sup>30</sup> Thus we get the idea that we can be ‘sensible’, but only with grammatically well-formed sentences which are, of course, those that conform to the formal language he defines.

Dummett explains Frege’s distrust of natural language as stemming from his success in solving the problem of universals by ignoring “the devices employed in natural language, for the expression of generality.”<sup>31</sup> This, combined with other defects in natural

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<sup>26</sup> Hacker, Wittgenstein’s Place, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Colour is for Frege a term of art. Dummett tells us that Frege had rejected colouring as being philosophically unimportant; instead he focussed on the sense and reference of a term or proposition. (See Michael Dummett, “Frege,” in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 227.)

<sup>28</sup> Gottlob Frege, “Begriffsschrift (Chapter 1)”, trans. P.T. Geach, in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, eds. P. T. Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Gottlob Frege, “Sense and Reference”, trans. Max Black, in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, eds. P. T. Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), “Sense and Reference.” 58.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Dummett, 227.



language, led him to the view that “In constructing a philosophy of language we need not be shackled by the inadequate instrument with which we are forced to make do in everyday discourse; we can construct a more perfect instrument and base our account on that.”<sup>32</sup> The question then is what exactly such a philosophy of language is meant to be doing. Perhaps what we have is essentially a normative account--this formal language is what pure thought must be and good thought is.

While this may have been a reaction to the intuitionism rampant in the mathematics of his time, because he attempts to derive mathematics from logic because it is the form of pure thought, what Frege says in this area can be extended to other proofs and inferences also. To be fair, generality and certainty are gained by such an approach and I think Frege was right to think that these are very hard to come by in natural language. Currie puts it in these terms, “What Frege always insisted on was an epistemology of mathematics must do justice to the intersubjectivity of mathematics, and that psychologism failed to do this.”<sup>33</sup> While he was interested in language it is not so much in meaning as such, but “the implications of language for the objectivity of our knowledge.”<sup>34</sup> Objectivity and the requirement of certainty for knowledge is found by applying logic and is what we need for proofs of mathematical systems and indeed other systems. However, one cannot help but wonder with Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> how much of this ‘formalized language of pure thought’ can be found in our thought.

Russell’s logical atomism in combination with his interest in epistemology and concern for certainty in knowledge can also be seen as the root of his distancing his system from natural language. In his 1918 lectures on “The Philosophy of Logical

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Currie, Frege: An Introduction to His Philosophy, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 165.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 167. Currie recognises this claim is in direct contrast to Dummett’s claims about Frege and suggests that Dummett tends to read later philosophy of language into Frege’s work (which is surely ironic given what Frege’s interests were).

Atomism”<sup>35</sup> he makes meaning a subjective entity, depending on the objects with which one is acquainted. However, the complexity of propositions does not derive from the subject who is acquainted with them and can mean something by referring to them. Instead complexity derives from facts themselves (a position that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> wholeheartedly accepts). Thus an atomism in the world is assumed against idealist pictures, prevalent in the late nineteenth century, of the world being essentially one.<sup>36</sup> Complexity is in the world and in analysis one should start with the complexity of the fact and end with the complexity of the proposition that corresponds to it. This is done in an effort to avoid as much of the colouring added by a subject as possible. However, the complexity must be apprehended and that can only be done by a subject, a process for which Russell does not have a particularly convincing account. He writes:

If in astronomical fact the earth moves round the sun, that is genuinely complex. It is not that you think it complex, it is a sort of genuine objective complexity of the world, and therefore one ought in a proper, orderly procedure to start from the complexity of the world and arrive at the complexity of the proposition. The only reason for going the other way round is that in all abstract matters symbols are easier to grasp. I doubt, however, whether complexity, in that fundamental objective sense in which one starts from complexity of fact, is definable at all. You cannot analyse what you mean by complexity in that sense. You must just apprehend it—at least so I am inclined to think. There is nothing one could say about it, beyond giving criteria such as I have been giving.<sup>37</sup>

What these given criteria are rather eludes me (unless they are to be drawn out analogically, taking the astronomical example and attempting to apply it elsewhere). Perhaps a more careful reader might find them. Besides, if one ‘must *just* apprehend it’, what criteria might one expect to be able to give? In our lingo, he points to the hooking device and says this just happens. But *that* it happens was never really in question. (We find something analogous to this magical type of apprehension in Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>’s picture theory.) Given the paucity of Russell’s atomism, it is striking that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> takes it

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<sup>35</sup> Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” in Logic and Knowledge, ed. Robert Charles Marsh, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956) 177-281.

<sup>36</sup> Hacker, Wittgenstein’s Place, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Russell, “Logical Atomism,” 196-7.

up, for it exists in the Tractatus as the elementary proposition. But even if we accept Russell's logical atoms, what are we meant to do with them?

Frege, while perhaps concerned with language and epistemology, was primarily concerned with mathematics, where he found application for his formal language. Russell explicitly recognises that his formal language could not be used in place of natural language for it would make communication impossible. In a Russellian logically perfect language that was actually used by people, words would correspond one to one with the components of the corresponding fact with the exception of logical connectives.<sup>38</sup> It would be impossible to live with such a logically perfect language, as any expression would be tediously long and the names given to objects would be private, for, as mentioned above, they would be assigned by the subject on the basis of her acquaintance with objects. Russell suggests that "one reason why logic is so very backward as a science, [is] because the needs of logic are so extraordinarily different from the needs of daily life. One wants a language in both, and unfortunately it is logic that has to give way, not daily life." He continues (to my amazement), "I shall, however, assume that we have constructed a logically perfect language, and that we are going on State occasions to use it..."<sup>39</sup> Although I am, on the whole, a great fan of metaphor and analogy, I cannot help but wish that Russell had not used a figure of speech to tell us when we *should* use logic, for unlike so many analogies, this one is totally uninformative. While one must commend Russell for recognising the importance of 'the needs of daily life', it is not entirely clear what this is referring to either. Are not these needs the same needs as most scientific needs (as is exemplified by the sciences' adequate progression for the last few centuries without the aid of Russell's or Frege's logical systems)? Where is the line over which one jumps from daily life to formal logic?

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<sup>38</sup> See Russell, "Logical Atomism," 197.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 198.

Given the problem of private names in a logically perfect language for life, we can see why Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> takes the subject and her acquaintance out of the picture. If we allow different subjects' acquaintances to interfere with the sense of various sentences, then it is no longer possible to communicate the objectivity of various facts of our acquaintance. Besides we do not need the subject to *make sense* for us. We can look instead at truth conditions (in as much as, if a proposition is true, its truth conditions must correspond to a state of affairs) as showing the sense of a proposition, so that the difficulties acquired by taking the subject's experience into account are avoided. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s embracing of natural language comes from his desire to allow that people have been talking about the world all along, and doing so quite adequately without a formal language. There is no line between natural language and the truths of logic.

**Picture Theory.** Anscombe describes the Tractatus in the following way:

the principle theme of the book is the connection of thought and reality. The main thesis about this is that sentences, or their mental counterparts<sup>40</sup>, are pictures of facts. Only we must not suppose that what is pictured by a proposition has to exist: as Wittgenstein wrote in explaining himself to Russell in 1919, a fact is what corresponds to a proposition *if it is true*. The proposition is the same picture whether it is true or false--i.e. whether the fact it is a picture of *is* a fact, is the case, or not. This should not make us ask 'How, then, can a fact not be a fact?' For, following Wittgenstein's explanation, it means: The proposition is the same picture whether what corresponds to it *if it is true* is the case or not: it is a picture of that. And what corresponds to it if it is true is the same, whether it is true or false. The world is the totality of facts--i.e. of the counterparts in reality of true propositions. And nothing but picturable situations can be stated in propositions. There is indeed much that is inexpressible--which we must not try to state, but must contemplate without words.<sup>41</sup>

The inexpressible we shall put aside, not for obvious reasons (i.e., that it is inexpressible), but rather so that we may discuss it later (see pages 99-100, below). For now, the pressing concern is to clarify the space defined above. Anscombe gives us a basic idea of truth and

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<sup>40</sup> Anscombe herself shows that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is not interested in mental entities, as is mentioned above, page 85, and thus he is not interested in the mental counterparts of language in any significant sense.

<sup>41</sup> Anscombe, 19 (italics hers).

falsity and we already have touched on the isomorphism that operates between language and world, as facts that picture the world. What must be added is the constituents of facts, elementary propositions, the way that facts and negative facts picture, which relates to truth and falsity, and finally the nature of the corresponding that happens between pictures, facts and the world. When we attempt to apply our hooking metaphor to this enterprise, the isomorphism makes it difficult to keep that which hooks and the world separate. (This is somewhat ironic given they were so very far apart for Kant.) Of course, if they really are so close then there is no point in our inquiry and this is indeed what Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> wants us to see. We throw away the ladder (metaphysical inquiry and perhaps the book as well) when we get to the end of the Tractatus, or so Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> wishes it. So the picture theory has a fairly tall order to fill: it must be the mechanism that *allows* this isomorphism.

To start with, facts correspond “to the logical product (i.e. the conjunction) of elementary propositions when this product is true.”<sup>42</sup> Anscombe lists what “appear to be theses which hold for elementary propositions:

- (1) They are a class of mutually independent propositions.
- (2) They are essentially positive.
- (3) They are such that for each of them there are no two ways of being true or false, but only one.
- (4) They are such that there is in them no distinction between an internal and an external negation.
- (5) They are concatenations of names, which are absolutely simple signs.<sup>43</sup>

When the tacit conventions (of which we make such copious use) are working (see pages 87-8, above) they are working right down to elementary propositions and back up again. Immediately a metaphysics<sup>44</sup> rolls out of the above characterization. For, as “an elementary proposition is a nexus, a concatenation of names”<sup>45</sup> and “an elementary

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 30. True elementary propositions are also called atomic facts.

<sup>43</sup> Anscombe, 31.

<sup>44</sup> The metaphysics here expressed is consistent with both the metaphysical realist and linguistic interpretations.

<sup>45</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 4.22.

proposition asserts the existence of a state of affairs”<sup>46</sup> and “A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things),”<sup>47</sup> we get right down to what the proposition is. The fact and the state of affairs collapse, “The facts in logical space are the world”<sup>48</sup> and “the world divides into facts.”<sup>49</sup> So, here it seems that at least *one* of the reasons we can do away with metaphysics is that with our language we do get at the fundamental constituents of the world logically, whether we know it or not. Thus the Tractarian isomorphism fits in with elementary propositions very comfortably. If they do not give us any compelling reason to accept the isomorphism, elementary propositions in no way contradict isomorphism. We can see the fit between the two theses even if we can imagine one being true without the other.

Unfortunately, Wittgenstein appears to have no notion of what elementary propositions are, for he gives no examples.<sup>50</sup> Anscombe explains

At 5.5562 we find: ‘If we know, on purely logical grounds, that there must be elementary propositions, then this must be known by anyone who understands propositions in their unanalysed form.’ But it is clear that [Wittgenstein] thought we did know this on purely logical grounds. That is to say, the character of inference, and of meaning itself, demands that there should be elementary propositions. And that there should be simple names and simple objects is equally presented as a demand at 3.23: ‘The demand for the possibility of the simple signs is the demand for definiteness of sense.’ We shall see that he holds that an indefinite sense would not be a sense at all; indeed in the Preface he put this forward, not just as one of the most important contentions of the book, but as an epitome of its whole meaning: ‘Whatever can be said at all, can be said clearly; and what we cannot speak of, we must be silent on.’<sup>51</sup>

It seems that elementary propositions must exist for objectivity and certainty to obtain, for only with elementary propositions could one get a definite sense. In this picture a concept has necessary and sufficient conditions<sup>52</sup> for application, for there is an infinity

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46 *Ibid.* 4.21.

47 *Ibid.* 2.01.

48 *Ibid.* 1.13.

49 *Ibid.* 1.2.

50 Anscombe, 29.

51 *Ibid.* 28-9.

52 The idea of necessary and sufficient conditions for concept acquisition is undermined by theories of open concepts, which are touched on in the next chapter. Also, see Appendix B,

of elementary propositions that relate any particular thing to everything else through negative and positive facts and the sets of both are definite. When we say anything about a thing we are tacitly invoking a number of elementary propositions and we are commenting on their truth value, by virtue of the truth conditions that will make our statement true. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> believed that there was a limit to the truth conditions that would make a proposition true or false and that each condition sat with a separate elementary proposition. This is why he holds that, “If one proposition’s making sense always depended on another one’s being true, then it would be impossible...to devise a picture of the world (true or false).”<sup>53</sup> In effect, we would never get down to what is the case; rather we would go in circles and end up with some kind of relativism.<sup>54</sup>

It is here that we find Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>’s understanding of sense. He explains, “The expression of agreement and disagreement with the truth-possibilities of elementary propositions expresses the truth conditions of a proposition./ A proposition is the expression of its truth-conditions.”<sup>55</sup> and “The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with possibilities of existence and non-existence of a state of affairs.”<sup>56</sup> We see again that isomorphism fits most comfortably with this understanding of sense, especially as “The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is reality.”<sup>57</sup> He adds “We also call the existence of states of affairs a positive fact, and their non-existence a negative fact.”<sup>58</sup> Thus a negative fact is nothing other than the fact we have when we know an elementary propositions is not true. Elementary propositions are therefore essentially positive<sup>59</sup>, for they give the possibility for a state of affairs or in other words, a relation between things.

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“Stevenson’s Persuasive Definitions,” for an example of open concepts and an account of what opens them.

<sup>53</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 2.0212.

<sup>54</sup> This attitude still appears to be quite prevalent in the analytic tradition.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 4.431.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 4.2.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 2.06.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> See Anscombe’s list of theses on page 95, above.

This shows how the analogy of a picture works, for a picture is essentially a relationship between symbols just as a proposition is a relationship between signs. The signs/symbols are connected to the objects in the state of affairs described/pictured by ostension.<sup>60</sup> As Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> sees it, a completely analysed proposition (one that has been analysed into elementary propositions) is composed of simple signs which are names. Again we have an assertion of isomorphism, “A name means an object. The object is its meaning.”<sup>61</sup> Because of the nature of this correspondence (I think the Rorschach analogy from pages 86-7, above, is again appropriate) names, or a set of names, cannot express a sense. Only when names are logically joined in a proposition can they express a sense.<sup>62</sup> Ostension is one of Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>’s hooks, connecting objects in the world and names in language. (It is also the victim of the attack waged by Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> in the first pages of the *Investigations*, where he suggests that names can have a sense which is defined by truth-conditions.<sup>63</sup>) Simple signs, like elementary propositions are absolute. They are words<sup>64</sup>, they name objects and as the constituents of sentences they are closely related to concepts as we have defined them. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> seems essentially to agree with Frege on the proper application of ‘concept’. Concepts are functions that are applied to names. They are to be strictly demarcated from formal concepts which we shall observe in greater detail, for they are the stuff of the shown and unsayable. As for concepts as we quasi-defined them in the first chapter, the closest analogue is the sign, i.e., the word. This not merely begs the question against art’s role in concept formation, for words are defined by ostension and/or truth conditions for the infinity of sentences of

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<sup>60</sup> McGuinness argues that the *Tractatus* says nothing whatsoever about ostension and that Anscombe, with other realists, simply reads this in (61). Although my discussion here is given in terms of ostension, the absoluteness that is at issue can also be found in the equivalent objects in McGuinness’ discussion.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 3.203.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 3.142.

<sup>63</sup> It appears that Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> does not so much object to ostension *simpliciter* as to the idea that ostension is as exhaustive as the *Tractatus* suggests, both in the scope of its applicability for grasping a huge variety of signs and its ability to capture a sense completely.

<sup>64</sup> See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4.026.



which they may be a part, but the concepts are closed, and thus cannot be reconceptualized. Concepts cannot evolve, for the use of a word in a sentence either gives a true proposition or a false one.

As for formal concepts, they are for Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> the second types of hooks in language. The following passage, which completes the part of the text that discusses the issues on page 98, above, illuminates the relationship. He writes:

3.21 The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign.

3.22 In a proposition a name is the representative of an object.

3.221 Objects can only be *named*. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak *about* them: I cannot *put them into words*. Propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are.<sup>65</sup>

Again concepts in our sense are pushed aside, for this would be a question as to what things are. The 'how' is the relationship, the world that is reflected in language. We have the signs and their relationship which can only be expressed by propositions. To understand the *nature* of these relationships, what the structure of language and the world allows, we must look to logic. As we draw the parts of a proposition under formal concepts we see the essential structure of language and the world. This is how the configuration of one corresponds to the other. Thus when we chose variables to stand for the parts of a propositions (such as the systems of variables Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> offers us), we *show* this configuration. I cannot understand these formal concepts by talking about them--indeed if I try I will end up talking nonsense--but I must *see* them in the structure of the language. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> explains

4.121 ....Propositions *show* the logical form of reality.  
They display it.

4.1211 Thus one proposition '*fa*' shows that the object *a* occurs in its sense, two propositions '*fa*' and '*ga*' show that the same object is mentioned in both of them.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* (Italics his.)

If two propositions contradict one another, then their structure shows it; the same is true if one of them follows from the other. And so on.

4.1212 What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said.

4.1213 Now, too we understand our feeling that once we have a sign-language in which everything is all right, we already have a correct logical point of view.<sup>66</sup>

When we hold up a proposition to a state of affairs, just as when we hold up a representational picture against a state of affairs, all we can ask is 'Does it obtain?' Tacitly we know what must be the case for it to obtain, which is the truth of the multitude of relations which fall out under analysis, the truth-conditions of the proposition.

Interestingly, we are given information about the world, whether the proposition is true or false. At 4.463 Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> writes:

The truth-conditions of a proposition determine the range that it leaves open to the facts.

(A proposition, a picture, or a model is, in the negative sense, like a solid body that restricts the freedom of movement of others, and, in the positive sense, like a space bounded by solid substance in which there is room for a body.)

We see from this that even if in principle the truth values of elementary propositions are independent, they cannot be so in actuality.<sup>67</sup> Each true proposition, even elementary propositions (whatever they are), restrict some possibilities in the world and thus dictate that some other propositions are true. Here we see a sort of holism. Let us use the example 'Those French windows were made in Italy.' We can pick out a particular set of French windows and define Italy as the political unit so called at this point of time and the proposition will be either true or false. If this sentence is true, then there is a confined set of sentences (even though it is an infinity) referring to the French windows and Italy

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* (Italics his.)

<sup>67</sup> Anscombe (who of course is the source of this concern (see quote on page 95, above)) understands this issue in terms of tautologousness and logical truth and consistency. It seems her point is that if we do not have mutually independent propositions in the truth functions of a set of sentences which go on to show the truth functions of the proposition of which they are a part, then we run the risk of some of the constituent propositions being inconsistent on one line of a truth table. As she puts it, "the type of tautology in which some of the combinations of truth-possibilities are inconsistent must be regarded as degenerate." (Anscombe, 33.)

which can be true and a larger set<sup>68</sup> that must be false. False propositions entailed would include claims that the French windows were made in Papua New Guinea, Stoke-on-Trent or the Crab Nebula, while possibly true propositions would include their being made in Rome, Naples or on the banks of the Tiber. If our sample proposition is false, then the set of possibilities just listed must be false also and likewise the set of propositions that were formerly false become possibilities. Presumably, the more complex a proposition the more the logical 'space is bounded', for more truth conditions are called into question. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> appears to deny that this follows from his system for he clearly states, "Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same,"<sup>69</sup> but I cannot see how his system allows for this.

**Problems with the Picture Theory.** The picture theory has been the object of discussion for some pages now and rather than gaining insight as to how language and world fit together, that they do perfectly fit together has simply been reiterated and *shown* in detail. We have something of a conundrum for, given that formal concepts cannot be argued for, for they cannot be spoken of, we can expect no more than that the formal conceptual scheme offered in the Tractatus should again be something that can *only* be shown. By the formal conceptual scheme I mean the whole project, the logical system he puts forth and explains and defends. As logic conforms to the structure of the world, the Tractatus acts only to reveal what is clear and to be seen in the world. It is. It cannot be argued for. This is why Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> considers the book itself nonsense, for it is full of words about things which we mistakenly think we can talk about, when really we cannot do so and make sense. Such things are metaphysical and this is where we make any number of unforgivable mistakes. He writes:

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<sup>68</sup> I am told that it does in fact make sense for one infinity to be larger than another, as we have transfinite numbers, though I could not say what this means.

<sup>69</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 1.21.

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them--as steps--to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)  
He must transcend these propositions and then he will see the world aright.<sup>70</sup>

This is not unlike the Kantian view of metaphysics. Just as Kant is interested in finding the bounds of sense, which he defines by way of the bounds of experience, so Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is interested in finding the bounds of sense, which he defines by the bounds of sensible language, which comes down to language that pictures the world, and thus to empirical claims.<sup>71</sup> Both think philosophers have shamelessly breached these bounds. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> writes:

6.54 Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language."<sup>72</sup>

It is not that there are not (dare I say) truths in metaphysics (or meta-philosophy of language) (for if Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is right, picture theory is true), but rather that they are inexpressible.

A distinction must be drawn here between dogmatism and insight and whether we are expected to accept the picture theory by one type of persuasion or the other. This distinction can be seen by describing a subject who, having read the Tractatus, still does not see that metaphysical discussions are nonsensical. Is she an idiot, or is she failing to see it, to grasp the situation in the right way? In the case of dogmatism there is no choice but to accept the view and be initiated into the class of sensible philosophers or reject it and continue misguiding students and speaking nonsense. In the case of insight there might be ways of persuading even though the thought is inexpressible in a (so-called)

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 6.54.

<sup>71</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> writes: "The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science." (Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 6.53.)

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 4.003.

'sensible' form. While there are certainly aspects of the dogmatism in Tractarian thought, for what one cannot argue for is difficult to argue against, Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is willing to induce our insight by offering analogies. The analogies are not supposed to *support* the claim, but rather help us understand the claim *per se*, to *see* that which can only be *shown*. If analogies can help us see the unsayable, what other modes of showing, for instance artistic modes of showing, might also offer insight?

When we open up the discussion to art we are struck by the fact that some of the most central analogies in the Tractatus are focused around art (the picture theory itself being the most obvious). One of the most interesting examples of this is his analogy with music, which is discussed by John Heil.<sup>73</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> writes:

4.011 At first sight a proposition--one set out on the printed page, for example--does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first sight to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech.

And yet these sign-languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent.

Immediately, it seems we have cause to worry, for it is not at all clear that the alphabet is a picture ('in the ordinary sense'), nor even a model of our speech. The only obvious shared features of the analogues of propositions is that they undergo interpretation to take them from one form to the other (i.e., notes to music, or the alphabet to speech). Also these analogues work as symbols for that which they become by undergoing interpretation. In typical anti-epistemological fashion Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> does not worry about the interpretation as it functions through an interpreter, but instead is concerned about what he calls the internal relation. He continues the analogy some passages later:

4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and world.

They are all constructed according to a common logical pattern.  
(Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are in a certain sense one.)

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<sup>73</sup> John Heil, "Tractatus 4.0141," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, vol. 36, no. 4, 545-8.

This 'depiction' which holds between language and world and between 'a gramophone record, the musical idea [?!], the written notes and the sound waves' is surely a very peculiar thing indeed. This passage appears to be hopelessly obscure until the next is added as a corrective.

4.0141 There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and, using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways. And that rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of musical notation. It is the rule for translating this language into the language of gramophone records.

Projection takes over the role of depiction and the logical pattern, the inner similarity, is expressed as rules, rules for translating from language to world. Trivially we see through the numerous different expressions pointing to the same thought, the effort made at leading the reader to insight. Less trivially we see the rules that we apply are buried deep within language, a view that plays an important role in his later philosophy. We are also guided toward the idea of projection.

The depicting that in 4.014 seems to sit between notes and sound waves, so that Jesus sitting at the right hand of God can depict the relation between this page and the one before it (or vice versa if you turn the book upside down), is put through an interpreter. Other passages in the Tractatus also seem to show the need for an interpreter. At 3.11 Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> writes "The method of projection is *to think of the sense* of the proposition."<sup>74</sup> The passages that follow seem to indicate that the proposition alone does nothing, is not isomorphic with the world, but requires projection, an interpreter, to have sense. "A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it."<sup>75</sup> If we allow this, the introduction of the seemingly obscure 'musical idea' suggested in 4.014 seems a little less obscure. But, if we accept the

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<sup>74</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 3.11 (italics mine).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 3.13.

importance of an interpreter, immediately the anti-epistemologist position breaks down. Perhaps Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> does not mean to let epistemology in by a back door, but a subject seems to be the only mechanism capable of making any serious link between language and world, just as a phonograph is the only way to really get music out of a record.

Heil makes similar points in his discussion of 4.0141, concluding that “the Tractarian theory of language in fact fails to explain the very features of language it was constructed to explain.”<sup>76</sup> Heil questions the depiction relationship, using the distinction between the isomorphism of sound waves and score versus that which obtains between the record groove and sound to illustrate his point. As regards the first relation, “Although such notation is not completely arbitrary, it is determined by convention, rather than by natural laws of physics or acoustics.”<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, “The projection rule holding between record grooves and musical sounds is based on natural laws.”<sup>78</sup> “The fact that [the irregularities in a record groove] produce such notes was *simply taken advantage of* in the design of recording equipment.”<sup>79</sup> Heil draws out the fundamental distinction between design and discovery. He goes onto suggest that the ways in which pictures depict is a combination of design and discovery, as “There is surely a sense in which many of the rules for drawing figures [i.e. human figures]...are given, determined, that is, by the characteristics of men.”<sup>80</sup> If this is the case then we have some sort of psychological isomorphism, a natural law analogous to that obtaining between record and sound, that draws the picture and the thing pictured together. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> suggests that language operates in the same way, but as Heil shows, the language/world relationship is purely conventional and we are given no means of understanding how this convention conveys meaning, which is surely the point of the inquiry.

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76 Heil, 548.

77 *Ibid.* 546.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.* 545 (italics his).

80 *Ibid.* 547.

While I think Heil's analysis holds, it is in some respects unfair and examining this unfairness in fact reveals more problems for Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>. Though Heil emphasizes the discovery aspect of the picture and how the features correspond between the picture and the world, he fails to recognise that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s reliance on elementary propositions gives him a way around this.<sup>81</sup> Let us say I have a picture of two men fencing. There are certain things that the picture must have in order to depict this, just as my sentence conveying the same fact must have certain words. For instance, the two men must have swords and they must be facing one another. My sentence also has a set of truth conditions implied by the complex sentence as it is broken down into elementary propositions. For my sentence to express a fact, propositions stating that the two men must be alive, they must, presumably, have hands (or some reasonable facsimile), and so forth are entailed. Just as these things are tacit in the proposition, there are certain things that must be tacit in the picture for it to depict a certain situation. After all, just because the belligerent men have the physiology specific to men, it does not mean that this must be clearly revealed in the picture.

A couple of difficulties arise. First of all, where do elementary propositions stop, in our understanding of a proposition? On the discussion of elementary propositions on pages 100-1 above, we saw that the truth conditions of a proposition entail an infinite set of possibilities and an infinite set of non-possibilities and this is the sense of a proposition. But, being a finite being, I cannot grasp the contents of any infinite set, tacitly or otherwise, so I cannot literally grasp all the elementary propositions that give a proposition sense. I can grasp in a vague way the propositions allowed and precluded by the fact, but most will not come to mind, until I am prompted--'Are the men in question Latvian?' Well, I don't see why they shouldn't be. If the truth conditions are only projected through me in a vague way, I am surely understanding the proposition, or

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<sup>81</sup> Anscombe's discussion of this is quite helpful, though very involved. Her chapter, "Negation (2): The Picture Theory" has influenced me here.



giving it sense, by way of universals (or Fregean concepts or something akin to them). So, in our example, I am tacitly aware of the fact (associated with the original complex fact) that the race or nationality of the men in question is open. This is not to claim that universals are in the world (of course, to make any such claim I would have to define in detail what universals are—a metaphysical project related to our own, but not one we shall investigate), or that they are needed to explain the world. The point is that although an infinity of possibilities forms the backdrop of any state of affairs, I must have some way of grasping this infinity. The process of projection I employ is finite and if universals (or Fregean concepts) simply act as a shorthand for all objects that are *x*, then we are, as finite beings, bound to be stuck with such a shorthand and the shortcomings of such a shorthand. We appear to have no alternatives. No matter how perfect the language, that which hooks and the world hooked by it are, the hooking mechanism, minimally, us, (inescapably, us) is imperfect.

From this imperfection and the derivative shorthand, another difficulty arises. Let us suppose one of the 'men' in question is a eunuch. Does this make the sentence 'These two men are fencing' false? Let us suppose the other is a transsexual who has only just started hormone treatment. Is it false now? Perhaps these two unfortunate individuals know rudimentary fencing technique, but are using dowels, or alternatively they found some real fencing foils, but are only pretending to fence. Are there really a set of truth conditions either in our language or in the world that can give us the answers to these questions?

Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> seems to make matters yet worse when he writes "All propositions [and surely this goes double for elementary propositions] are of equal value."<sup>82</sup> Perhaps this is so before they are spoken but certainly once we have *said* things our *interest* usually points us in the direction of *relevant connected propositions*. If I say 'Those two men are fencing' to describe what they are *doing*, then I will dismiss as irrelevant the fact

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<sup>82</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 4.6.

that actually they are legally boys as they have not yet reached the age of majority. If I am discussing legal liability concerns at my gym, such a statement will be of greater interest, of greater value to the conversation.

A final feature of the impoverishment of the Tractatus is brought out by Heil in his discussion of the similarities between the various modes of music, the discovered and the designed. He suggests that “both [of these cases] involve a 1-1 correlation of elements. The contours of a record groove correspond to alterations in the resulting tune; the symbols on a score similarly reflect musical variations.”<sup>83</sup> The claim is that given the right rules, we should be able to derive each of the score, the sound and the record groove from either of the others. While clearly in a certain respect this is true, there are certain intangibles that will invariably not translate. Even if we preclude the digital enhancement of the sort whereby the music derived from a score cannot match the record, there are other intangibles, the acoustics of the place where the recording was made, the style and technique of the musicians, which will be lost in the ‘projection’. As to the one to one correlation, think of a string which keeps sounding after it has been bowed while the note on the page has come to an end; is this a one to one correlation that we can predict? Admittedly none of these concerns change the piece itself but it may change the colouring of the piece. Finally, there is the issue of interpreting the piece to be played, for different conductors will take the same score, apply the same rules and come up with quite different results. Different understandings of *crescendo*, *allegro*, and *staccato* can totally change the effect of a piece. These tiny details are what differentiates a mediocre performance from a marvelous one. Similarly we must at least stay open to the idea that colouring in language helps to get things exactly right, rather than right enough. *This* is why we use italics, to point out the colouring which is left out in stagnant black and white.

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<sup>83</sup> Heil, 545.

We have seen why the picture theory does not work, but Bogen goes further, offering us reasons for the picture theory's being misleading.<sup>84</sup> It is unfortunate that these reasons are terribly weak, as there is at least one really rather good reason for considering the theory misleading. Trivially, Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is picking up on the fact that pictures represent states of affairs, *but* this presupposes that there is one way that pictures represent. This is false. Certainly, in the classical western tradition since the Renaissance, pictorial realism (and the achievement of perspective) has been all the rage and it is only in our century that we have seen the first major move away from this. However, this is not to say that works cannot represent except through pictorial realism. Some of the most 'primitive'<sup>85</sup> works of art represent things too. Now I could refer to the size of a pharaoh in an Egyptian representation compared to everyone else, showing a relation of power, which I think would appeal to the linguistic Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>, though perhaps not the metaphysical one, but there are better fish to fry. Consider, for instance, two representations of a fish, one a still life by someone working in the style of a sophisticated western pictorial realism where the fish sits on a plate on a table, perhaps next to a bowl of fruit. The other work is more 'primitive'. There is just a fish, shown, as it were, in profile (although such a category might not apply in the 'primitive' tradition) with two eyes and two fins. The western artist might complain that she has never seen a fish with two eyes and two fins on each side, just as the primitive artist might snort that

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<sup>84</sup> Bogen writes: "Wittgenstein held that a picture is not a thing but a fact, the fact 'that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way' (TS 214). Even if propositions were facts, representational pictures like road maps and portraits are not. A representational picture can be moved from place to place; a fact cannot. A picture can be constructed and taken apart; a fact cannot. A picture can change; a fact cannot. Picture belongs to an entirely different grammatical category from the gerundive and 'that...' phrases which express facts. The fact that the elements of a picture stand to one another in certain relations is what makes the picture the picture it is. Thus in analysing or criticizing a painting we may note, for example, what the obtaining of a certain relation between certain elements does to the picture and how the picture of its composition would be different if the fact were otherwise. But this is not to say that a picture consisting of certain painted figures arranged in a straight line from left to right is the fact that the painted figures stand in a straight line. Mundane, representational pictures are not facts; we state fact about them." (18)

<sup>85</sup> The scare quotes are to scare off pejorative connotations of the term.

she has never seen a fish with only one eye and one fin. She might reasonably go on to ask why we did not tell her that we were interested in a picture of a table and a plate and comment that it is a pity that the mutant fish is covering up the details of the plate and the plate is covering up the table.<sup>86</sup> Doubtless, the western artist would snap back that she had never seen a fish floating in a void.

Of course, the representation of our tradition is supposed to take snapshots; western works show particular fish at particular times. The 'primitive' representation shows the features of fish, what we will see if we cope with a fish, or many fish, over time. The western approach places the subject that views the picture in a certain position, a subjective view. The other is much more a statement of the thing, never mind when or how who is looking at it. It is, as it were a symbol, the eternal fish. Does it make sense to ask which is right? Does it not depend on context? Analogously, there are different aspects to propositions, which may have nothing to do with the literal propositional content, that grab us in different ways. The metre, the use of analogical or symbolic language, repetition, all have different effects. After all, Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> uses *italics* which surely have *nothing* to do with truth conditions, but everything to do with *what* he is saying and *how* he should be understood.

The picture theory simply affirms isomorphism. It explains how language and logic might work if isomorphism were the case. All we have is an appeal, an invocation to see the situation as Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> presents it and to adopt it. The appeal is simple and elegant and gives us both certainty and objectivity in our judgements, but there is nothing else to recommend it and a number of things that count against it. Perhaps the most devastating objection is the implausibility of the existence of elementary propositions and our inability to grasp them.<sup>87</sup> But can we keep anything of the picture theory if we reject

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<sup>86</sup> I owe much of these ideas to E.H. Gombrich's discussion stereotype and the progression of art in Art and Illusion, especially the fourth and fifth chapters.

<sup>87</sup> This is discussed on pages 106-7, above.

Another problem is the idea that the world boils down to elementary states of affairs. Quantum theory and its seemingly endless array of particles that keep being postulated and discovered (if

elementary propositions? Without elementary propositions we will lose the firm grasp on the world and its coherence (which are two of the more attractive aspects of Tractarian theory) for without them sense cannot be comprised of an implied set of particular (objective) tacit propositions. Instead, we are going to picture things in different ways depending on such matters as the relevant importance of the things pictured, their relation in time and space to other things and their place in the conceptual and emotional space of the subject.<sup>88</sup> As it is, while language may picture the world, it does not do so in only one way, nor does it use elementary propositions to do so.

**Back to hooks and Kant.** Now, given that it was elementary propositions and all our tacit understanding of them that was meant to hook us onto the world, what do we do when this is gone? If we allow that the subject as conceiver informs what is known rather than simply receiving facts, then we end up with idealism, for, as Kant before us, we shall have to admit a veil, if not of appearances, of conceivings, which come between us and the world. Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>, bereft of elementary propositions, uses his private language argument to try to prevent such lapses, for with the impossibility of private language, *I* cannot create the world (though my language may), so objectivity (even if it is only perfunctory objectivity through intersubjectivity via the shared medium of language) is retained.

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such a demarcation makes sense in this situation) has not yet given us any reason to think that we will ever get to truly atomic atoms. What is more, even if we seemed to have done so, there would always be some question as to whether we had not simply come to the bounds of our own ability to cut up that subatomic level into anything finer. I have heard philosophers claim that they believe there really are fundamental particles, but such claims seem to be little other than claims of faith. The defence of such claims appear to be nothing more than appeals to ontological systems. Having said this, it does not appear that Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> simply thought that elementary propositions corresponded to the states of affairs of elementary particles. They do, however, depend on their existence, for everything must be thus or so, which means that everything must be atomic in some way, including the subatomic.

<sup>88</sup> Without elementary propositions, the view, while still linguistic, is no longer metaphysical. To retain some kind of objectivity and certainty we may introduce something like certain basic ontological commitments (such as the existence of quarks at MIT and tables in the living room) which we make by virtue of engaging in language-games. From the Tractatus we can take the idea of showing and use it for our own purposes.

Certainly, the Tractatus does not give a more satisfactory answer to our problems than Kant does. However, by way of conclusion, let us examine in more detail why the hooks for both the metaphysical and linguistic interpretations are unsatisfactory. As most of my discussion above is framed more in terms of the metaphysical interpretation, let us consider this first. Again, isomorphism, language perfectly hooking onto the world, is assumed. But, we have no reason to accept isomorphism. What reason is there to think that language and the mind-independent world conform so closely? Why would we think humans are the measure of all things?<sup>89</sup> Kant's rhetorical defence of his own critical idealism rings in our ears: "by what name shall we call him who...changes mere representations into things?"<sup>90</sup> It is not an answer to the idealist (or those so accused) simply to say 'There is no problem.'

The linguistic interpretation is less simplistic, but can hardly be considered more satisfactory. It will be remembered that I compare the objects of the linguistic interpretation to objects<sup>K</sup> (see page 83, above). In an effort to clarify this maneuver some discussion of McGuinness may be helpful. He claims that "It was not Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s intention to base a metaphysics upon logic or the nature of our language,"<sup>91</sup> as the metaphysical interpretation would have it. Rather Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> "is doing logic and basing philosophy on it."<sup>92</sup> From here McGuinness goes on to undermine the thesis that Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s proper names operate ostensively. He defends the position that to know an object is "to understand the reference of a name, [it] is to know something about the truth-conditions of some propositions [for] there is no securing of reference prior to occurrence in a proposition."<sup>93</sup> The identity of the name with the object named is still consistent with this thesis (demanded by Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> at 3.203, see page 98, above), but

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<sup>89</sup> Hacker suggests this is the view that the Vienna Circle adopted from Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>. See Hacker, Wittgenstein's Place, 40.

<sup>90</sup> See page 43, above, and Kant, Prolegomena, 293-4, § 13.

<sup>91</sup> McGuinness, 62.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

it *means* something quite different from the ostension implied under the metaphysical interpretation. In the linguistic interpretation this identity is obviously more literal and the sense and reference of a word collapse.<sup>94</sup> From this we see that elementary propositions are necessarily beyond us for “an example of an absolutely simple object cannot be given. We cannot grasp anything but a concatenation of objects.”<sup>95</sup> But in principle the elementary propositions relating one thing to another remain. They must exist to be concatenated, even if we cannot grasp them in their unconcatenated state.

The idea that objects somehow exist beyond this in the world is a kind of ontological myth based on our language.<sup>96</sup> McGuinness brings out the implications of such a position near the end of his article:

what Wittgenstein is trying to convey is a point of view according to which what [propositions and their objects] are about is not *in* the world any more that it is *in* thought or *in* language. Objects are the form of all these realms, and our acquaintance with objects (our contact with them, to borrow a metaphor from Aristotle) is not an experience or knowledge of something over against which we stand. Thus it is not properly experience or knowledge at all. Objects are *eti epekina tes ousias* (beyond being), and it is therefore misleading to regard Wittgenstein as a realist in respect of them. His position is one, as indeed he tells us, from which realism, idealism and solipsism can all be seen as one.<sup>97</sup>

McGuinness is coy, leaving the final rather mind-blowing statement for another time.

We, however, will plough on, for it seems that the hooking analogy does a reasonable job of showing how this peculiar marriage falls out of the linguistic interpretation.

This interpretation is, in effect, a more literal understanding of isomorphism and effectively shows that pushing this theory to its logical conclusion is just as unpalatable (if not more so) as the idealism that faces Kant. The hook (me and my language) and that which is hooked (the world) are not simply very close, or indistinguishable in a weak sense, but are *the same thing*, which gives us solipsism. It also gives us idealism as the subject creates the world. The realism comes out when we consider the truth-conditions

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 72-3.

as real entities, as nothing other than the objects themselves.<sup>98</sup> In this understanding of isomorphism, the real hooks onto the names as much as language hooks onto the real. The *action* of hooking (for as Kant has shown understanding, which is the hooking mechanism, works through time) goes both ways, but in the end we see no hook is needed for there is one thing; one world of language/reality, not two. The realism emphasizes one side of the hooking, that which is hooked, while solipsism and idealism concern themselves with the other side, the individual (and the language) that does the hooking.

While hooking onto the world is no longer a problem in the linguistic interpretation, we can hardly be happy with the results. Even if we are willing to accept solipsism or idealism as plausible accounts of the nature of the world, that solipsism, idealism and realism should be consistent world views is, to say the least, counter-intuitive. If we seriously allow such a possibility, we run the risk of losing our hold on these somewhat slippery terms altogether. If such measures are the only ones that will allow us certainty and objectivity, perhaps we shall have to give up on these desirable (and for some, requisite) features of knowledge. But what should we be willing to accept to retain certainty and objectivity? What should, what can, guide us?

Perhaps there is a deep temperamental difference at play which guides philosophers as to what philosophical maneuvers they are willing to accept, what is and is not unbearably counter-intuitive, in such attempts to hang on to certainty. Ideally, we would like to say we get at reality, but certain limits on our cognitive abilities make such claims impossible, for it appears a number of things about ourselves as a species and as particular subjects inform the vast majority of our claims. Once we accept even the possibility of such limitations, we are unable to say where they stop and we are

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<sup>98</sup> This may seem peculiarly counter-intuitive, but it is surely no more strange to consider truth-conditions for possible propositions containing a name of an object as nothing other than the object, than it is to consider an object to be nothing other than its dispositions to act with other objects. This latter view is held by at least one philosopher whom I respect greatly.



vulnerable to being pushed, by arguments, to the far edges of idealism.<sup>99</sup> All we can do to keep what appears to be the sensible position--keeping our situatedness as human subjects and clinging to a mind-independent reality which we imperfectly grasp--is make intuitive appeals and depend on leaps of faith.

Such leaps of faith are sometimes called ontological commitments. These commitments are made despite what the sceptic says, whenever she walks across the road or is surprised (say by an impatient anti-sceptic pulling a chair out from under her as she sits). Some of these more theoretically respectable ontological commitments are derived from some things we do and the self-referential incoherence of *not* having certain commitments when we do them. For instance, *you* cannot convince me to be a solipsist. I cannot think that *I* am the only person in the world *and* that *you* convinced me of it. Similarly, I cannot love another person as a partner in my life and at the same time think that I am the only mind in the world. As another example, if I engage in scientific enquiry, I am committed to the idea that there are states of affairs that manifest in predictably similar ways that are not created by me, but of which I can gain knowledge. However, simple inductive processes and their kindred beliefs, like 'If I turn on a tap, water will emerge', make similar commitments. What we discover by way of the faults of the Tractatus is that logic and language may play a role in this hooking, but they cannot account for the whole process. They do not give the complete story.

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<sup>99</sup> This I take to be demonstrated in the discussion of Kant's "*Phenomena, Noumena and Idealism*" on pages 39-44, above.

## Chapter 4

## On Opening Things Up

**From the Tractatus to the Investigations and a Change of Tactics.** Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> replaces the picture theory of language with the language-game analysis. He suggests there are a number of different types of language-game, as opposed to one logical system, which play different types of roles in our lives. The language-game analysis is intimately entwined with Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s ideas of the nature of mind (which demands the impossibility of private language) and as with the Tractatus, a discussion of the nature of philosophy is woven through the fabric of the text. Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> retains from his early work the idea that philosophical problems are tricks of language as opposed to *real* problems. They "arise when language *goes on holiday*."<sup>1</sup> He also retains his desire for objectivity and the idea that although scepticism is not something one can properly argue against, neither is it something that can be sensibly defended.<sup>2</sup>

In the Investigations, instead of looking for ultimate objectivity in the sense (the truth conditions) of language, Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> turns to intersubjectivity and the impossibility of a private language entailed by the nature of language-games. This is founded upon a certain view of the rules that operate in language. Rhees explains in "Can There Be a Private Language?" that in order for language to mean there must be agreement as to its use. When we learn the use of an expression we have learned a rule<sup>3</sup> and future use will agree or not with this rule. Rhees draws epistemology into the discussion, telling us that agreement, rules and understanding work together.<sup>4</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, Investigations, 38 (italics his).

<sup>2</sup> In the Tractatus this is rooted in the formal conceptual scheme. Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> writes: "Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked." (Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 6.51.)

<sup>3</sup> R. Rhees, "Can There Be a Private Language?" Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume, vol. 28 (1954) 77.

<sup>4</sup> Rhees writes, somewhat opaquely, "Because there is this agreement we can understand one another. And since we understand one another we have rules. We might perhaps speak of being 'trusted' to go on in the way that is for us the only natural one. But if you have learned the

the introduction of epistemology does not put us in the Kantian position of not knowing how to get beyond our own experience and understanding. This is because the existence of these rules depends on a community and so the basis of a subject's understanding exists outside the subject. As Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> puts it, "I could not apply any rules to a *private* transition from what is seen to words. Here the rules really would hang in the air; for the institution of their use is lacking."<sup>5</sup> In this way Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s understanding has rules that are as objective as Kant's categories (and almost as objective as Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s formal concepts) but rather than coming from within each individual or the structure of the world/logic, they are rooted in language and language-games.

A weakened isomorphism remains. There is still a sense that when we speak we are tied to a certain ontology entailed by virtue of speaking of the world. Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> writes, "The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists of this: if I say falsely that something is *red*, then, for all that, it isn't *red*. And when I want to explain the word "red" to someone, in the sentence "That is not red", I do it by pointing to something red."<sup>6</sup> In the Investigations the ontological commitments may change from language-game to language-game (although, to what extent is not made clear), but in all of them we are nevertheless speaking about the world. As with the Tractatus, there is a close link between (indeed, a conflation of) thought and language, but now behaviour is included. Gesture and living itself are recognised as other ways of expressing and showing what one knows. Indeed, we cannot go beyond behaviour into the mind alone. Behaviour itself is not simply rooted in the concerns of the individual, but is rather based on rules in a language-game. Anything we wish to know of thoughts we can learn from the external

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language you take it for granted. If anyone did not, we could never understand him." ("Private Language?" 79.)

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein, Investigations, 380 (italics his).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 429 (italics his). He also writes, "To invent a language could mean to invent an instrument for a particular purpose on the basis of the laws of nature (or consistently with them)..." (*Ibid.* 492.) Throughout the Investigations it seems that Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> vacillates between the linguistic and metaphysical views (discussed above, pages 81-4 and 112-4), although he does not say much explicitly about either. While I think the linguistic view is most likely the one Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> had in mind, I am quite uncertain as to where Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> stands on the issue.

world and the language-games played there. Even if we can read Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> without taking from him a strong attack on mind talk (which is arguably impossible) he definitely thinks that there is nothing beyond language-games that can be analysed and thus nothing that is worth contemplating in philosophical discourse. Minimally, there are not thoughts that exist in any interesting way as separate from what takes place in the multitude of language-games that a subject plays.

Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> tells us that: “The philosophical remarks in [the Investigations] are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of...long and involved journeyings.”<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, I do not retrace his steps or draft a map of the relative positions of and pathways between landscapes. Rather I point to his views of a few interesting landmarks as I try to find my own way. I avoid, no doubt for better *and* for worse, getting bogged down in Wittgensteinian<sup>I</sup> criticism. I suspect, however, that this is more in keeping with the nature of Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>’s work and how he thought it should be read. After all, he is not (as he was in the Tractatus) simply putting forth a thesis and defending it. Rather he is engaging us in a dialectic and, indeed, he appears to be engaging himself too, working through his own ideas. In Culture and Value he tells us “Nearly all my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tete-a-tete.”<sup>8</sup> He also prefaces the Investigations with “I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.”<sup>9</sup> The particular path I take is one I began some years ago when I first analysed the variety of language-games in the Investigations.<sup>10</sup> What I did not realise at the time is that the nature of this variety and the analysis by which I scrutinized it

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7 *Ibid.* ix.

8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, 77.

9 Wittgenstein, Investigations, x.

10 The work I did on this consisted of a paper written for a class on the Later Wittgenstein (Philosophy 589.23) in the fall of 1994 with Professor Brian Grant at the University of Calgary. The paper in question is called “Playing Around with Language-Games.”

suggests the implausibility of Wittgenstein<sup>1</sup>'s view of the mind. Now, I continue along the path, I again take up the language-game that I began years ago.

**Language-games within Language-games.**<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> gives us many evocative examples of language-games, but he gives us no sense of where their proliferation stops. If the proliferation continues too far (and there seems to be no way to stop it from doing so) it threatens to undermine Wittgenstein's rejection of private language. He starts well enough describing three different types of language-game in the seventh section of the Investigations.<sup>12</sup> There are "*language-games*"<sup>13</sup> which minimally encompass the games by which children learn their native tongue, exemplified by the section 2 "Block!" language.<sup>14</sup> He also "sometimes speaks of a primitive language as a language-game," and then there is "the *"language-game"*" which refers to "the whole consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps most important is "the term *"language-*

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11 This section mostly follows the exegesis I gave in the aforementioned paper.

12 The relevant part reads, "We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) as one of those games by means of which children learn their nature language. I will call these games *"language-games"* and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game. "And the process of naming stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of much of the use of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses.

"I shall also call the whole consisting of the language and the actions into which it is woven, the *"language-game"*." (Wittgenstein, Investigations, 7.) (As to my peculiar use of quotation marks, see note 13, below.)

13 The translators do not italicize *"language-games"* in this passage, even though *"Sprachspiele"* is italicized on the facing page. On the grounds that the German is more likely to reflect Wittgenstein's punctuation I follow it. My comfort with making this assumption has been somewhat enhanced by Brian McGuinness and G.H. von Wright's brief discussion of Wittgenstein's habits of emphasis in his letters. See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters: Correspondence with Russell, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey and Sraffa (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 9. Similarly, I am loath to edit the punctuation with which Wittgenstein and his translators supply us, as presumably he chose what he chose carefully or we had better assume so, just in case. My keeping strictly to what is written leads to various editorial abominations concerning quotation marks, but if I change them I fear I may be misquoting Wittgenstein. I suppose this is simply one more example of a fundamental problem with language-games; one never knows what are rules and what is merely happenstance.

14 This is where he describes a "primitive language" used by builders based on an ostensive approach, the point and name system of learning and using language.

15 All these phrases can be found in note 12, above.

*game*” [which] is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life.”<sup>16</sup>

Of course, the fact that the same term, ‘language-game’, can be properly applied to a number of different, though similar, things is an example of the family resemblance theory of meaning. We can see with the distinctions made above that the primitive language-games share aspects, such as a limited vocabulary, with the children’s “*language-games*” (in fact, the section 2 “Block!” language can be used as an example of either) and both exist within ‘the “*language-game*” which appears to be at the top of the hierarchy as a ‘form of life’. However, this is only the tip of the language-game iceberg, for Wittgenstein<sup>1</sup> gives us a whole list of language-games in section 23 which do not appear to fall under the categories offered so far:

Giving orders, and obeying them--  
 Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements--  
 Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)--  
 Reporting an event--  
 Forming and testing a hypothesis--  
 Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams--  
 Making up a story; and reading it--  
 Play-acting--  
 Singing catches--  
 Guessing riddles--  
 Making a joke; telling it--  
 Solving a problem in practical arithmetic--  
 Translating from one language into another--  
 Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.<sup>17</sup>

When I first considered this passage in the context of the above concerns, it seemed obvious that we fall into both a blur of language-games (for “How does ‘Making up a [funny] story; and reading it’ differ from ‘making a joke [so long-winded that one must write it down] and telling it’?”) and a multitude of language-games (for thanking the Academy for an Oscar is surely different from thanking a stranger for holding a door, which must again be different from thanking Archbishop Tutu, a convicted rapist or a young cousin for the same gesture). Which circumstances are *mere* circumstances and

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<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

which constitute a new language-game? To some extent the distinction is bogus, for Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> is clearly interested in undermining the idea that things must be one way or another (a far cry from his Tractarian days). However, if there are rules which dictate how a language-game is played, and there is some kind of agreement in the community in question to adopt them, the distinction is important. If it is just a case of circumstances, we are only facing the ambiguities of rule interpretation and we do this alone, whereas if it is a new language-game, a new set of rules are being formed in a community.

When we consider this distinction it is difficult to see how it plays out in our lives. I am certainly aware of changing my behaviour in different circumstances, but there are no explicit decisions as to rules that are followed in ordinary conversation that I am aware of making. Certainly, as a child I was informed of rules of politeness and grammar, but much of what I have acquired since then, the language-games that I have joined, has happened through tacit understandings and compliance. Is this really different from interpreting circumstances?

How might adult language-game formation come about? Certainly there is space for an account of this within Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s system, and we can surmise the nature of its features, even though Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> offers little to guide us. No doubt a new language-game would be informed by the greater language-games of which it is a part (as, for instance, philosophical discourse is informed by academic discourse in general). Also, one imagines it will be molded by the particular language-games (and the forms of life) of the participants. The participants, though doubtless sharing some language-games (perhaps middle-class Canadian English, and artistic interests and politically correct-ese<sup>18</sup>), are not going to share all of them. If nothing else, language-games will differ from family to family and religious and professional language-games will often differ too.

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<sup>18</sup> I am unsure as to whether Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> would be willing to accept these as language-games, for, as mentioned above, he does not offer any notion as to how to limit their proliferation. However, these suggested language-games do not seem to me to be in any way out of place with the language-games which he himself offers, discussed above.

Such differences can radically inform the role that humour or emotion or countless other aspects of language and life play in the language-game. Thus what is involved in building a new language-game is presumably going to be informed by all language-games of all the participants.

This genealogy of language-games emphasizes how they arise in a community, but there are certain language-games (as in the list quoted on page 120, above) that occur within a number of different language-games in a number of different communities. In my old paper I used the following possible conversation to show how language-games can operate sentence by sentence within two different language-games at the same time.

- A: Pass me Wittgenstein. (Giving an order.)  
 B: Which one is he? (Asking.)  
 A: The large, blue hard-back. (Describing the appearance of an object.)
- B passes book (activity, relating to form of life).
- A: Thanks. (Thanking.)  
 C: Hello. (Greeting.) What are you doing? (Asking.)  
 B: Passing around Wittgenstein. (Reporting an event.)  
 C: What's that? (Asking.)  
 A: A Viennese fruitcake. (Making a joke.)  
 C: Is it tasty? (Asking.)  
 A: Hell, no (cursing); it's heavy and utterly indigestible. (Making a joke.) (Describing.)

Originally, I considered it notable that in the last utterance, though A is talking to C, the joke she is making is aimed at B. Two language-games are played at once for C is not initiated into a language-game that A and B share. It has since occurred to me that the joke may be entirely made for A's own benefit. This does not make it an example of private language, for there is, no doubt, some community to which A belongs in which she would be understood, but it is nonetheless interesting in terms of the role language plays as a tool for our *own* understanding as well as a tool for communication. That we do have this tendency to make jokes to ourselves, indeed the whole notion of the internal monologue, surely makes the idea that we have our own private language-games more appealing. Of course, it is not an *argument* for accepting private language, for



Wittgenstein<sup>19</sup>'s position depends on agreement of a rule for use in a community which makes error in understanding possible.<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> might indeed view things like inner monologues and private jokes as reasons why we make the mistake of thinking there are private languages, but as we do not necessarily share this opinion, such reflections are and surely should be suggestive. They fit with private language like a piece in a jigsaw. This does not mean this view is correct, but it does suggest plausibility.

**A Glancing Blow to Private Language.** There are, however, more compelling reasons for entertaining private language. If we accept that everyone plays a variety of language-games and that it is impossible that any two people are going to be familiar with exactly the same language-games, then we have the following problem. Although language-games inform each other and constantly evolve, they are also separate. Thus, although by the relationship between language-games the reader may be able to 'get by' sharing a conversation I might have with my family, my twelve year old god-daughter, graduates of the York University theatre program, or people familiar with the life and works of Antonin Artaud, she will, by virtue of being uninitiated in these communities, miss some things. The communities of which I am a part and with which I share a language-game all cross over in varying degrees. So while my god-daughter may be utterly lost when listening to a conversation with an initiated person about Artaud's Catholicism and his obsession with bodily functions, she will tend to do a little better with my conversations between myself and my immediate family. Now, subjects of discourse do, in varying degrees, cross over from language-game to language-game, but the terms one would use in the language-game that centres around a subject (the language-game of experts on that subject) rarely cross-over entirely. So, if I am discussing Artaud's hang-ups with my family, the fact that I cannot use any kind of short-hand (like 'the Rodez years' of 'the final image of Le Jet de Sang') will dictate

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<sup>19</sup> The main force of Rhee's discussion is that the possibility of error in understanding is necessary for language as it is comprised of rules for the proper use of words. A private language could have no criterion of error. See quote on page 117, above, corresponding to note 5.

what I can say so as to be understood. What is both obvious and important is that *I* do not miss out. *I* can play two or more language-games at once and indeed, what I learn in one language-game about a subject, about a concept, I can apply in another language-game. How else can language-game evolution take place, other than by experience<sup>20</sup>?

When I use a word in a language-game which is important in its multiple aspects in other language-games, I am often aware of doing this. I can use a concept and have my understanding of a thing inform what I say, even when the other members of the community in whose language-game I am presently playing do not pick up on this aspect. We blame people when they do not transfer rules from game to game in this way. We call them hypocrites and accuse them of maintaining double standards.

I am sure my readers can think of various examples of their own, but I offer an anecdote which seems to me to point quite nicely at two language-games in conflict and the hypocrisy that can arise from it. Fortunately for me, this experience is not mine but that of a friend whose grandfather held that women should not work professionally, but should leave 'men's work' to men and stay at home. He *also* thought that his only grandchild, my female friend, should pursue a respectable career, such as that of criminal prosecutor. It seems clear, in this case, that the language-game that belonged to his old-fashioned, conservative background and the family language-game with all of its family pride were at odds. We might try to think of various ways to save the old codger but *prima facie*, my friend's grandfather was a hypocrite. Socialists who begrudge middle-income tax hikes and pro-choice activists who try to silence pro-life activists provide us with more examples. Indeed examples are, sadly, plentiful. This suggests that such

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<sup>20</sup> I apologise for dropping this rather juicy thought for the time being, but I hope the reader will see 'experience' and think of Kant and how experience, attaching appearances to an object<sup>K</sup>, will inform one's understanding of said object. The reader might also consider the appeals I have made to a mind-independent world as an explicative device for consistencies between subjects in awareness and understanding. I return to such concerns explicitly below in the section "Polanyi and Waismann on Open Concepts".

extending of rules throughout a set of language-games is not necessarily either easy or natural.

We not only *do* blame people for such double standards, but we *should* blame them. It is an error. What is more, it is an error that people make privately, with their own private concepts--private because they are constructed from the concepts of multiple language-games played by a subject, but are not reducible to one in particular. While, in principle, no private language so constructed is such that there *could* not be another speaker, in practice there will be certain combinations of language-games that will be impossible to repeat. This gives us reason to think that even if it is not *necessary* that private languages exist, they *actually* do exist. While Rhees might reply that a private language so constructed does not have a criterion of error, the above example of our hypocritical geriatric suggests at least one criterion: contradiction.

Maintaining double standards is fundamentally irrational. But if we cannot take lessons learned from one language-game into another, we cannot avoid being hypocrites. This is one respect in which the Tractatus is fundamentally right.<sup>21</sup> When we do make a claim (and indeed claims are hidden in all forms of utterance), there are a number of tacit claims that are made with it which often stretch into other language-games. Invoking the concept of concept is useful here, for what is being required is that the same concept is used through different language-games. This is not to say that different aspects might not be emphasized in different language-games,<sup>22</sup> but the aspects must not entail contradictions. There should be some degree of awareness of one's use of a concept no matter what language-game one is playing<sup>23</sup> and this extends to the tacit claims entailed also. Sometimes tacit claims depend on the language-game in such a way that taking a statement out of context often makes for misconstrual when it is placed in another

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<sup>21</sup> This is not to claim it is right in contrast to the Investigations. Indeed, Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> *seems* to have similar views, but does not express them nearly so clearly.

<sup>22</sup> My friend's grandfather might encourage her to have a career and emphasize that women are often successful homemakers without being a hypocrite.

<sup>23</sup> This is another way of considering the absurdity of stipulation discussed in chapter one.

language-game. Even in the most blatant examples, where one feels there can be no misconstrual of the tacit implications (as with racist, sexist and homophobic terms), one's expectation can be upset. Invariably, on such occasions one sees oneself the hapless player in a language-game into which one is not initiated.

**Puzzling Over Political Correctness and What What I Say Means.** The issues around reclaimed language<sup>24</sup> clearly illustrate such concerns. Can a feminist call another feminist a bitch (as a joke or seriously) and still be acting in a consistently feminist way? Can she call a non-feminist a bitch? Can she call herself a bitch and at the same time be expressing her feminism? If the rap group, Bitches With Attitude, believe they can reclaim the word in a feminist way, do I have the right to disagree with them? If they are black, or from another disenfranchised community with their own language-games to which I do not belong, does this take away my right to disagree with them? Is my dissent just another form of oppression? Now it seems right to recognize that a number of these questions can only be answered personally by each person designated by such a term. I might ask myself, do I object to being called a bitch? However, my answer (as Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> might suspect) seems to depend rather on who calls me it and how they are using it.

My perception of the relationship I have with people and my view of myself all seem to be at play in this issue. Feminist or not, even if I consider 'bitch' to be a reclaimed term, if I see myself as a quiet gentle person, it is unlikely that I will fancy being called a bitch. Alternatively, if I take pride in telling it as it is and stepping on toes to get what I think I deserve, I might consider 'bitch' to be something of an honorific. Obviously, this will also vary from situation to situation. I might be quite comfortable with close female friends calling me a bitch, but not comfortable with people on my Master's thesis committee doing so. By mentioning it, have I now made this second

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<sup>24</sup> Melanie Misanchuk's paper "Queers, Dykes and Fags: Reclaiming and Renaming," forthcoming in Proceedings of the 1997 Gender Research Symposium, has inspired and informed some of my thoughts on this subject.

situation somehow an acceptable one, and can I really know I have until the situation obtains? There are all kinds of things which will inform us whether it is acceptable or not. They include all the language-game concerns, and thus the language-games of the committee members, but they also include my mood at the time--am I giddy, grumpy, jumpy? This may depend on what I had for breakfast. The point is, *I* will get to say whether it is acceptable or not and how can *you* possibly know until the fateful word is uttered? Alternatively, perhaps I shall self-referentially mutter 'You silly bitch' during my defense and my examiners will shuffle their papers, cough and look at the floor. Perhaps I have broken some rule of the language-game we are playing now simply by mentioning this thought experiment. In fact, I feel a little uncomfortable just writing it. Are you uncomfortable reading it? As it now stands, in *this* language-game the concept 'bitch' is totally open.

We have, to this point, looked exclusively at language-games which operate in language proper. However, given the central role that gesture played in awakening Wittgenstein from his Tractarian dreams,<sup>25</sup> this deserves a moment's consideration. I wonder if Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> was ever quite comfortable with gesture's equal role in language-games, for he sometimes writes in the Investigations as if he has forgotten their potency altogether. He asks, "Can I say 'bububu' and mean 'If it doesn't rain I shall go out for a walk'?"<sup>26</sup> He clearly wants us to snort. 'Of course not!' but this is to ignore the other language-games played in an utterance. There is a game used for training actors which

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<sup>25</sup> Malcolm writes in Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir about a conversation Wittgenstein had with Sraffa in the early thirties which (among other things) convinced Wittgenstein that the Tractatus was mistaken. He writes: "One day (they were riding, I think, on a train) when Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form', the same 'logical multiplicity', Sraffa made a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the finger-tips of one hand. And he asked: 'What is the logical form of *that*?' Sraffa's example produced in Wittgenstein the feeling that there was an absurdity in the insistence that a proposition and what it describes must have the same 'form'. This broke the hold on him of the conception that a proposition must literally be a 'picture' of the reality it describes." (Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Memoir, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958, 1962] 69.)

<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein, Investigations, 18.

depends on the potency of non-verbal language-games. Actors are told to say the words of a sentence, but *mean* something else by them. Sometimes they are asked to convey an emotion, sometimes they must communicate an action they want the person to whom they address themselves (often imaginary) to perform, sometimes they are asked to convey a state of affairs (usually a personal state). Usually, what they are asked to say is a sentence, but sometimes it is simply nonsense (like 'bububu'). It does not much matter what the words are as in the context of meaning something else, the sentence is nonsense or, at most, totally unimportant anyway.

To some extent such games are exercises in using subtext. A master of subtext will be able to say, 'If it doesn't rain I shall go out for a walk' and mean 'I hate you, I've always hated you and I wish you were dead' and unambiguously convey this meaning (at least, as unambiguously as the second sentence itself could be expressed by a simple utterance). This is the stuff high drama (well, certainly high drama of this century) is made of. Indeed, some would say that such subtext is what makes twentieth century scripts and acting realistic.<sup>27</sup> Another interesting game which is related to this theme is repeating a sentence, emphasizing a different word each time, and seeing how the meaning changes. Effectively, as one does this, the truth-conditions that are of interest change.<sup>28</sup> For instance, "If it doesn't rain I shall go out for *a* walk." emphasizes that I shall go out for one and only one walk. "If it doesn't rain *I* shall go out for a walk." emphasizes that I shall go, whether or not anyone else does so, and whether or not anyone else expects that I really shall. I may, indeed, go out for several walks, whereas I would surely be falsifying my stated intent if I took several walks after the first utterance.

While Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is right to think that there are a range of tacit truth-conditions that are evoked when any statement is made, only some of them are of interest and these

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<sup>27</sup> Pinter is perhaps the modern playwright that depends most on what goes unsaid, but is shown. This is said to be realistic, though I personally think that this type of dependence on subtext tends to portray everyone as hopelessly passive aggressive, a trait which, though common, is hardly universal.

<sup>28</sup> See pages 100, 107-8, above, for a discussion of the truth conditions of interest.

relate to what the sentence is about. All tacit elementary propositions are not of equal value.<sup>29</sup> Rather, the ones that matter most depend on relevant interests. This aboutness can be shown through context, i.e. the language-game(s) being played at the time and the physical environment, through emphasis of the sort in the above-mentioned game, by rhythm, as when a word falls on the ultimate foot in a line of blank verse,<sup>30</sup> by gesture<sup>31</sup> or any combination of these. Interestingly, it is difficult to say a sentence and mean nothing by it, just as it is difficult to say a sentence and not have a particular interest in a subset of the truth-conditions entailed by it. If one attempts to mean nothing by falling into a monotone, it rather sounds as if one is depressed, and if one sounds depressed one is (perhaps inadvertently) expressing (perhaps falsely) that one is depressed. Perhaps the closest we can come to utterance without interest is the computer voice, or the peculiarity of separate spoken words put together by a computer (such as one hears when using an

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29 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.4.

30 I did a study of *Measure for Measure* in my undergraduate degree looking at it as a thought experiment on the nature of justice and the fact that measure does not equal measure. I believe this is highlighted by the unevenness of the blank verse of the big judgement in the play which comes in the measure for measure speech (Act V, sc. i). Remember that Shakespeare is a pretty good poet and is not going to butcher iambic pentameter to the extent he does here without meaning to do so. The speech is full of lines with eleven feet (sometimes as many as thirteen) which speeds the speech along, making it seem to tumble over itself, only steadying itself on the crucial lines of judgement. These are not the words of careful measured judgement.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is one passage where the metre helps to reveal the double meaning of the text. It comes after Oberon has told Puck how to fix the trouble he has made between the lovers and Puck has commented that it must be done quickly for the day is on its way and all the spirits are disappearing back into their realm. This has all been done with very tame and even verse and Oberon replies in the following way, where we see in the fourth and fifth lines he gets a little carried away, but slows down for the sixth. He then gets back on track, totally changing his line of thought:

"But we are spirits of another sort:  
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;  
And, like a forrester, the groves may tread  
Even till the eastern gate all fiery-red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.  
But not withstanding haste; make no delay:  
We may effect this business yet ere day." (Act III, sc. ii,)

Note that the majority of the words at then end of lines are particularly evocative, "sport", "tread", "beams" and "streams" should be taken euphemistically and "fiery-red" is passionate and intense.

31 Think of politicians thumping desks and podiums. Nobody was better at this than Hitler.

automated phone system to register for classes or check a flight time). In such cases, the meaning is entirely bound by the words. Tractarian truth-conditions with the equality of all the propositions entailed apply here more than anywhere else, but still *I listen* with my own interest.

**Language-games as a Springboard for Ontological Commitments.** The notion of language-games is one with which I have a good deal of sympathy. However, what is misleading about it is that by it Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> points to a proliferation of admittedly related and blurry, but still *separate* things. It is suggested by much of his own discussion that any distinction of this kind is bogus, yet the requirement that rules change from language-game to language-game suggests language-games are distinct and separate. Even if it is only a loose guide, something to demarcate rules from circumstances is required.<sup>32</sup> While Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup> focuses on the “language-games” of teaching for his examples, much of the concepts we learn, we learn after we have stopped learning by way of such clearly rule following games. Many of the language-games we participate in are generally governed by habit and I suppose in some sense they may be considered rules, but much of the detail focuses around particular individuals and their own experience, their own evolution of understanding, and their states of being at the time the language-games are played. Many rules seem to *make themselves* unbeknownst to many, if not all, of the members of the community. Compliance and acceptance without overt agreement have great influence in language-games. Yet this itself suggests that much of our understanding of the rules of language-games happens at an inarticulate level.

Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>, despite his views of private language, has a role for this way of understanding without articulation. He writes:

241. “So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they

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32 This distinction is discussed on pages 120-1, above.



agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.

These forms of life are the structures through which we understand our experience. It might be said they set the bounds of sense. Michael Polanyi seems to agree when he suggests in Personal Knowledge that languages show the same type of agreement, a shared ontological commitment, that is required for a large group to communicate. He writes:

In learning to speak, every child accepts a culture constructed on the premises of the traditional interpretation of the universe, rooted in the idiom of the group to which it was born, and every intellectual effort of the educated mind will be made within this frame of reference. Man's whole intellectual life would be thrown away should this interpretive framework be wholly false;....Different vocabularies for the interpretation of things divide men into groups which cannot understand each other's way of seeing things and of acting upon them. For different idioms determine different patterns of possible emotions and actions.<sup>33</sup>

These ontological commitments bare some resemblance to those discussed at the end of the last chapter. Here, however, we are looking from a holist perspective, rather than pointing to particular acts (as when we make particular tacit ontological claims by making everyday claims, see page 115, above). As I have suggested above in various places, the centres of our lives, both the central objects and the central concepts, inform the way we see everything else. They work with this interpretive framework which is found in language and culture to form the skeletons upon which our lives as we understand them hang. When central objects disappear from our lives we fall apart. The child that loses her primary parent in a real sense does not know what to do, and the same goes for the primary parent that loses his child. People cannot envision their lives under such extreme circumstances. The constant adaptation at which Polanyi points<sup>34</sup> does not promise any obvious way to accommodate these changes when people suffer such breakdowns.

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) 112.

<sup>34</sup> I discuss this on pages 139-40, below.

We also go through a similar trauma when we realise that a central abstract concept (a central hook) of our lives is wrong, that it does not adequately pick out the objects which it is supposed to, or it predicates them falsely. A typical central abstract concept might be one like human nature. Even if one thinks that the concept 'human nature' is bogus, one has a certain schema (all Kantian overtones intended) suggesting a range of behaviour, a range of motives and beliefs, that people will have. There are situations that are either so morally offensive, or so close and personally hurtful that they can utterly undermine one's understanding of other people and leave individuals quite unable to act. While there are horror stories of atrocities committed in war by which witnesses are terribly emotionally scarred,<sup>35</sup> one need not go so far from our own pleasant existences to find people breaking down by what is essentially conceptual collapse. We might imagine a rather sheltered individual who believes that people never *really* act from malice nor do people *really* enjoy watching the suffering of others, especially not people they know. Such a person would criticize Othello as unrealistic for nobody would ever act like Iago—people are not *really* like that. Should this person be betrayed by a friend for no other reason than the so-called friend's pleasure, we must expect her to undergo a crisis. For our subject everything is different. She must reassess all her relationships because she knows that they were based on a false understanding of what she can expect from people, of what people *really are* like. She has the concept of human nature still, but the schema holds a contradiction. She must rebuild the schema, from whatever she feels she can still hold with some certainty. She may simply decide that you

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<sup>35</sup> My own prime example of this sort I picked up from a Canadian news programme (although what and when I admit I have forgotten). The subject of this story was a Canadian soldier who served as a peacekeeper during the Bosnian war. He had gone into a school and found, not merely the children massacred, but a number of their corpses nailed to the wall. Since coming back from Bosnia he had gone into a deep depression and was incapable of doing anything. While there may be a number of things at work in this poor man's collapse, part of what is surely going on is a breakdown of understanding: 'How could someone do that?' 'What would a person have to be to do *that*?' This is an emotional response, but a conceptual response, too.

should never trust people who have power over you and if she is rational, she will live her life accordingly.

We can imagine people living with fractured concepts as my friend's hypocritical grandfather seems to, but we can hardly call such individuals rational. The rational thing to do is to reconceptualize. Polanyi suggests that we are "rational only to the extent to which the conceptions<sup>36</sup> to which one is committed are true,"<sup>37</sup> but try as we may, truth sometimes evades the most rational among us. Our sorry subject, her innocence lost, has effectively a huge hole in her noetic structure. In a central aspect of a major part of her life and day to day interaction, she has nothing to which to be committed. She is literally at a loss.

**Private Language and Tacit Knowledge.** The types of experiences discussed above are private. The multitude of language-games gives us private language in as much as they give us our own understanding of particular words, especially those that are central to our lives. Perhaps a consideration of Kantian objects<sup>K</sup> applied to the system will clarify. Rather than one table of categories, we have a multitude of language-games, led by the one in which we are at present engaged, dictating how we conceptualize things in a certain situation. Although we will project the object<sup>K</sup> according to the schema of the concept as used in the language-game presently in use, the schemata for the same concept in other language-games will either work their way into our understanding or we shall

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<sup>36</sup> What exactly one might mean by this term is discussed below, pages 144-53. Here we see an implication of a connection between conceptions and beliefs. However, given the account below, 'true' is an odd thing to expect conceptions to be. Surely, 'more or less accurate' is more appropriate, not implying the strictness of truth or falsity that our tradition seems to have inherited from Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Polanyi, 112. 'Truth' seems a rather tall order in this context, for the Ptolemaic universe is hardly irrational (at least, not before Kepler's discoveries). A more reasonable demand is that one's conceptions (one's language-games) not contradict each other.

choose to reflect and consciously apply them (if we are rational). In this way, the way *I* live, my form of life is to *some* extent created by me as well as through me.<sup>38</sup>

This does not, however, speak to Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s attack on sensation, which is where his argument is (and our intuitions about privacy<sup>39</sup> are) strongest. He asks us to consider a case where he keeps "a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation", associated with the sign "S" which he marks in a calendar each day he has the sensation. He remarks, "That a definition of the sign cannot be formulated.--But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition.--How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense."<sup>40</sup> He complains that while we might have a kind of ostension with my writing the sign when I recognise the sensation, "I have no criterion of correctness"<sup>41</sup> by which I can be sure that the remembered sensation is matched by the present sensation. He insists:

261. What reason have we for calling "S" the sign for a *sensation*? For "sensation" is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. So the use of this word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands.--And it would not help either to say that it need not be a *sensation*; that when he writes "S", he has *something*--and that is all that can be said. "Has" and "something" also belong to our common language.--So in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound.--But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language-game, which should now be described.<sup>42</sup>

It seems to me there are two ways in which one can understand this passage. Both interpretations have their problems. The first is at the heart of Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s worries, focusing around the relationship of scepticism and private language. The problem is how can I know that what I experience as pain, you do not experience as a tickle.<sup>43</sup> If we put meaning inside our subjects, we cannot know that what one person means by a phrase is

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<sup>38</sup> In contrast, of course, to Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s implication that this is something in which we find ourselves, something with which we cannot but agree.

<sup>39</sup> Many of the passages between 243-256 in the Investigations play with our intuitions about sensation and privacy.

<sup>40</sup> Wittgenstein, Investigations, 258.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 261.

<sup>43</sup> This is Brian Grant's way of putting it.

the same as what another means by it. What we must notice is that, due to the proliferation of language-games, this is not something we can know anyway (unless we are confident that our language-games largely overlap). If we think back to our sorry disillusioned subject, discussed on pages 132-3, above, we can imagine the Iago in her life asking after the betrayal, 'Can't we be friends?' Our subject might rightly think that even though the two of them share a language-game, they *do not* mean the same thing by the word, 'friend'. As for sensations, there are physiological attributes, be they the number and shape of taste buds or the rods and cones in our eyes, that often dictate the intensity or type of our sensations. Some of our sensations might be radically dissimilar; indeed, we have reason to think they are.<sup>44</sup> If we do have different sensations, it is striking that we get along as well as we seem to when we communicate. Might it not be more constructive to account for the similarities of understanding despite different experiences and understandings rather than precluding the possibility of different understandings?

Before probing deeper into these ideas we must consider the second issue raised in 261, which centres around the *extent* to which you can understand what I am feeling. At this second level Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s discussion is strikingly unconvincing. Just because any language can capture part of the nature of an object, it does not show that it can *adequately* capture it in the relevant details of its important aspects. I can say 'Everything is in the universe' and have referred to all things and have described them truthfully. However, if I say this as a response to 'Where does it hurt?' I have failed to mention the relevant details and aspects of the thing and its location which are in question. For example, one often has great difficulty explaining sensations to one's family doctor. One

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<sup>44</sup> I, for one, am unable to smell the smell of skunks and it seems plausible to suppose that such a deficiency will have repercussions throughout my olfactory faculty. Also, the colours I see through one eye are slightly more vivid than those I see through the other eye. My mother claims her eyes have a similar variance, though she puts it in terms of one eye seeing colour through a slight wash of grey and the other seeing through a wash of gold. Whether this is a good description of the difference between my eyes I cannot decide.

might describe a sensation as 'not painful exactly, but uncomfortable.' One might point to an area of one's body and when the doctor probes around that area say, 'Not quite, but in that general vicinity.' This is not a very good description, but it might be the best we can do. We could come back later with a quite different pain and yet be unable to give a different description. We might be left saying things like, 'It's not that it hurts more, it's just more *there*, I'm more aware of it.' Similarly, when it 'looks like rain', we often cannot say what it is about the atmospheric conditions that makes it look like rain.

Polanyi touches on such issues, citing the example of skills and the inability of artisans to pass on what they know through words, instead depending on example.<sup>45</sup> This type of knowing how is one of Polanyi's central examples of tacit knowing. He considers such tacit knowledge to be a link with our evolutionary past, claiming that we use this method of knowing, which we share with non-human animals, when we learn by experience and by watching others.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps we shall find we can articulate what it is we have learned, but if we cannot, this does not mean we have not learned it. Often it is not language but our own perception which teaches us most effectively. Through our experience we learn the most successful ways to use our perceptual apparatus so as to understand and operate in our environment.<sup>47</sup>

This way of learning and understanding the world invites us to see the possibility that rather than language-games alone hooking us together, the world itself, in the realist sense, does some of the hooking. While forms of life and our natural history dictate much

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<sup>45</sup> Polanyi, 53-4.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> The rules that we habitually follow in the use of our perceptual apparatuses are not optimal for all occasions. Polanyi claims, "Ames and his school have shown that when a ball set against a featureless background is inflated, it is seen as if it retained its size and was coming nearer....The rule that we follow in shaping the sight of the inflated ball is one that we taught ourselves as babies, when we first experimented with approaching a rattle to our eyes and moving it away again. We had to choose then between seeing the rattle swelling up and shrinking alternately, or seeing it change its distance while retaining its size, and we adopted the latter assumption. By this way of seeing things we eventually constructed a universal interpretive framework that assumes the ubiquitous existence of objects, retaining their angles, and their colour and brightness when seen under varying illuminations. (Polanyi, 96-7.)"

of our understanding, they only cover that which hooks and the hooking mechanism; the world remains to dictate aspects of understanding even though its effects may be dampened by the fact it must work through our perceptions. Thus, while our language-games and natural history greatly differ from those of a lion<sup>48</sup>, because if a lion could talk it would be referring to the same world as we are (even if it refers to different aspects) we probably could understand it to *some* extent, though not entirely.

We share more with people outside our own culture than with non-human animals, although there are often stopping points where understanding breaks down.<sup>49</sup> We have a greater amount of understanding of people with whom we share a language, but again we do not understand what they mean by some words, or entirely how they understand some situations. We all have experiences where we feel extremely dissociated from particular people, in the sense that we cannot begin to imagine what it would be like to be them, to make the judgements they do and act the way they act.<sup>50</sup> Of course, we know that they choose the piece of chocolate cake due to their partiality for chocolate, but how they can look themselves in the mirror after doing *x*, or how they can say *P* and *Q* (like my friend's granddad) is beyond us. The mistake is to think that such issues are all or nothing affairs. We will understand some things about everyone's actions and the corresponding understandings that inform and prompt action (though we may often make mistakes), especially if we use vague enough terms. But we will never understand everything about someone's understanding, nor can we expect to understand any but the most abstract entities quite the way they do.

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<sup>48</sup> This is, of course, inspired by Wittgenstein's famous line, "If a lion could talk we could not understand him." Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Part II, xi.

<sup>49</sup> For instance, I really do not know what it would be like to believe the earth sat on top of a infinite stack of tortoises and I am also willing to accept that I cannot fully understand the Japanese concept of '*amai*' or the Gururumba concept of 'being a wild pig' (two examples quoted by Alison Jagger to suggest the inextricability of emotion from culture, in her words "to say that individual experience is simultaneously social experience" (151). This seems to me to be a somewhat hasty generalization.)

<sup>50</sup> Brian Grant in "Wittgenstein and the Tortoise" calls such people martians.

**Worries About the World.** We seem to have an idea of that which hooks--us and our language--and the hooking mechanism--the synthesis of our perception, language and personal understanding (further discussed in the next section)--but what of the world? There is something to keep us objective, intersubjectively, for our private language is derived, at least in part, from the multitude of shared language-games which we play. We cannot have a certain level of complexity, certainly not the degree of complexity we have in private language, unless we have public language-games first. With such a tack we need not *assume* the reality of a mind-independent world. Rather, a mind-independent world offers an explanation as to why we have both the variety of languages we have and yet can understand each other as well as we do through translation and interaction. Rather than there being an argument that accepts certain axioms and deduces from them, we are asked to look at a whole array of experience and an account is offered which attempts to make sense of it. This is not as systematic as Kant's method of asking what must be the case for experience to be possible. We are not looking for some kind of deductive system. But neither is it so terribly different in that we are trying to find the best way to account for that to which we do have access. Our situation is not unlike Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s, for while doubting the existence of any conclusive arguments for the position, we must try to find some way to make it plausible, some way to prompt insight.

There is another feature of this account which might be construed as a problem. Our lack of precision opens us up to an infinity of explanations that will fit our experience (something which Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> was trying to avoid). This is because ontological commitments, interpretive frameworks and conceptual schemata will vary as to the way the objects are conceptualized. These, of course, will operate with the frameworks mentioned on page 131, above and will offer a variety of metaphysical speculations that are more and less adequate for dealing with certain phenomena. Our explanatory frameworks however, to be adequate, must fit with our perceptions to some extent. As Kant shows us, we are limited by our perception and conception, which means



that not only will there be worse and better ways for the world to be conceptualized, but there will be worse and better ways for *us* to conceptualize it due to our natural history. Sometimes these worse and better ways will be informed more by our community or more by our experience (which should not surprise us if we accept anything of the language-game analysis). If, however, the community ontology and our experience too often do not cohere, then arguably our cognitive capacities will break down.<sup>51</sup>

This is a way of thinking about what we do when we hook onto the world. The appeal is intuitive. In this way it is similar to that made by Wittgenstein in the Tractatus, except that the account does not depend on the mysterious *shown*, and thus does not depend by necessity on analogy. In accepting this view we must look across all of our own experience, through language-games and the instances in which we stall and make mistakes, around our insights and our inability to articulate certain things and see if we can fit them into this system. Such a system cannot be held with certainty (at least in so much as inductive claims cannot) but depends on its plausibility in comparison with other interpretive frameworks. As Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> showed us, it seems we have to rely on intuitive appeals when outlining a metaphysics.

**Polanyi and Waismann on Open Concepts.** Polanyi takes a very different approach from Wittgenstein<sup>I</sup>'s and indeed shows no interest in the metaphysical concerns that so inform our investigation. He recognizes language's role in understanding, seeing it as the form by which we articulate knowledge, but maintains that much of what is known is inarticulable. Language operates as a useful guide, but has no metaphysical import in itself. It is only a tool to aid understanding. Understanding is what allows us to grasp what is the case and grasp the nature of the world that molds what is the case as it changes in the ever-evolving process of being. He writes:

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<sup>51</sup> I make a similar point on page 60, above and relate it to remarks made by Quine and Ullian.

Language is continuously reinterpreted in its everyday use without the sharp spur of any acute problem, and some kindred questions of nomenclature are usually settled in a similarly smooth fashion in science. The general principle which governs these occasions...[is] as follows. In this changing world, our anticipatory powers have always to deal with a somewhat unprecedented situation, and they can do so in general only by undergoing some measure of adaptation. More particularly: since every occasion on which a word is used is in some degree different from every previous occasion, we should expect that the meaning of a word will be modified in some degree on every such occasion. For example, since no owl is exactly like any other, to say 'This is an owl', a statement which ostensibly says something about the bird in front of us, also says something new about the term 'owl', that is, about owls in general.<sup>52</sup>

Literally, as Polanyi sketches the case above, a second time our subject says 'That is an owl,' she has said something different, as the owliness in the second case is informed by being comprised of a set of examples (or perhaps the concept which conforms to a set of examples) which includes the particular owl just sighted.<sup>53</sup> The intersubjectivity of the language-game that has taught the use of the term 'owl' dissolves into the subjectivity of the transcendental subject. This highlights the fact that we do not merely create the objects<sup>K</sup> in the world by acquiring the use of the terms in a language-game, but we also create them through (in Kant's terms) the *phenomena* that we conceptualize as the objects<sup>K</sup>. The kind of openness of the awareness to particular situations following other situations is the openness of the concepts involved in understanding the situation, both

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52 Polanyi, 110.

53 There seem to be several steps within this act of recognition. At first, as Bradshaw points out, the learning process involves an inference which may be informed by the appearance of the object or by the actions of those present. Once we have learned to recognise the object, no such inference is needed. However, the concept is still informed. It may be colder when I see the owl than on previous occasions, in which case my owl schema is opened up to owls being active at colder temperatures. Even if a sighting is almost indistinguishable from another sighting, the repetition informs what one takes as the likelihood of a similar sighting in the future. The more one sees objects that fall within the schema in an unexpected way, the less an occurrence informs the concept. Also, a lack of interest in the concept (or the related object(s)) will stunt the growth in the complexity of one's understanding of the concept. Thus when the thirty thousandth gasket roles off the conveyor belt for Shelley to inspect (or even for her to merely package) her concept of gasket is essentially uninformed. Having said this, between the thirty thousandth and forty thousandth gasket she may find that the sight of gaskets away from her workplace makes her feel woozy or she cannot smell certain kind of rubbery aromas without seeing a gasket between her fingers. This is surely a change in Shelley's understanding of gaskets, a change in how she hooks onto gaskets.

what concepts we are willing to attach to a concept<sup>54</sup>, the openness of our schema, and what objects we are willing to accept as falling under a concept.<sup>55</sup> The mistake is to view these operations as separate. Rather they all work together.

Waismann has investigated this openness in his analysis of open texture concepts.<sup>56</sup> He compares open texture not to vagueness itself but to the possibility of vagueness, vagueness being exemplified by words “used in a fluctuating way” (such as ‘heap’ or ‘pink’). However, “Vagueness can be remedied by giving more accurate rules, open texture cannot.” This is because “no definitive sets of rules or criteria can be laid down for their use....[thus] these concepts must allow for and accommodate the ever present possibility of the new and unforeseen.”<sup>57</sup> In such a view none of the criteria by which we define a concept are unchallengable,<sup>58</sup> owing to the nature of acquiring knowledge and the incompleteness of any set of sense data (as the phenomenalist might invoke) or any definition of a given concept.<sup>59</sup> Importantly, this is not due to the multitude of language-games, but rather due to our awareness of things conceptualized. The point is not only one about language, but also about epistemology. I cannot know a

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<sup>54</sup> Some examples of these attached concepts are ‘feathers’, which are of course related to ‘bird’, and also things like ‘wisdom’ for which owls are a symbol.

<sup>55</sup> Polanyi refers to the “reasonableness of the image” as a criterion for right perception (Polanyi, 138). This seems to me to be a vague appeal to schemata and judgement<sup>K</sup> discussed by Kant, see pages 61-76, above.

<sup>56</sup> Discussed in “Verifiability,” in *Logic and Language (First Series)*, ed. Antony Flew. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968.) It should be noted that there are many different types of open concepts with different theories to match. Weitz discusses a number of these in “Open Concepts”. He recognises Stevenson’s persuasive definitions as one of the most radical and interesting types (see Appendix B).

<sup>57</sup> Weitz, “Open Concepts,” 92-3.

<sup>58</sup> While this criterial openness is consistent with the subversion of concepts requiring necessary and sufficient conditions, in this instance it rests on Waismann’s theory of definition, which demands that for a concept to be closed all the situations in which a term might be used are described (Weitz, “Open Concepts,” 92-3.). He recognises the Leibnizian aspect to this “that anything actual is always inexhaustible in its properties and a true image of the Infinite Mind.” (Waismann, 122 and Weitz, “Open Concepts,” 93.)

<sup>59</sup> Waismann, 118.

thing in all its aspects. Nor can I know that the way I understand a concept has “fill[ed] up all the possible gaps through which doubt [as to its application] may seep in.”<sup>60</sup>

Waismann uses a number of examples to show the nature of this open texture. The most interesting and convincing of these (which isn’t saying much) is the possibility that we might find a substance exhibiting all the properties of gold, but which also emits a new type of radiation. He is doing more than simply suggesting that because empirical concepts are quasi-theoretical and thus postulate all the properties of the substances in question, they are prone to the problem of induction. Apart from anything else, he appears to preclude the possibility that a concept might be closed but we do not and cannot know it is closed. We might indeed have found all the possible type of applications<sup>61</sup> for the term gold, but not know we have. In such a situation we would simply treat the notion as closed until the closure of our understanding is falsified. Rather, all situations are open textured, and thus the concepts there employed are also.

Waismann, perhaps inadvertently, highlights the role ontological commitments play in understanding a theory of concepts. To have a concept of gold that is truly open textured I could not hold that particular features of the metal depended on each other, that they go together with a certain necessity.<sup>62</sup> Consider the gold example. Either the radiation is caused by the stuff that we already know is there (for instance, it might be due to a particular electron shell configuration when in close proximity to barium) but it is a phenomenon sufficiently obscure not to have been predicted, though it is readily predictable. Or alternatively, it might be a sign of a property type, the existence of which

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 120.

<sup>61</sup> I do not take up the implication that what is required is a list of the token situations, actual and possible, throughout time, as this is clearly not possible. That gold conducts electricity when at a temperature of one degree celsius, two degrees celcius and all temperatures in between as measured at all points in time is firstly, not the way we conceptualize things anyway; secondly, it does not begin to be possible for anything but a divine agent and finally, it precludes the exclusion of mathematics from the class of open concepts (something he explicitly does not wish to do), as to understand addition I would need to understand every possible case of addition.

<sup>62</sup> If I were a certain type of philosopher I would not bother talking of concepts at all, but I would leave epistemological problems behind and apply myself to natural and human kinds.

we had no prior notion of (the substance might be extended in a fifth dimension which in certain gravitational situations emits the radiation). It might apply to all metals. This discovery could open a whole new area of enquiry for scientists.

The possibility we are not willing to admit is the Humean possibility that stuff can just happen. When Waismann asks “Have we rules ready for all imaginable possibilities?”<sup>63</sup> the obvious answer is ‘No, nor should we, nor can we.’ J. J. MacIntosh has a most eloquent attack on this type of idea which he levels at Hume’s contention that one can imagine almost any state of affairs in the world, such as mercury being heavier than gold. MacIntosh writes:

“...it is very unlikely whether Hume (or anyone) *could* conceive that mercury is heavier than gold, assuming some standard story about what it is to count as *heavier*, what it is to count as *gold*, and what as *mercury*. The *properties* of gold are not independent of one another, nor are those of mercury. The density of gold at 300° K is 19.3 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, while that of mercury is 13.5 g/cm<sup>3</sup>. These properties result *directly* from gold’s being *gold* and not some other element (mercury, for example). It is not, given the set-up of our universe, *accidental* that gold is denser than mercury

But mightn’t the set-up be *different*? Well, how, exactly? Is the suggestion that gold (atomic number 79) and mercury (atomic number 80) might not occupy those places in the periodic table, but some other places? That *gold*, for example, might have the atomic number of hydrogen? Hume might be able to conceive that, but I can’t, in part at least because of the enormous number of other changes it would bring in its wake, all unknown to, incalculable by, hence inconceivable for, me.”<sup>64</sup>

We should be reminded of the Kantian schema and the interlinking complexity in our understanding described by Kant. If we allow open texture to be too radical then, as Polanyi suggests, we can just allow any property to be predicated of an object falling under a particular concept.<sup>65</sup> In Polanyi’s terms we have to be able to fit an object and its properties into a conceptual framework when we pull the object under a concept. What I have said here does not entail that the concept ‘gold’ is closed, but it does entail that if a

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<sup>63</sup> Waismann, 119.

<sup>64</sup> J. J. MacIntosh, “Kant and Causality,” presented at the Western Canadian Philosophical Association conference 1996, 3-4 (italics his).

<sup>65</sup> Polanyi, 113.

new property (such as the radiation) is discovered which cannot be explained by contemporary science, it is not just the 'concept' gold that changes, but the interpretive framework and the concepts most closely bound to this framework.<sup>66</sup>

**Three Levels of Understanding, Concepts and Conceptions.** Clearly what is lacking in our account so far is what it is to understand or to grasp a concept, the hooking mechanism. This is an issue Polanyi addresses throughout Personal Knowledge, but of particular interest is his discussion of "three successively deeper strata of intensions."<sup>67</sup> The depth to which he is referring seems to be a combination of comparative depth going into our evolutionary past as a member of the animal kingdom which apparently corresponds with the depth in what might be taken as the stream of consciousness (or at least this seems to me to be the closest analogue). The depth of the stream operates much

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<sup>66</sup> Concepts that correspond to kinds that are considered less natural fit even more awkwardly into Waismann's system. Waismann suggests it is possible that we might find a man so old he lived in the reign of Darius (Waismann, 121) and we must be able to expand our concept of man to include him. We might respond, in kind with MacIntosh, that an organism whose cell structure so radically differs from that of you or I that it can support such longevity can hardly be said to be a member of our species, invoking a feature of natural kinds as a necessary condition. But what if he had only lived since the reign of Napoleon and his secret was not some mutated cell structure, but good food and clean living. There is no obvious line.

<sup>67</sup> Polanyi, 115. What exactly Polanyi means by the term 'intension' is somewhat opaque. He makes a leap of faith (or 'ontological commitment') showing great confidence in "our own faculties for recognizing real entities, the designations of which form a rational vocabulary...[and such] classification according to rational criteria should form groups of things which we may expect to have an indefinite range of uncovenanted common properties." (114) He continues, "The ampler the intensions of a key feature, the more rational should be as a rule the identification of things in its terms and the more truly should such classification reveal the nature of the classified objects." (114) I surmise that 'ampler' is meant to identify the centrality of the feature to the nature of the object. This centrality I imagine depends on the number of features that attach to the class of objects and to the particular feature. For instance, the electron's charge being negative seems to me more central than the weight of the electron, as this dictates what it attracts and repels, that it annihilates positrons (through arguably weight has some role here), fulfills its role as electrical current and so forth. I am far more pessimistic than Polanyi as to the metaphysical import of the rationality of such features and their ampleness. I suspect *our* classification dictated by *our* categories (psychological, logical and otherwise) has a far greater role than he suggests. This is in some ways a radical interpretation of the 'meaning is use' doctrine. We call a feature the most ample when it is that by which *we* find it most useful (a kind of epistemological instrumentalism). Charge is the feature of the electron we use most although, if any other feature of the electron were different, it would utterly change the structure of the universe (this is my best guess as to a non-anthropocentric example) as much as a change in charge.

as the spectrum between attention and awareness, discussed on pages 71-3, above. It appears that Polanyi suspects this correlates with our complexity as animals, for he investigates three types of animal learning and then suggests that they are “Primordial forms of three faculties more highly developed in man.”<sup>68</sup> Language is only the form by which we make the most concentrated and precise use of our cognitive faculties. To continue the stream analogy, the first stratum floats on the surface, carrying words, the second is the currents and riptides below it and the third the muddy bottom which is arguably not part of the stream at all.

The first level “Comprises the *readily specifiable* properties which a class of things are known to share apart from their common key feature.”<sup>69</sup> Immediately our Wittgensteinian<sup>I</sup> hackles are raised, for some corrective must be made to allow family resemblance concepts and open concepts into this group. However, the kind of thing I believe Polanyi is after is that of which languages dictionaries are made; at this level of conception, the concept when grasped is always articulable. (This association helps to explain why a number of philosophers have thought that philosophy of language is the proper realm for concept talk.)

The next level down is the level of conceptions which “comprises the known but not readily specifiable properties which these things share.”<sup>70</sup> Analysis of the sort done by Socrates of terms like ‘justice’ and ‘courage’ and by our very own analytic tradition can elucidate the term and its subject matter, “from which we may derive both a more rational use of the term and a better understanding of the thing it designates.”<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, Polanyi appears to assume that this process of elucidation is comparatively easy and the properties, though not *readily* specifiable, are specifiable. This is, however,

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<sup>68</sup> Polanyi, 76. He elaborates: “Trick learning may be regarded as an act of *invention*; sign-learning as an act of *observation*; latent learning as an act of *interpretation*. The use of language develops each of these faculties into a distinctive science...” (*Ibid.*) See also Polanyi, 99-100.

<sup>69</sup> Polanyi, 115 (italics mine).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 116.

somewhat implausible in light of what else must sit at this level. This is surely where understandings (often inarticulable) of particular situations and skills such as riding a bicycle or recognising that someone is lying fit into these strata. Such skills are rather difficult to elucidate. Certainly, anyone determined to push a skill (let alone a poetical phrase, expression, gesture or anything else that is tacitly communicative) into propositional form will probably be able to do so, but this does not prove the specifiability of the conception. Rather it shows that language and understanding are squishy stuff. The description of skills and such expressions are rather like quantum wave functions and when we look at them logically they collapse into a point, which misses the point of what was going on before the analysis. (An analogy with Collingwood's famous seagull comes to mind.<sup>72</sup>) This collapse only shows that we can squeeze most non-propositional expressions into propositional language, but this we already knew from Wittgenstein's<sup>1</sup> remarkably unconvincing suggestions regarding sensation "S", on page 135, above. This should not surprise us any more than that we can squeeze a round marshmallow through a square hole. From this it does not follow that the marshmallow is made to fit the hole or that it will not be somewhat transformed by the squeezing.

At the lowest level in the hierarchy are the acts of recognition and anticipation.

The third and deepest level of intensions is formed by the indeterminate range of anticipations expressed by designating something. When we believe that we have truly designated something real, we expect that it may yet manifest its effectiveness in an indefinite and perhaps wholly unexpected manner. The intension comprises a range of properties which only future discoveries may reveal--confirming thereby the rightness of the conception conveyed by our term.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Collingwood writes about attaching meaning to a word. He suggests: "The proper meaning of a word...is something over which a word hovers like a gull over a ship's stern. Trying to fix the proper meaning in our minds is like coaxing the gull to settle in the rigging, with the rule that the gull must be alive when it settles: one must not shoot it and tie it there." (R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, 1967) 7.) Similarly, when we take skills and conceptions and draw them into a strictly propositional form we are, in effect, killing them and tying them to our own logical rigging.

<sup>73</sup> Polanyi, 116.



Here we see an openness of concept comparable to that suggested by Waismann, but in this case it is directed. It is somewhat akin to the Kantian imagination<sup>K</sup>, which is little more than an openness to certain states of affairs operating around an object<sup>K</sup>.

The territory here sketched by Polanyi gives us a framework in which to try to understand the concept/conception distinction, which we can blend with some of the insights from Kant and Wittgenstein. As a very minimal account, the conception of a thing is the *view* of an object<sup>K</sup> or set of objects<sup>K</sup> in a particular language-game, or held by a particular subject, and the concept is the view of an object in all language-games (and none in particular). This works within the articulability constraint of concepts suggested by Polanyi and adds to it the requirement that it communicates and that necessitates at least a context of community and perhaps of situation.

While I sketch the differences between concepts and conceptions, noted by people such as Ware<sup>74</sup>, Weitz and Polanyi, I do not think that there is any *clear* distinction between them and certainly none that is systematically recognised or used by philosophers.<sup>75</sup> There are certainly intuitive distinctions as regards the flexibility of the terms. Intuitively, they point us in different directions and address different ways of hooking onto the world. I expect that the reader will be able to come up with counter-examples to the way I draw the distinction; however, given that the terms are often used (some would say misused) interchangeably, it would be surprising if none could be found. Also, expecting a strict distinction would imply that these levels of understanding are quite separate, rather than being intimately interwoven, working together as they do.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> I was put onto R.X. Ware's work on concepts and conceptions by John Baker. Dr. Ware kindly gave me his unfinished paper, "Concepts and Conceptions", which I understand he was working on some years ago.

<sup>75</sup> Ware also holds this, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ware suggests that developments in psychology or elsewhere (presumably cognitive science) might eventually give us an authoritative conflation or distinction of the two, but I think this shows an unreasonable degree of optimism in our abilities to give an answer to such a question (not that such investigations would not inform the overall project within which this issue sits).

While all three of Polanyi's distinct areas work together in the rational mind, the deepest two, understandings and anticipations attached to types of situation, are most closely linked. Indeed, at time he seems to suggest their conflation:

The power of our conceptions lies in identifying new instances of certain things that we know. This function of our conceptual framework is akin to that of our perceptive framework, which enables us to see ever new objects as such, and to that of our appetites, which enables us to see ever new things as satisfying to them. It appears likewise akin to the power of practical skills, ever keyed up to meet new situations. We may comprise this whole set of faculties--our conceptions and skills, our perceptions and our drives--in one comprehensive power of anticipation.<sup>77</sup>

The reader will doubtless recognise the similarities with Kant's ideas as discussed above. While skills and drives are not included, Kant illustrates a feedback loop between perception and conception and joins it with essential ways in which the human mind works. Kant also allows us to build a story of evolving understanding as a subject recognises relevant distinctions of a systematic sort obtaining between instances of the appearance of objects<sup>K</sup> that fall under a concept. Thus 'That's an owl' evolves into 'That's a snowy owl' and 'That's a barn owl'. The same can work for understanding situations such as riding a bicycle over gravel or mud, or recognising someone lying who lies as a matter of course versus someone who occasionally lies when in a tight spot. Polanyi refers to these evolving sets of conceptions as conceptual frameworks, remarking that "the capacity continually to enrich and enliven its own conceptual framework by assimilating new experience is the mark of an intelligent personality".<sup>78</sup> Essentially, conceptions perform the role of language-games play in forming our ontology, but sit in the understanding of a single subject.

The above passage also implicitly offers the first signs that concepts and conceptions might be inseparable. This is because our concepts are informed by our awareness of them in our conceptions of situations in which the objects conceptualized occur. Equally, our conceptions of situations are comprised of the conceptualized objects

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<sup>77</sup> Polanyi, 103.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

and their interrelations. We see that, in as much as beliefs are of relations of concepts, they operate at the level of conception and may therefore be unarticulated.

While Polanyi places recognition in the realm of conceptions, a number of philosophers who consider such issues have seen this as a role for concepts.<sup>79</sup> Dispositional accounts depend on concept acquisition correlating with the disposition to bring objects under that concept correctly. Ware takes such considerations further, remarking that there appears to be “little difference between knowing what it is to be a triangle, knowing what it is to be triangular and knowing what triangularity is.” He continues, “I am equally hard-pressed to find differences between the concept of a triangle, the concept of being a triangle and the concept of triangularity.”<sup>80</sup>

Something that Ware does not point out, though it suggests itself if we push this line of thought, is that my concept of this tri-triangle does not seem to differ from the conception thereof. However, if I have somewhat kooky views about triangles—that they create power vortices at their centres or are symbols of strength and womanhood—this will inform my conception of triangularity, without informing the concept. This derives from conceptions’ relation to situations, which also relates to their being applied to sentences and their being right and wrong.<sup>81</sup> Also, that “Having a conception seems to cover a variety of cases from believing, visualizing, to imagining, to imaging...”<sup>82</sup> reinforces the idea of a state of affairs as a suitable thing for conception. In such a light we might say that when we understand a Wittgensteinian<sup>T</sup> fact, we have a conception thereof and so too of all the elementary (or pseudo-elementary propositions) there implied. They sit around the concept like peripheral vision around the cone of focus.

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79      Bradshaw leaps to mind in this respect, but clearly Fodor and Kant have recognition (among other things) in mind in their discussions of concepts.

80      Ware, 4. Hereon, I refer to the concept of a triangle, the concept of being a triangle and the concept of triangularity as the concept of tri-triangularity.

81      Ware, 10.

82      *Ibid.* 12.

Concepts apply to words; they are classificatory devices for particular objects<sup>K</sup>.

Ware suggests that they should be demarcated from proper names, but I suspect this is the fruit of a Fregean influence. While it may be useful in philosophy of language and logic, I do not think that such a demarcation is particularly helpful in epistemology, philosophy of mind or theories of concepts in general. Apart from anything else, it seemingly ignores the blurriness found here. Do definite descriptions operate as proper names and does that somehow make them non-conceptual? What of proper names that work as classificatory devices, such as surnames: do I fall under the concept Meynell?<sup>83</sup>

Conceptions are associated with conceivings<sup>84</sup> that operate at a certain point in time for a certain person. My conceptions may change from moment to moment, though it is rather odd if my concepts do. This highlights their anticipatory nature and helps to make sense of the prevalence of misconceptions and preconceptions<sup>85</sup> which seem to apply more to situations, whereas concepts tend to be of particular things. This aspect fits well with Weitz' use of conception, which simply denotes a mental entity,<sup>86</sup> in other words, some kind of mental something that corresponds to the understanding of a whole situation as well as the components within that situation and the relationship there between. While Weitz maintains that some theories of concepts conflate concepts and conceptions, typically concepts are taken to be less subjective. Thus one can have no concept of 'birthday party' and yet be at and participating in a birthday party. It would be odd to say that such a person had no conception of *this* birthday party unless she was oblivious to the situation being anything other than normal. Here Polanyi's conceptual framework talk is useful. For this individual not to have any conception of this being a birthday party she would have to fit singing "Happy Birthday", giving presents, blowing

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<sup>83</sup> I reject the idea that the meaning of a term when used as a subject (i.e. a Fregean proper name) is different from the meaning of the term when it is the object (i.e., the Fregean concept). This seems to me merely to indicate what the sentence is more centrally about, which, while important, does not bear any significance as to the meaning of the words.

<sup>84</sup> Ware, 9-10.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>86</sup> Weitz, The Opening Mind, 6.

out candles on a cake and treating a particular person in a special way into the framework by which she normally categorizes her less exceptional experience (a sort of normalcy framework). With conceptions we have a synthesis of my understanding of the situation here and now, which is necessarily unique, containing objects<sup>K</sup> by way of my anticipation (or imagination<sup>K</sup>) informed by the past moments and by way of concepts and conceptual frameworks I have at my finger tips. Of course, every situation has an infinite number of true statements that can be made about it and an infinite number of constituent things that can be conceptualized and discussed. In such situations our awareness of things is not of them as conceptualized in detail. I can, however, bring anything in my perceptual awareness to attention and if I have any concepts at all, I will invariably have a concept I can bring a given thing under (even if only in the most trivial way), but most of my surroundings sit in the realm of conception.

This suggests yet more strongly that an ability to properly use a word<sup>87</sup> is a roughly defining mark of having a concept, but only if the role of conception lying underneath it is duly recognised. Any thoroughgoing discussion of concepts in epistemology or philosophy of mind will be lacking if it does not include conceptions. Even a philosopher of language will find herself compelled to include conceptions, for their role in meaning urged by the language-game analysis cannot be ignored. Also, the link by way of tri-triangularity and other similarly multi-termed concepts indicates that the proper use of a word, while linked with a concept, is not an exact connection. After all, we might say of a child who properly picks out triangles with the utterance, 'That's a triangle,' has grasped the concept of triangularity, even though she could not use the word 'triangularity' properly.

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<sup>87</sup> As well as a word, an equally complex gesture which indicates the object (or objects of the type denoted by the concept) must be allowed, here. This admits that two people that are able to recognise triangles even if they do not have the word and one recognising a triangle by conceptualizing it as a three-sided closed figure and another by conceptualizing it as a three-angled closed figure, have the same concept.

Surprisingly, Rawls has been influential in the concept/conception debate simply by pointing out the obvious. Ware paraphrases him, writing, “It is natural to think that concepts can be specified by what is common in our varied conceptions or the area of agreement surrounding them.”<sup>88</sup> But, as Ware points out, people can begin from different specifications (such as conceptual frameworks, ontological commitments and forms of life) and “there can be a wide area of agreement about our conception of something where there is a shared view of what it is like.”<sup>89</sup> Such differences in specification (which we have seen in language-games) are what keep concepts open. In the end perhaps we must admit that the varying uses of ‘concept’ versus ‘conception’ are persuasive (see Appendix B). We are often trying to direct people’s interest when we choose one term over the other, suggesting the more objective and verbally bound with ‘concept’ and the more subjective, indeed personal, and intuitively active with ‘conception’

**Analogies and Intuitions.** Philosophy is full of analogical and intuitive appeals, as can be seen from the works of both Kant and Wittgenstein. Even the father of analytic philosophy and twentieth century logicism uses analogy, in his own words, to ‘clarify’

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88      Ware, 14 (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971] 5).

89      Ware, 14.

the subject he is discussing,<sup>90</sup> not to make his subject, or anything else, more vague.<sup>91</sup> I am neither willing nor able to give anything approximating an adequate account of analogy, but I do wish to offer a suggestion as to why it keeps on turning up in metaphysical discussions. I think it is fairly obvious that when we use analogies we are making intuitive appeals, as when Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> does not *argue* for his theory but presents it through analogy. Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> is saying, 'Don't you see, it's like this', and people will either say, 'yes, I do see', or 'no, I do not.' Kant, too suggests that analogies will allow us to understanding the relationship between the universe and God as analogous to that between a watch and watch-maker.<sup>92</sup> Of course, this is not something Kant thinks we can know<sup>K</sup>, but we can accept it with subjective certainty. But what is happening when we do?

If we are to consider analogical appeals as intuitive appeals, then of course, we need to clarify what is meant by intuition. The level of suggestiveness of intuitive appeals is greater than has been supposed. They are, of course, subjective and putatively a-rational, for my appeal to your intuitions depends on *your* accepting it for success. If it were 'rational' (in what I take to be a traditional sense) I should be able to convince you by argument. As it is, all I can do is try another intuitive appeal and perhaps flail my arms

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<sup>90</sup> "Sense and Reference" contains an analogy within the first few pages. Frege writes: "The following analogy will perhaps clarify [the relationships between sense, reference and idea]. Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself to the reference; it is the object of the observation, mediated by the real image projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter is the idea or experience. The optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective, in as much as it can be used by several observers. At any rate it could be arranged for several to use it simultaneously. But each one would have his own retinal image. On account of the diverse shapes of the observers' eyes, even a geometrical congruence could hardly be achieved, and an actual coincidence would be out of the question. This analogy might be developed still further, by assuming A's retinal image made visible to B; or A might also see his own retinal image in a mirror. In this way we might perhaps show how an idea can itself be taken as an object, but as such is not for the observer what it directly is for the person having the idea." (Frege, "Sense and Reference," 60.)

<sup>91</sup> Stevenson suggests a link between metaphorical use and vagueness, though he does not pursue the issue (see Appendix B).

<sup>92</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 357-8, § 57.

around a bit and say things such as ‘Don’t you see?’ Interestingly, when a metaphor is not immediately grasped, another metaphor is usually called forth.<sup>93</sup> We do not usually give up and attempt a more ‘rational’ appeal. This is because when they ‘get it’ we want them to get the whole thing, not just the bare facts but the way they make one feel and how they fit in the scheme of things.

A given knower cannot say why she has a particular intuition; intuitions are openly unjustified. As such they have thus been relegated to the primal, the animal and the feminine realms of emotion or instinct (read stimulus response). But as we have seen, especially from Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>, intuitive appeals often have no discernible emotional content. When we use an intuitive appeal we often appeal to the emotions, but this is because they too are at work on the levels beneath the realm of concepts.<sup>94</sup> We are often, though not always, trying to either uncover or change their conception of something. The mistake is to suppose that such a change will not change the relevant concepts also.

In philosophy, intuitions are often the things against which we test our theories.<sup>95</sup> Consider ethical theories, which are often refuted by the incompatibility of their application and the intuitions we have about things such as justice, fairness or the intrinsic value of life. Also, we have intuitions, not logical reasons (as the sceptic consistently points out), for not thinking we are brains in vats or souls in thimbles. Such

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<sup>93</sup> For example, if when Bernstein sings, ‘Here come the Jets like a bat out of Hell,’ his audience frowns and shakes their heads, he might try, ‘Here come the Jets like a rampaging bull,’ or ‘...a fiercesome tornado.’ He is not going to sing ‘Here come the Jets like a gang, full of hoodlums (which they are).’

<sup>94</sup> This helps to explain why people are persuaded by persuasive definitions (Appendix B) without knowing that they have been. This is why these differences can sit beneath philosophical discussions without people being aware of their doing so, but rather as with the Socratic process (mentioned *a propos* conceptions on page 145, above) they must be brought to light.

<sup>95</sup> There may be room to consider in this area the theory/observation distinction, both in science and in philosophy. While intellectually this distinction is quite (dare I say) intuitive, in application the distinction famously breaks down for, as orthodox quantum theorists enjoy pointing out, we tend to see what we look for. This is again supported by the idea, commonly held to a greater or lesser extent by philosophers of science (and I think rightly so), that observations and indeed concepts are theory-laden. To an extent we cannot look at something with a completely open mind. Where exactly in this landscape intuitions lie is debatable. Intuitions can stop us following particular beliefs to their logical conclusions (often a good thing) and they can inform the paths we take.



appeals sometimes bear the guise of common sense or appeals to the non-theoretical. However, what any given philosopher considers to be common sense often rests heavily on rather uncommon philosophical theories and such appeals, though they may sound good and feel compelling, are often quite useless in argument. We can only properly make such appeals when we are appealing to conceptions that everyone has (or the conceptions they must have if they are to be rational<sup>96</sup> (in the terms discussed on page 125, above)).

Of course, we also recognise that argumentation, no matter how logical, is often not compelling either. When we present an argument we are trying to show how a system of beliefs fit together, and if we are to convince a particular person she must both see that they do fit together and see that they fit with her system of conceptions (i.e., in her terms, that they are rational). For instance, if we look at the Tractatus, we can see that much of what made it so palatable to the Vienna Circle and logicians since is that it fit within a system that was already being built. This is why the book will only speak to those who have had the same thoughts Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> has had.<sup>97</sup>

Now, of course, the Tractatus has a great deal in it and while Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> may have thought that it held together so tightly that if you accepted one bit of it you were bound to accept the others, that he should have retained the views he had pertaining to the adequacy of natural language while utterly reworking them in the Investigations, proves that he was wrong. Similarly, we can accept aspects of analogical appeals without accepting them in entirety. Different people will have different ideas of where any particular analogy goes lame because different people have slightly different conceptions, different language-games, into which to fit them. Of course, intuitive appeals are going to work better if we use them with an individual within the relevant language-game

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<sup>96</sup> In as much as intuition must spread across an array of understandings to be optimally rational, problems of the hyperspecialization that so characterizes modern academia can be criticised as irrational (although, ironically, only on intuitive grounds).

<sup>97</sup> Wittgenstein, Tractatus, Preface.

community. A socialist will be more able to convince another socialist of women's oppression than a capitalist will, no matter what the appeal made and the examples used, for their conceptual framework and their anticipation are already set up to fit such ideas. If the young are impressionable, this is because of the openness of their conceptual frameworks. If television is damaging to them, it is because of the manipulation of their conceptions and conceptual frameworks.

Once we have this kind of holistic view of understanding in place and we can see where intuition fits in, we may also find a place for grasping, as opposed to mastering, a concept. For one to grasp a concept would be for one to roughly fit it in the web of belief; in fact, the mere grasping of a concept is to have some conception of the issue at hand connected (doubtless, loosely) to a term. It would no doubt often be rather intuitive and one might, if one had a mere grasping, be only able to give examples of a proper use of the term, or suggest related concepts without really being able to say why these were examples or how the related terms were related. Someone with a grasp would be able to use the term adequately (although she might produce the occasional malapropism). She would usually understand other people's use of the term, although she might sometimes be surprised at a particular use, an experience from which she could learn. To use an analogy with Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s system, the picture would be imprecise, or blurry, in areas left blank, but would still picture the world.

As for mastering a concept, here the picture would be more complete. It would be very odd to say someone had mastered a concept if they were unable to say in fairly precise terms what the term in question meant. Of course, some people are very bad with words and the suggested definition here implies that such a person might be considered incapable of mastering any concepts. For such individuals other kinds of proof, a few particularly subtle examples (for some concepts they might be pointed out ostensively) or a particular degree of ability (for instance the ability to solve certain types of mathematical problems) might be enough.

When we make appeals to plausibility we are in effect making appeals to our conceptual and interpretive frameworks. We are saying, as with intuitive appeals, it does (or does not) fit. Plausibility seems to sit somewhere between argument and purely intuitive appeals. We often have reasons we can articulate for thinking something implausible without their seeming to be particularly good ones; they frequently seem somewhat tangential and difficult to argue against.<sup>98</sup> Sometimes when we make claims of implausibility we do so because we cannot fit the claim in question into any of our interpretive frameworks (let alone the over-arching interpretive framework in which the others operate). As such we find it difficult to argue against it, for in a real sense we do not have the tools to do so. We can appeal to our own conceptual frameworks that seem to fit the same general subject, showing the inconsistencies, and perhaps we will eventually be convinced by the claim and do away with our old framework when we understand both well enough to be able to judge. However, if the claim is too radical a departure from what can fit in the set of our existing conceptual frameworks, then it is unlikely we shall ever have the cognitive tools required to understand it.

Claims made by the philosophical sceptic are examples of these radical claims. While we can take our conception of doubt, derived from our everyday experience, and apply it to everything that makes up experience, for our understanding to go any further is not possible. Often when we are teaching scepticism we mask this by asking our students to imagine an evil demon or mad scientist who has placed our brains (or more particularly, one's own brain) in a vat and is sending it electrical signals that we interpret as experience. This, of course, is an appeal to our conceptual frameworks, a move the sceptic has no right to make. She would do better to make appeals to forty-eight-dimensional souls in thimbles with no extension, for this does not appeal to our conceptual frameworks; it has no ontological commitments or metaphysical assumptions.

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<sup>98</sup> Sometimes plausibility does come in an argumentative form and then we are looking at what can comfortably be considered probability. There are no clear lines to be drawn here, but only rough borders.

It is likewise nonsense. Nonsense, also in the Wittgensteinian<sup>T</sup> sense of being necessarily beyond us. This is, indeed, more nonsensical than Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup>'s paradigms of nonsense, which are the forms of understanding beyond which we cannot go, for this is a denial of these forms. Little wonder that we find ourselves unable to argue against scepticism, for we literally cannot conceive of what we are arguing against.

Instead we find ourselves bombarded by the world. Reality hits us all at once. (It is this fact about reality that I believe leads Wittgenstein<sup>T</sup> to give all propositions equal value.) However, while all of reality in its various aspects may arise at once, our experience of reality does not and how we get at reality, how we hook onto the world and do the nature of reality justice, how we can get it right, is the central problem.

Indeed, the very project that one sets oneself in explicating aspects of Kant's theory or Wittgenstein's theories points to the difficulty. One feels one can jump in at any point in the Critique, the Tractatus or the Investigations, but in order to properly explicate a point one must explicate all of it. This is, of course, the problem of doing philosophy at all and there is wisdom in the methods of the artist philosopher, as exemplified by Nietzsche, who recognises there is no best way of explaining reality, although perhaps better and worse ways of understanding. Thus to properly represent reality one must say everything at once. And this is impossible. Perhaps the best way of coping with this is a kind of non-linear approach like that of Wittgenstein's Investigations, in which thoughts weave around the world as he sees it in the way one winds a ball of wool. One crosses over the same area in slightly different ways, only gradually filling in the gaps and making the sphere.

**Parting Thoughts (With a Sigh and a Shrug).** As I come to the end of this project I cannot help but feel there must have been a better way to do it. A better path to take to inform my understanding and represent my thoughts as a more coherent whole. But the whole point of the project is that there will almost always be better ways to understand

things in general or a thing in particular than one is presently employing. This is not to say that we know nothing, but rather to admit our limits and recognise that they too need to be understood. We cannot know we know anything in all its aspects, even ourselves, but that is not reason to suppose that we cannot understand things. Does this mean that the world must be entirely intelligible? No, the world must be intelligible enough. Does this mean that our belief-forming processes must be entirely reliable? No, they must be reliable enough. Does this leave me open to the attacks of the sceptic? Yes, though no more so than it seems anyone but the most naïve realist is (and I leave Kant to deal with her). Does this make me an idealist? Only a little bit of an idealist, though it seems this is a position where if one takes an inch one is accused of taking a mile.

The most important lesson learned is that artistic expression is another form of expression and it says something about the world, both tacitly and explicitly, as well as showing us things about the bounds of sense with which we operate. As with other conceptions and conceptualizations, it operates at many levels. The one that is of least importance in art is Polanyi's upper level, which is generally considered to be the most important in epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language, but perhaps this shows a weakness in these areas of philosophy rather than art. Because artworks can inform us without articulation and translation to the articulated, because they can move us and change our understanding of the world and ourselves in the world, they deserve a place in epistemology. Indeed, it may be that we will never have an adequate epistemology until we take the role of artworks and aesthetics seriously.

I conclude with a thought from Culture and Value which comforts me :

It seems to me I am still a long way from understanding these things, a long way from the point of knowing what I do and what I don't need to discuss. I still keep getting entangled in details without knowing whether I ought to be talking about such things at all; and I have the impression that I may be inspecting a large area only eventually to exclude it from consideration. But even in that case these reflections wouldn't be worthless; as long, that is, as they are not just going round in a circle.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, 65.

## Appendix A

### Can the Transcendental and Empirical Truly be Kept Separate?

Scientific advances in this century have demanded that we question whether the demarcation between transcendental and empirical can really hold water. The types of understandings of space and time found in relativistic physics and quantum mechanics threaten to hopelessly blur Kant's distinction between the empirical<sup>K</sup> and transcendental. Evidence of this can be seen in Kant's discussion of cosmology as an Antinomy, for, at present, scientific method, not mere metaphysical speculation, is being exercised in enquiry into the birth of the universe. Background cosmic radiation and pictures from high-powered telescopes of stars as they were billions of years ago offer good grounds for accepting the big bang hypothesis. This, of course, entails a beginning of time, knowledge of which Kant presents as an example of metaphysics reaching beyond the bounds of sense.

Through this and related discussion and investigation into phenomena such as those at the perimeter of black holes, where space and time, as we immediately understand them, cease to exist, we see that at least in some respects, modern physics' particular empirical notions of space and time are at odds with the forms of intuition<sup>K</sup> as Kant conceives them. The notion of time presented by modern physics goes against our immediate experience of time; thus it goes against both the empirical concept and intuitive form of time. Frames of reference do not merely trivially affect different subjective experiences but change things objectively. It is a way of understanding time that is totally different both from our common sense notion or a more sophisticated Newtonian notion, even though it is empirically based.

We seem in this muddle to have at least three separate concepts (and I use the term loosely) for both space and time, two Kantian and one relativistic. The first is space and time as they exist as the forms of intuition<sup>K</sup>. It is, perhaps, a mistake to call this a

concept as it is meant to be importantly pre-conceptual. This, however, merely multiplies what we are dealing with, for there are the intuitions<sup>K</sup> and as a separate thing the intuitions<sup>K</sup> as conceptualized. At the point where we recognise space and time to be the forms of our intuition<sup>K</sup>, thus consciously recognising the depth of their importance (for deriving mathematics and other useful things), they are understood in a manner different from our empirical<sup>K</sup> understandings of time and space. In as much as the empirical<sup>K</sup> realm is that of common sense, this must be space and time as we most concretely understand them, both the sort of things that pass while we ride on a train and the sort of things we measure when investigating velocity, acceleration and other such things. We can relate this to the concepts as they represent the forms of our intuitions<sup>K</sup> as conceptualized, but we cannot conflate the two. Even if we grant that space and time, as they exist in the Transcendental Aesthetic, are only forms that admit the possibility of experience as opposed to concepts and thus plausibly the understanding of space and time in this fashion is merely a deepening of the empirical concept rather than being a different concept, there is no escaping the incongruity of relativistic space and time. Relativistic time weaves afresh the fabric of our universe. Time is not the firm kind of thing we experience when we ride the bus; a perspectivalism in space and time is implied and in a real, if hopelessly imperceptible way, my point of view is integral.

In this light it appears that one concept can have a number of different types of object, or alternatively, one term can refer to a number of different concepts. Perhaps a yet better way of understanding the situation is to allow that all these notions of space and time in fact fall under one concept and the different contexts of the various areas highlight aspects of the concept. After all, it is surely *prima facie* sensible to imagine that one concept should be consistent throughout our understanding if our cognitive faculties are working as they should. Otherwise the consistency required for rationality would be impossible. Thus the understanding of time in a metaphysical discussion not only *should*

not but *cannot* be *wholly* divorced from time as it is understood in an empirical discussion. Rather it is viewed with a particular interest in a particular context.

Another point that is impossible to ignore given the nature of modern physics is that modern science is full of metaphysical implications. I know of six different ways of interpreting quantum mechanics put forth by scientists, not philosophers, which have varying degrees of metaphysical plausibility. Whether one chooses Bohm and de Broglie's pilot wave picture or a many worlds interpretation (in my opinion, the most bizarre) one is making a commitment to a metaphysical description of what is actually happening. This is not dissimilar to Kepler's metaphysical commitment that allowed him to successfully derive Mars' elliptical orbit from the Rudolphine Tables and such commitments can be equally useful in modern science. Regardless of our inability properly to understand the metaphysical implications of quantum mechanics, in as much as modern science is in Kant's sense empirical we cannot get away from them. So we see how difficult it is to keep each of Kant's three epistemological areas separate from each other and that it is impossible to keep the different concepts that belong to these three areas completely separate too.

We may derive from this a loose distinction between concepts applied to our immediate environment (the empirical) and more abstract concepts (the transcendental). There is a suggestion of comparative conceptual closeness to the every day life of the perceiving subject in the empirical, transcendental gap. As much as we can and perhaps should join Wittgenstein in mocking Moore's 'this is a hand' assertion, we really do understand it more easily than a 'this is a complex of quarks and leptons (and who knows what else)' assertion which accompanies the same gesture. I can talk of a much greater range of things that have to do with my life qua my hand as my hand, rather than a complex of fantastically complicated sub-atomic stuff. What is more, I cannot imagine paying attention to my hand as a complex of sub-atomic particles, whereas, in as much as my hands can type and manipulate mice, I can comment on them and think of them quite



successfully. It is not just a question of context, it is also a question of familiarity with objects and the awareness of their complexity and how it links to the realms of perception and conception. If we are sufficiently familiar with the concept, one might say, if we have mastered it, the schema of the concept will be precise and our openness will be complex so that any particular aspect of an object falling under a concept will have a particular schema leading the subject to expect particular things to occur. The schema will stretch forward in greater detail, far more than that of someone who has merely grasped the concept. With mere grasping, the schema may lead them to be either open or closed, but not in a particularized way based on past attention to the concept and objects falling under it.

## Appendix B

### Stevenson's Persuasive Definitions

The subject's role in opening concepts is pursued, admittedly for rather different reasons from our own, by C.L. Stevenson. Weitz cites Stevenson's notion of persuasive definitions (hereon PDs) as the first exploration of the notion of open concepts and the most radical.<sup>1</sup> Stevenson's account is of particular interest to us, as PDs depend on emotional content, the subject's role and metaphor (the sister of analogy). What is more, this account suggests a type of conceptual inference, perhaps a reconceptualization, through metaphor and emotional content. Although published before the *Investigations*, there is a Wittgensteinian<sup>I</sup> flavour with regards to situating a meaning in a community, but this does not come at the expense of the subject's role.

Stevenson's paradigm example of a PD is a fictional account. It is not a complicated description, but it is worth quoting at length. He begins his story, "There was once a community in which 'cultured' meant widely read and acquainted with the arts."<sup>2</sup> These qualities gradually came to give the term status as an honorific, indeed,

the word acquired a strong emotive meaning. It awakened feelings not only because of its conceptual meaning, but more directly in its own right; for it recalled the gestures, smiles, and tone of voice which so habitually accompanied it....As the emotive meaning of the word grew more pronounced, the conceptual meaning grew more vague. This was inevitable, for the emotive meaning made the word suitable for use in metaphors....one member of the community had no wholehearted regard for mere reading, or mere acquaintance with the arts, but valued them only to the extent that they served to develop imaginative sensitivity....he proceeded to give 'culture' a new meaning. 'I know', he insisted, 'that so and so is widely read, and acquainted with the arts; but what has that to do with culture? The real meaning of "culture", the true meaning of "culture", is *imaginative sensitivity*.'...It will now be obvious that this definition was no mere abbreviation; nor was it intended as an analysis of a common concept. Its purpose, rather, was to redirect people's interests....When people learn to call something by a name rich in pleasant associations, they more readily admire it; and when they learn not to call it by such a

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<sup>1</sup> Morris Weitz, The Opening Mind: A Philosophical Study of Humanistic Concepts, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Leslie Stevenson, "Persuasive Definitions," Mind, vol. 47, (1938), 331.

name, they less readily admire it. The definition made use of this fact. It changed interests by changing names.<sup>3</sup>

*Prima facie*, this is a plausible account of a real and curious phenomenon, suggesting one way in which meanings mutate while giving us an explanation of a sort that precludes such mutation as a feature of all concepts. There are, however, a number of aspects of the account which require elucidation if we are to understand the underlying nature of concepts that allow for this phenomenon.

Although Stevenson recognises that “Outside the confinements of philosophical theory,” there has been interest in “the interplay between emotive and conceptual meanings in determining linguistic change and its correlation with interests,” he is particularly concerned with their role in philosophy. He claims that, particularly in ethics, the “failure to recognise [PDs] persuasive character has been responsible for much confusion.”<sup>4</sup> Stevenson places PDs “under the broader heading: the correlation between terminology and interests.”<sup>5</sup> He specifies that PDs are “definitions that change interests”, where “the term defined has a strong emotive meaning, and...the speaker employs the emotively laden word...with the predominating intention of changing people’s interests.”<sup>6</sup> Because we are interested in the nature of the concept that allows this shift, we are not concerned with issues of swaying interests and one’s intention to do so *per se*. Let us define the set of cases that concern us, PD<sup>O</sup>,<sup>7</sup> to include any case where meaning shifts due to emotive content or metaphorical tendencies.

Some of these various PD<sup>O</sup>s are strikingly visible in our own time in reclaimed terms and politically correct language. In these cases typically the conceptual meaning stays the same, the referent is the same, but the emotive meaning changes, although

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3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.* 344.

5 *Ibid.* 335.

6 *Ibid.* 336.

7 The O is supposed to make us think of open concepts and their breadth in comparison to PDs.

naturally there are variations on this.<sup>8</sup> Also, there are ethical ramifications of the use of PD<sup>O</sup>s (which are of greater societal import than philosophical disagreement) as the way we talk about things affects our attitudes towards them.<sup>9</sup> This is a reflection of how language-games, forms of life and ontological commitments blend into one another depending on the focus of our conversation.

Although Stevenson's interest is narrow, many of the features of PDs in particular are features of PD<sup>O</sup>s at large, so it is worth breaking the account down into the steps of this mutation of meaning, so as to bring out the features of Stevenson's analysis.

1. In a community, *c*, a term, *t*, has a conceptual meaning, *x*.
2. *t* acquires strong emotive meaning, *y*, by (i) *x* and (ii) the pleasant emotional reaction recalled by *t*.
3. *y* makes *t* appropriate for metaphorical usage.
4. As *y* becomes more pronounced, *x* becomes more vague, in part due to metaphorical usage.

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<sup>8</sup> Stevenson discusses this type of PD, although obviously he does not call such things cases of reclamation (337). Politically correct language runs the gamut in persuasiveness. Some terms are just perennially vague, such as "appropriate" (which makes no sense outside a context), others have to do with implicit reference, such as 'mail deliverer', rather than 'mailman', some are more like Stevenson's PDs such as the term 'politically correct' itself, the honorific status of which changes with the community in which it is used. A number of politically correct terms seem simply to be more gentle than the traditional alternatives, such as 'physically challenged' as opposed to 'handicapped', or the prevalent use of 'closure' rather than 'end' or 'getting over it'. See also discussion on pages 126-7, above.

<sup>9</sup> A striking example of this appears in a study by Bavelas (unfortunately I have not been able to get my hands on the study and have only heard Dr. Bavelas speak about it), which suggests a correlation between the use of romantic language and convictions in sexual assault cases. Bavelas' research suggests that the greater the use of romantic or scientific terms to describe sexual assault during a trial, the less likely a conviction for the crime. The situation appears to be most extreme in cases of incestuous assault of children, where the use of romantic language appears to be even more prevalent than in cases of spousal assault and the conviction rate again correspondingly lower. For example, if the situation was that an adult grabbed a child's genitals and forcibly anally penetrated the child, the situation is likely to be described along the lines of the adult caressing the child and their having sex. The same type of language that could be used to describe consensual sex between a loving adult couple. Bavelas contends that one cannot 'have sex' with a four-year-old child; one can only rape it. In these cases surely there is not so much a conscious attempt to redirect interest, but a sufficient discomfort with the subject matter to lead not merely defense attorneys, but judges and prosecutors, to use less than violent terms for acts that are essentially violent, and are so described in the Criminal Code. If what Bavelas describes is a case of persuasive definitions, their existence is both more prevalent and more potentially pernicious than Stevenson suggests. This study was discussed at a lecture given at the University of Calgary in February, 1996.

5. A fellow, *a* (our hero), has no regard for *x* (presumably, in such a way that he does not associate *y* with *x*).

6. *a* gives *t* a new meaning, *z*. He considers *z* to be the true<sup>10</sup> meaning of *t* because *x* is not sufficiently laudable to deserve *y*, but *z* is.

7. *a* does this to redirect *c*'s interest (and presumably may succeed in doing so, in any given situation (i) if *c* "is already on the point of changing their interests"<sup>11</sup> and (ii) if dynamic usage ("the vigor of the speaker, his gestures, his tone of voice, the cadence of his accompanying sentences, his figures of speech and so on"<sup>12</sup>) is successfully employed by *a*).<sup>13</sup>

The first thing to notice in step 1 is that Stevenson places the PD within a community. Presumably, something like the Wittgensteinian<sup>I</sup> language game is the sort of thing Stevenson has in mind, as, by the nature of the case, the community must be a linguistic community, but cannot be defined as all the speakers of a particular language. The language-game analysis has the added benefit of being able to explain the mysterious state of mind exhibited by *a* in step 5. If *a* belongs to a language game, *d*, that does not award honorific status to *x*, as well as belonging to *c*, *a* might bring *z* from *d* to *c*, if the relevant conditions (in step 7) obtain.

These conditions require special attention, because they are indicative of the ways in which we acquire and understand concepts, as suggested by Stevenson. Condition (i) depends on naturally changing values in a community which progress hand in hand with changing concepts. By saying *c* is 'on the point of changing their interests', Stevenson implies that the meaning would have changed sooner or later. Thus there is some sort of evolution, presumably gradual, in which *a*'s efforts are like a kind of punctuated equilibrium, forcing sudden change. Waismann's verificationist account of open texture concepts seems very much open to this type of mutation (think of Polanyi's owl) which

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10 This is, of course, a persuasive use of 'true', as Stevenson recognises, see page 334.

11 Stevenson, 338.

12 *Ibid.* 337.

13 My analysis mostly follows Weitz' analysis ("Open Concepts," 90-91) with the difference that Weitz emphasizes that *a* argues that *x* is not a criterion of *t* unless *x* leads to *z*, but *x* is not a necessary or sufficient property of *z*.

will result in new situations arriving where the term in question can be appropriately applied. Indeed, here we see by contrast with Waismann, just how radical Stevenson is, for PDOs allow radically new types of situations in which the term may be properly used. Another departure from Waismann is that, not merely must the possibility of new situations for appropriate application of a term be forever open, but they must also allow that some usages should become inappropriate.<sup>14</sup> Plausibly, Waismann's account can and should be opened even further, as meanings (in as much as meaning is use) literally come and go. Given that the definition is derived by verification of certain appropriate usages, if a usage of a certain term can cease to be acceptable, then perhaps there is a need for some sort of re-verification that concepts must continually undergo.<sup>15</sup> Re-verification of concepts is surely manifested as one generation teaches the next to speak and read. The choices of what is taught depend on the terms that occur in each community and which each member of the community thus requires. So *c* is in flux regardless of the effect of PDs (although possibly not PDOs). But the re-verification goes further in the affirming of conceptual frameworks, metaphysical commitments that we pass on as well. Also, we see Polanyi's anticipation working here. When it works well it will bring greater insight; when it works poorly it will act as dogmatism or self-fulfilling prophesy that closes us from what is actually the case. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing which is happening except again for appeals to interpretive frameworks. In this respect *a* may be a terrible villain, a great hero, or quite neutral, bringing his community toward or away from understanding.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, "the child that's born on the Sabbath day is bonny and blithe and *good and gay*" jars us even when we know the original meaning because of the prevalence of the popular meaning. The original conceptual meaning of 'gay' will eventually be archaic, the sort of thing that will confuse students reading Noel Coward in the twenty-fourth century, just as students get confused with Hamlet's 'get thee to a nunnery' speech today.

<sup>15</sup> Certainly, there seems to be a need for re-verification of conceptions, as my conception of politicians as dishonest should be corrected if from now on all politicians that come to my attention are honest. Only if I keep seeing more dishonest politicians than honest ones is my conception of politicians as dishonest verified and rational. (Note that my use of 'conception' reflects the use discussed in Chapter Four.)

The second condition of *a*'s success, the *presentation* of PD, is intriguing given our interest in art. Thirty years before Marshall McLuhan said the medium is the message, Stevenson strongly implied it. If we accept that the meaning's being understood and accepted depends on the way it is presented rather than on its context, concepts are one step further away from being closed. This relates to the third possible condition which is not discussed by Stevenson, but cannot be denied given the power of popular culture in our society, the status of *a*.<sup>16</sup> In some communities this will amount to nothing more than celebrity status and in others *a* may need to be considered an expert in her field.

Regardless of her status, it is striking that *a* can "give" a term "a new meaning" quite consciously and deliberately (as suggested in step 6). This is perhaps the least plausible part of Stevenson's account. After all, we do not actually set out to confuse people (except for nefarious purposes). Does he really suppose that a certain variety of manic philosopher says to herself 'I know that Canada is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary elections and a Charter of Rights, but what does that have to do with being a democracy? The real meaning of "democracy", the true meaning of "democracy", is from each according to his ability, to each according to his need', and then proceeds into discussions with other philosophers *without* making this conscious choice explicit. The only place an explicit choice does seem to happen is in cases of reclamation, but only because *a* becomes aware of an aspect of a term that has unfortunate tacit truth conditions. Thus 'mail deliverer' is preferable to 'mailman' because the latter term tacitly

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<sup>16</sup> This is, of course, your classic appeal to authority. One particularly famous example of this is the use of 'bad' to mean 'good' (a certain sort of good), popularized by Michael Jackson in the mid-eighties. Jackson took a meaning from somewhat mainstream ghetto street talk and introduced it to a language game he shares with teenagers across the world, but particularly those in middle America. The term 'bad' reveals extremely interesting persuasive characteristics; while the term has essentially reversed its original conceptual meaning, for the bad is now desirable, aspects of the original conceptual meaning still prevail, exhibited properties such as carrying a gun, being scary, doing things your parents would probably prefer you didn't. Is this a metaphorical usage? Surely not. It is just something of a marshmallowy word which has been turned upside down, but still maintains certain aspects of its original texture.

assumes that the person in question is a man.<sup>17</sup> In this situation, part of the meaning of the old term, an aspect of it, is highlighted and informs *a* as to how to change the term, or how to bring out the way it hooks onto the world.

We can also imagine that an experience suggesting that a concept has been misunderstood might prompt *a* to act in a similar fashion. This time the world, not language or culture, impinges on *a*, showing that the previous meaning was flawed and must be revised. Marxists, feminists and members of the civil rights movement have made this sort of maneuver with 'freedom', just as the observers of white ravens have done with the concept 'raven'.

The final option is that the change seems simply to happen. *a* may be the first to systematically make use of the new meaning, but the community follows, for it is natural for it to do so. In such cases the conception must be somewhat fractured and an awareness of a number of aspects related to one aspect overwhelm the previous meaning. This is an appeal to the network of understanding in which a concept sits,<sup>18</sup> for although a conception might change without relevant concepts changing, if a concept changes, changes in conceptions will also occur.

All of these situations operate at the level of conception, which then overwhelms the higher level of the concept when *a* decides that *x* must change. Still the catalyst for this event is somewhat mysterious. Obviously, *y*, the emotive meaning, is essential to the

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<sup>17</sup> This is, in fact, a nice example of the not necessarily articulated nature of such conceptions for, of course, people will recognise that there are female mailmen when asked, but simply by application of the concept 'man' the implication is that aspects of typical female lives will often be forgotten when considering the role. I have heard J.J. MacIntosh suggest that the male pronoun and 'man' as supposedly gender neutral terms fall prey to misleading our anticipations in a similar manner.

<sup>18</sup> We can offer an account of last three steps in persuasive definitions, which does not depend on *a*'s either setting out to persuade or deceive.

5. *a* wishes to apply *t* to *b* (our hero's friend) who in no way exhibits the properties of *x*. He has heard *t* applied to people who are like *b* in a *y* way, so considers the usage proper.

6. In considering the properties that make the application of *t* appropriate, *a* considers the properties of *z* to be most worthy of note and appreciation in *b*.

7. *a* does this to persuade *c* to think well of *b*, but does this without reflection, merely because *a* likes *b*.



operation. A certain level of emotive meaning is required to obfuscate  $x$  so as to allow  $a$  to change  $t$ 's meaning from  $x$  to  $z$ . Stevenson places emotive meaning in a strikingly behaviourist framework, emphasizing "the gestures, smiles, and tone of voice which so habitually accompanied [the term]." I do not, however, think this need be taken seriously, for just as sensation "S" can have important aspects beyond our articulation, emotions have them also. Deeper concerns with Stevenson's view of emotion are more perplexing, but bring us deeper insight.

We are presented by Stevenson with the question of what is the amount of  $y$  needed to topple  $x$ ? Obviously, the emotive meaning must be pretty strong. This implies that there are quite plausibly a number of concepts with growing emotive meaning and with some of these it is plausible that  $x$  will never quite be vague enough to undergo radical reconceptualization, no matter how strong  $y$  becomes. One might imagine empirical<sup>K</sup> concepts will typically be less prone to the PD syndrome, but Waismann has given us reason to think that some empirical concepts will have the vagueness required in step 4 (see page 41, above). What is more, a number of empirical concepts do give us the warm fuzzy feelings, evoking smiles and so forth, that Stevenson requires for PDs.

'Cat' is a concept that pushes my buttons in this way. Cats are and have been a significant part of my life; they are, and their corresponding concept is, close to me and close to the centre of my 'world'. This fact has even informed my philosophy in deep ways, for I truly believe that cats are, in some respects, persons. I share a language-game with my cat. I have rights and responsibilities concerning my cat, just as my cat has rights and responsibilities concerning me. I have an ontological commitment regarding the relation between animals and humans, informed by my experience, the emotional life I share with my cat. I cannot detach my emotive stance *qua* cats from my ontological commitments *qua* cats or my experience *qua* cats, or my concept and conception(s) of cats.

There are other perhaps surprising examples of concepts with emotive content. For instance, mathematics can work within an ontology and emotive framework as it did for Pythagorean spiritualism. It seems there is nothing to preclude emotive content, if not in all concepts, then definitely in all conceptions. Because conceptions belong to subjects, a conception's emotive content may vary from individual to individual. Thus we can imagine that PDOs will often lead to the kind of controversy that prompted Stevenson's investigation in the first place. Conceptions have emotive content because they are our understanding of situations and situations form our lives. As Robert Solomon has said, "Emotional lives are our lives."<sup>19</sup>

I am not sure I find Stevenson's account wholly plausible, but the right pieces are there. Emotion does have a role in meaning, a role that has been grossly neglected by analytic philosophers concerned with meaning. Concepts do change, sometimes prompted by one individual, but often affecting the whole community. The last piece in Stevenson's puzzle is the role that metaphor plays. He might, when in step 4 he mentions metaphor, mean only to emphasize the necessary fuzziness of the term before it can undergo persuasive change. I am not convinced that Stevenson has a clear idea of its role, but perhaps he intuitively feels it belongs. However, I think that analogy and metaphor have much to tell us about meaning and understanding and are, like emotion, grossly neglected in this respect. Unfortunately, this is an area to which I cannot do credit and so, I regret to say, I leave it for others to ponder.

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<sup>19</sup> Solomon, 609.

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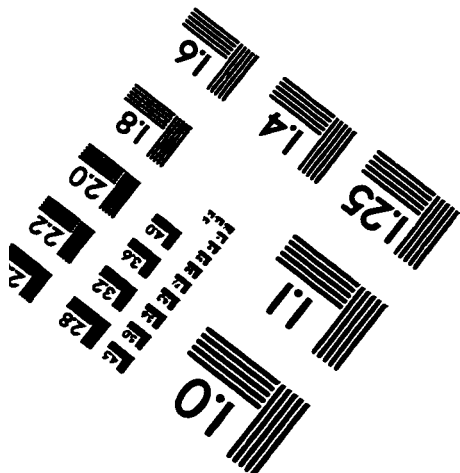
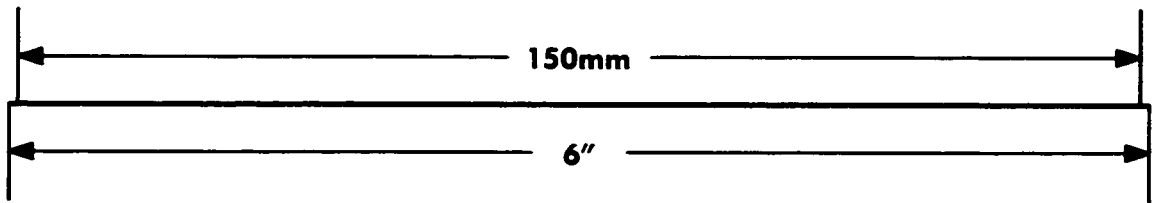
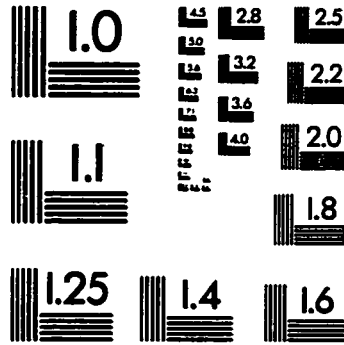
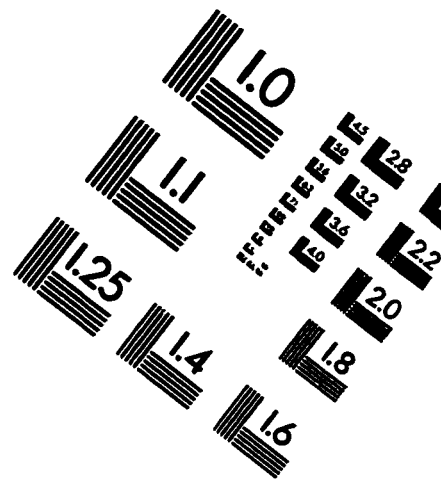
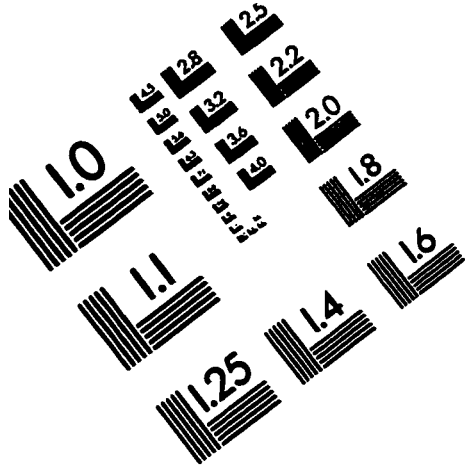
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