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Preface

The present volume contains the submitted papers of the 29th International Ludwig Wittgenstein Conference (ILWS) which took place in Kirchberg, Lower Austria, in the week from 6th to 12th August 2006. It was organized by Georg Gasser and Edmund Runnaldier (both from the University of Innsbruck), together with the author of this preface. The submitted papers have appeared already in the volume: “Cultures: Conflict-Analysis-Discourse. Papers. Kirchberg 2006.”

The papers presented at the workshops “How Successful is Naturalism?” and “Substance – Attribute. Islamic and Western Philosophy in Dialogue” appear at the same time in separate volumes in the ALWS-series of ontos. The former is edited by Georg Gasser, the latter by Christian Kanzian, University Innsbruck, and Muhammad Legenhausen, Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom.

The general topic of the 29th ILWS is the same as the title of this volume suggests. Our leading idea is to make aware of the chances of systematic philosophical dispute for promoting a substantial dialogue between different cultures. With this idea we remain in the tradition of the Kirchberg-conferences: to provide a platform for high-level philosophical discussions on actual philosophical issues.

Essential for every Kirchberg-conference is the Wittgenstein-section. The papers included in the first chapter are its result. The other sections are intended to cover several aspects of the philosophical dialogue we try to promote: Intercultural Dialogue from the Perspective of Logic (chapter 2), Theory of Action and Theory of Decision Making (chapter 3), Intercultural Philosophy (chapter 4), (Social-)Ethical Aspects of the Intercultural Dialogue, and Rational Structures of World Views (chapter 5). Last but not least, we present the main talks of a workshop on “Social Ontology” organized by Barry Smith.

We are especially proud to have the permission to publish the paper of Richard Rorty (“Wittgenstein and the Linguistic Turn”) in this volume. Professor Rorty accepted our invitation to be the opening lecturer of our conference. For medical reasons he had to withdraw his plan to come to
Kirchberg, but allowed that his paper was presented during the conference. Our special thanks go to Professor Wiredu who was ready to assume spontaneously Richard Rorty’s part as the opening speaker.

Keynote speakers alone are no guarantee for the scientific quality of a conference and its proceedings. Thus we have to mention that we could bring a large number of worldwide leading philosophers to Kirchberg. Have a look into the “Table of Contents” and you will find them. Thanks to them and to all of our contributors!

On behalf of the organizer’s committee I want to thank the board of the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein for the support of the idea of our conference and to our publisher ontos, represented by Dr. Rafael Hüntelmann, for the friendly cooperation. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Science sponsored this publication together with the Government of the Province of Lower Austria. We are very grateful for the given funding and understand the support as an expression that the idea of this volume is appreciated also by our official institutions: May our common efforts help to build bridges between our cultures, to find via philosophical analysis from conflict to continuous dialogue.

Christian Kanzian
There are profound differences of opinion among contemporary philosophers both about whether Wittgenstein is worth reading and about what one can learn from him. They parallel disagreements about whether, and in what sense, philosophical problems are problems of language. In this paper, I shall describe three views of Wittgenstein, corresponding to three ways of thinking about the so-called “linguistic turn in philosophy”. Doing so will help me defend two claims for which I have argued in the past. First: there is no interesting sense in which philosophical problems are problems of language. Second: the linguistic turn was useful nevertheless, for it turned philosophers’ attention from the topic of experience towards that of linguistic behavior. That shift helped break the hold of empiricism—and, more broadly, of representationalism.

Contemporary philosophers who call themselves “naturalists” typically see little value in Wittgenstein’s work. For them, the central topic of philosophy is what Phillip Pettit calls, in Sellarsian language, the clash between “the manifest image” and “the scientific image”. The manifest image incorporates what Pettit calls “the ideas that come with our spontaneous, everyday practices, such as the ideas we naturally have about freedom and consciousness, causation and law, value and duty”. The scientific image, he says, “challenges us to look for where in that world there can be room for phenomena that remain as vivid as ever in the manifest image: consciousness, freedom, responsibility, goodness, virtue and the like.”¹

Nothing in Wittgenstein’s writings is of any help with what Pettit calls problems about the “place” of these phenomena in a world of physical particles. For these so-called “location problems” are the good old metaphysical ones—problems about how the really real is related to the merely apparently real. Those who, like myself, have been convinced by Wittgenstein that philosophy should dissolve such problems rather than solve them

¹ Pettit 2004, 308.
regard the naturalists as reactionaries. They are turning their backs on advances that Wittgenstein helped us make.

Naturalists typically doubt that what Gustav Bergmann dubbed “the linguistic turn” was a good idea. Bergmann said that taking that turn was a result of the discovery that “the relation between language and philosophy is closer than, as well as essentially different from, that between language and any other discipline.”2 Though many admirers of Wittgenstein still believe something like this, most naturalists do not. As Timothy Williamson has written, “there is a increasingly widespread sense that the linguistic turn is past”.3

Williamson remarks that, from the point of view of admirers of Wittgenstein, “the revival of metaphysical theorizing, realist in spirit” will look like “a throwback to pre-Kantian metaphysics”.4 It does indeed. Williamson wants to break free of both Kantian and Wittgensteinian ways of thinking. Whereas Kant wanted philosophers to study thought rather than reality, Wittgenstein wanted them to study language. But, Williamson says, “perhaps one cannot reflect on thought or talk about reality without reflecting on reality itself…What there is determines what there is for us to mean”.5

Discussion of the issues that divide naturalists like Pettit and Williamson from admirers of Wittgenstein is complicated by disagreements about the import of Wittgenstein’s work. Some Wittgensteinians take seriously his suggestion that what philosophers do “is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI 116) and his claim that “philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (PI 126) They cite the concluding passages of the Tractatus, and sections 89-133 of Philosophical Investigations, as evidence that Wittgenstein must not be thought of as offering any theses or theories about language, or about anything else. He was, on their view, exclusively a therapist.

Let us call the people I have just described “Wittgensteinian therapists”. Their understanding of Wittgenstein’s importance differs from that of philosophers who, as I do, find support in his writings for pragmatist views of truth and knowledge. Call these people “pragmatic Wittgensteinians”.

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2 Bergmann 1992, 64f.
3 Williamson 2004, 106.
4 Williamson 2004, 111.
5 Williamson 2004, 111.
They tend to brush aside just those passages that the therapists think most important—his dicta about the origin of philosophical problems and the need to abjure philosophical theorizing. The pragmatic Wittgensteinians think that their hero’s importance consists in having replaced a bad theory about the relation between language and non-language, such as that offered in the Tractatus, with a better theory, the one offered in the Philosophical Investigations.

Neither the naturalists’ location problems nor “analytic metaphysics”, pragmatic Wittgensteinians say, will interest you unless hold two false beliefs. First: that language is a medium of knowledge only because it is tied down to non-language at certain particular points. Second: that the scientific image, by telling you what is really real, tells you what non-linguistic hitching-points are available. But Philosophical Investigations helped us see that this hitching-post idea can simply be dropped. On a pragmatic reading of that book, Wittgenstein is urging us to stop trying for what John McDowell calls “an external perspective” on language—a perspective enabling one to “view language side-ways on”. If we could view it from that angle, we could spot the places where it hooks on to the world.

Wittgensteinian therapists agree with McDowell that one should not try for a sideways-on view. But they do not want to substitute an alternative view. They claim that Wittgenstein wants philosophers to engage in an activity called “elucidation”, which is very different from that of propounding theses and backing them up with theories. To elucidate is not to replace one view of language by another, but to realize that any view about the relation between language and non-language is bound to be nonsense, and that philosophers who put forward such views have failed to attach a meaning to the words they use. On the therapists’ reading, Wittgenstein was not telling us anything substantive, but rather conducting what he called “a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (PI 109). Therapists accept his claim that “problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth…their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language”. (PI 111)

The people who take this tack sometimes refer to themselves as “resolute readers” of Wittgenstein’s works. Thomas Ricketts has applied this term to himself, Warren Goldfarb, Cora Diamond, James Conant, and various others. Readers of this sort accept the belief that Bergmann identified as the rationale for the linguistic turn in philosophy. They think that abandoning that belief amounts to repudiating Wittgenstein’s most important
contribution to philosophy. Pragmatic Wittgensteinians, by contrast, are accurately described by Edward Miner as treating “Wittgenstein’s observations on philosophy as expressions of a very particular and idiosyncratic view of its nature, a position more or less detachable from his treatments of specific philosophical problems.”

Pragmatic Wittgensteinians tend to be historicist in their metaphilosophical views. They think that the problems of pre-Kantian metaphysics, the problems that the naturalists have revivified, are hangovers from a particular moment in Western intellectual history. These problems originate not in a clash between common sense and science, but rather between the immaterialist notions that Christian theology had inherited from Plato and Aristotle and the mechanistic and materialistic world-picture sketched by Galileo and Newton. That clash was between metaphysical outlooks, not between metaphysics and a premetaphysical understanding of things.

This clash produced the Cartesian notion of ideas as appearances on the stage of an inner theatre, as well as the Lockean account of words as signs of such ideas. More generally, it produced a picture of knowledge as an attempt to acquire accurate mental representations of non-mental reality. Representationalist accounts of the relation between language and non-language emerged from the attempt to divide language into assertions that represent real things and those that do not. On this historicist view, Wittgenstein’s importance lies in his having helped wrench us out of our Cartesian-Lockean mindset. He helped us overcome the temptation to ask “Which pieces of our language lock on to reality, and which do not?” On this pragmatic view of his achievement, he did not show metaphysics to be nonsense. He simply showed it to be a waste of time.

2.

I have been describing a three-cornered debate. In one corner are the naturalists, who want to get past the linguistic turn. In another are the pragmatic Wittgensteinians, who think that replacing Kantian talk about experience, thought, and consciousness with Wittgensteinian talk about the uses of linguistic expressions helps us replace worse philosophical theories with better ones. In a third are the Wittgensteinian therapists, for whom the importance of the linguistic turn lies in helping us realize that philosophers have failed to give meaning to the words they utter. The people in the first

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6 Minar 1995, 413.
corner do not read Wittgenstein at all, and those in the other two read him very differently. I want now to describe the differences between these two readings in more detail.

The two camps disagree about the relation between early and later Wittgenstein. The therapists take the last pages of the *Tractatus* very seriously indeed. They do their best to tie them in with the metaphilosophical portions of *Philosophical Investigations*. In sharp contrast, the pragmatists tacitly dismiss the final passages of the *Tractatus* as an undigested residue of Schopenhauer. They regard sections 89-133 of the *Investigations* as an unfortunate left-over from Wittgenstein’s early, positivistic period—the period in which he thought that “The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science” (4.11). They have no more use for the claim that “The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense” (PI 129) than for the earlier claim that “Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical” (4.003).

Pragmatic readers of Wittgenstein are not much interested in his self-image—his claim to be doing something radically different from what other philosophers do. In this respect they resemble pragmatic readers of Heidegger, who brush aside a distinction on which Heidegger insisted—that between mere philosophizing, which was what Heidegger’s rivals and critics did, and a rarer and more important activity called “Thinking”, in which he himself was engaged. Pragmatic Wittgensteinians do not see him as exemplary, either morally or methodologically. But they do think that he formulated an assortment of powerful and original criticisms of Cartesian-Lockean views.

On their view, Wittgenstein’s contribution to philosophy consists principally of the critique of ostensive definition, the private-language argument, and the rule-following argument. So the *Tractatus* strikes them as a false start. About all they can find to salvage from that book is its account of objects, as expounded by Ishiguro and McGuiness. What Anscombe called “linguistic idealism”—the idea that the essence of an object is determined by the sorts of thing we say about it—fits in well with an anti-Lockean, non-representationalist account of knowledge. For it chimes with Davidson’s thesis that most of our beliefs about an object must be true, as well as with McDowell’s argument that “since the world is everything that is the case…there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world”.7

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7 McDowell 1994, 27. Williamson quotes this passage disapprovingly in his “Past the linguistic turn” (here Williamson 2004), 109f.
Pragmatic Wittgensteinians think that his really important contribution was to formulate arguments that anticipate, complement, and reinforce Quine’s and Davidson’s criticisms of the language-fact distinction, and Sellars’ and Brandom’s criticism of the idea of knowledge by acquaintance. On their view, comparing and contrasting the writings of these later philosophers with the *Philosophical Investigations* helps us filter out what is merely idiosyncratic in Wittgenstein’s writings. Pragmatic Wittgensteinians do not want to recapture Wittgenstein’s own way of thinking, but rather to restate his best arguments in more effective ways.

Naturalists sometimes refer to philosophers who are dubious about their revival of metaphysics as “Wittgensteinian quietists”. But this label is more appropriate for Wittgensteinian therapists like Conant and Diamond than for pragmatic Wittgensteinians. The therapists treat “philosophy” as the name of a disease that can be cured by recognizing that one has been uttering nonsense. The pragmatists, however, are not interested in getting rid of philosophical problems as such. They are dubious about the claim that philosophical problems constitute a natural kind. They are focused on certain particular problems—those that came into prominence in the seventeenth century.

These problems no longer arise once a representationalist account of thought and language is replaced with a “social practice” account. To the pragmatists, it is a matter of indifference whether one says that the old problems are thereby dissolved or that they have now been solved. For Cartesian and Lockean ideas were, on the pragmatist view, no less clear and coherent than their replacements, just as the concepts of natural place and of phlogiston were no less coherent than those of gravity and of molecular motion. But, like their analogues in natural science, the older ideas did not pan out. They became more trouble than they were worth.

From the pragmatist’s point of view, the positivists who initiated the linguistic turn in philosophy were wrong to think that there is a big difference between progress in empirical science and progress in philosophy. Consider the transition from Aristotelian hylomorphism to materialistic mechanism. Hylomorphism was neither nonsensical nor incoherent nor confused. Nor were the problems that Aristotelians discussed pseudo-problems. But those problems were forgotten once the advantages of the account offered by Galileo and Newton became evident. As with science, so with philosophy. Cartesian dualism, epistemological foundationalism,

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8 See Leiter 2004, 2f.
and the fact-value distinction do not embody category mistakes, nor are they the results of conceptual confusion. They incorporated ideas that played an important part in intellectual progress. By now, however, it is time to replace them with better ideas.

Pragmatic Wittgensteinians think that the linguistic turn was an unnecessary detour. Mindful of Davidson’s advice that we should cease to distinguish between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world generally, they see no point in picking out something called “language” as the source of philosophical problems. On their view, both scientists and philosophers help us learn to get around the world better. They do not employ distinct methods. The only difference between them is that we call a new theory “scientific” if it facilitates prediction and “philosophical” if it does not.

But pragmatic Wittgensteinians agree with the therapists that there are some important links between early and late Wittgenstein. As Jose Medina puts it, “A crucial point of continuity in Wittgenstein’s philosophy is the attempt to articulate a deflationary account of necessity that does away with the metaphysical view of necessity imagined as fact.”

But they think that his later “social practice” view of necessity leaves the notion of “obtaining complete clarity” in the lurch. Once he had begun to treat the “hardness of the logical ‘must’” as internalized peer pressure--pressure to use words in certain ways in certain circumstances--it would have been better for Wittgenstein to have criticized the kind of philosophy he disliked on grounds of uselessness rather than as “nonsense”.

In the *Tractatus*, the idea of rigid conditions for the meaningful use of an expression—conditions that we can get a clear view of—borrowed plausibility from the identification of the totality of true propositions with those used to state facts, the ones that compose the totality of the natural sciences. (Cf. 4.11) But once that restriction on the kind of expressions that can have a truth-value is dropped—once it is granted that moral judgments can be true in exactly the same way that empirical predictions can--it is hard to see how a sharp contrast between science and philosophy, or between philosophical discourse and other sorts of discourse, can survive.

In Wittgenstein’s later work, no attempt is made to address what Popper called “the demarcation problem”—tracing the border between good science and bad metaphysics. Nor does he try to justify the linguistic turn. Rather, he simply contrasts “the everyday use” of expressions with their...

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9 Medina 2002, 156.
“metaphysical” use. (PI 116). The former is, we are told, an unconfused use, the latter a confused one. Wittgenstein writes as if his readers will find it obvious that thinkers like Descartes, Locke, Hegel, and Heidegger were victims of “the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (PI 109) rather than original thinkers who, by using words in new ways, broke new paths of inquiry. He has no interest in putting himself in the shoes of the great dead philosophers, nor in treating them as responsive to the intellectual and sociopolitical exigencies of particular times and places.

In the language-game of the Tractatus, the contrast-term for both “metaphysics” and “nonsense” was “fact-stating, reality-picturing language”. Later that role is taken over by “the everyday use of words”. But we are told much less about everydayness in the later books than we were told about facts in the Tractatus. The everyday is described purely negatively. It is simply what philosophers are out of touch with. “Philosophy”, in the metaphilosophical sections of the Investigations, means something like “discussion of problems created by the misuse of language”. But the notion of “misuse of language”, like that of “nonsense”, strikes pragmatic readers of Wittgenstein as an explanation of the obscure by the more obscure.

3.

So much, for the moment, for the views of the pragmatic Wittgensteinians. I now want to offer a somewhat fuller account of the views of the therapists, the self-described “resolute readers”. The most original and provocative claim that these readers make is that Wittgenstein never accepted the logical positivists’ doctrine that philosophical problems arise out of misunderstandings of what they called “the logical syntax of language”. He never believed that there was such a syntax. His version of the linguistic turn was as idiosyncratic as his aphoristic style. So he should not be put in the same box as Schlick, Carnap, Russell, and Ayer.

James Conant argues for this view by distinguishing between Frege’s and Carnap’s “substantial conception of nonsense” and Wittgenstein’s own “austere” conception. Carnap explained the difference between “iggle piggle higgle” and Heidegger’s “Das Nichts nichtet” as the difference between an utterance composed of signs in which no meaning can be perceived and a sentences composed of meaningful signs arranged in ways that violated syntactical rules. Conant argues, very persuasively, that Wittgenstein, when he wrote the Tractatus, did not believe that there were such things as
“syntactical rules”. So the only sort of nonsense that he could countenance was “mere nonsense”, the sort exemplified by “iggle piggle higgle”. Conant writes as follows:

Tractarian elucidation aims to show that these sentences that apparently express substantially nonsensical thoughts actually express no thoughts. …The “propositions” we come out with when we attempt to formulate these problems are to be recognized as Unsinn. The only “insight” that a Tractarian elucidation imparts, in the end, is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions of thought….The illusion that the Tractatus seeks to dispel, above all, is that we can run up against the limits of language.10

Edward Witherspoon agrees with Conant, and cites a passage in Wittgenstein’s Cambridge lectures of the 1930’s. There Wittgenstein explicitly criticizes Carnapian attempts to distinguish two kinds of nonsense. He explicates this passage by noting that Carnapians “want to say that there are certain rules or conditions that these sentences do not conform to, and that they are therefore nonsense”. But to do this they “have had to quasi-analyze the utterance so as to show that it consists of meaningful concepts combined into a determinate quasi-logical form”11. By contrast, he says,

when Wittgenstein is confronted with an utterance that has no clearly discernible place in a language game, he does not assume that he can parse the utterance; rather, he invites the speaker to explain how she is using her words, to connect them with other elements of the language-game in a way that displays their meaningfulness…When Wittgenstein criticizes an utterance as nonsensical, he aims to expose, not a defect in the words themselves, but a confusion in the speaker’s relation to her words—a confusion that is manifested in the speaker’s failure to specify a meaning for them. (NW 345)

I have been persuaded by reading Conant, Witherspoon, Diamond, and other contributors to The New Wittgenstein, that Wittgenstein did indeed use “Unsinn” in a way different from either Frege or Carnap. I have also become convinced by them that Wittgenstein designed the Tractatus to be a self-consuming artifact. The recognition that the sentences of that book are Unsinn depends, as Conant puts it, “upon the reader’s actually undergoing a certain experience”, the attainment of which is “the sign that reader has understood the author of the work”.12 Wittgenstein, Conant continues,

10 Conant 2000, 197.
11 Witherspoon 2000, 345.
12 Conant 2000, 197.
“does not call upon the reader to understand his sentences, but rather to understand him, namely the author and the kind of activity in which he is engaged—one of elucidation….When the elucidation has served its purpose, the illusion of sense is exploded from within”.13

But though I am inclined to accept this as an accurate account of Wittgenstein’s intentions, and am grateful to his resolute readers for providing it, I have no interest in undertaking the project Conant describes. My reaction to Wittgenstein’s attempt to explode illusions of sense from within is the same as to Kierkegaard’s attempt to escape from the aesthetic to the ethical, and then from the ethical to the consciousness of Sin: C’est magnifique, mais ce n’est pas la guerre. Admirers of Dewey like myself think that the point of reading philosophy books is not self-transformation but rather cultural change. It is not to find a way of altering one’s inner state, but rather to find better ways of helping us overcome the past in order to create a better human future.

Despite their disagreements with Dewey, the positivists shared his conception of philosophy as a form of cultural politics. Carnap and Ayer thought that they might be able to make society more rational by formulating the rules that govern our use of language. They believed themselves to have acquired a superior grasp of those rules, thanks to their familiarity with symbolic logic. By spelling out those rules, they hoped to get undisciplined thinkers back on the rails. Their understanding of “the logical syntax of language” would enable them to draw a clear line between the cognitively meaningful and the cognitively meaningless. But once one gives up the notion that there is such a syntax, it is hard to see why one should take the linguistic turn. By turning his back on that notion, Wittgenstein may have made it impossible to defend Bergmann’s claim that “the relation between language and philosophy is closer than, as well as essentially different from, that between language and any other discipline”.

Nobody now thinks that the positivists’ Kulturpolitisch initiatives bore fruit. If Carnap had been less eager to bring symbolic logic to bear, and a bit more patient, he could easily have connected “Das Nichts nichtet” with “other elements of the language-game in a way that displays its meaningfulness” (to use Witherspoon’s phrasing). The language-game in question is one that Heidegger deliberately and self-consciously created. It is utterly implausible to think that Heidegger might have been led, by a process of elucidation, to find himself “confused about his relation to his own words”.

13 Conant 2000, 198.
Like Descartes, Locke, Kant, Newton, and Einstein, he gave a technical sense to familiar terms, and invented neologisms, hoping thereby to expand our linguistic repertoire in ways that would bear fruit.

Pragmatists like myself typically find most of the language-games Heidegger invented unprofitable. We think it unlikely, for example, that there is anything useful to be said about the relation between Being and Nothing. But we also suspect that there is nothing interesting to be said about the distinction between sense and nonsense. If we adopt the social-practice view of language, there seems no way to reconstruct the relevant idea of “confusion”. Anything will have a sense if you try hard enough to give it one. Nor will there be any way to identify a disease called “philosophy”, one that needs to be elucidated away.

To see this point, it helps to consider the difference between the everyday use of epithets like “confused” and “nonsensical” and their technical use by Wittgensteinian therapists. When Descartes mocked the Aristotelian definition of motion (“the actualization of the potential qua potential”) as unintelligible, he did not try to back up this charge with argument. The term “unintelligible” was just a rhetorical flourish. His point was simply that it would be better to treat “motion” as a primitive term than to try to synthesize mechanism with hylomorphism. When other fans of the New Science called various Scotist and Ockamite doctrines “nonsense” they did not mean that these authors had failed to attach meaning to the words they used. Rather, they used “nonsense” to mean something like “not worth bothering about, now that Aristotle has been dethroned by Galileo and Newton”. “Useless” would have been as appropriate an epithet as “confused”.

It was Kant who first made charges of confusion and senselessness more than casual polemical rhetoric. When he rebuked the natural theologians for misusing the terms “cause” and “substance”, he backed up his point by argument. One such argument started off by exhibiting the antinomies created by the attempt to use those terms to describe non-spatio-temporal entities. These antinomies were already familiar, and Kant’s originality lay in his attempt to erect a general theory about proper and improper use of concepts. This theory was put forward as the fruit of a new-fangled discipline called “transcendental philosophy”. Kant thought that we needed a general theory of representation if we were to understand what had gone wrong in the history of philosophy. By erecting one, he gave philosophy a new lease on life, and ensured its survival as an academic discipline.
Kant’s own theory, however, seemed to many of his critics to be more trouble than it was worth. To replace metaphysics with transcendental philosophy, they suggested, was to adopt a remedy as bad as the disease it claimed to cure. For this new kind of philosophy required one to take seriously what Strawson was to call “the mythical subject of transcendental psychology”—a mongrel discipline, neither logic nor psychology. It also required one to profess an understanding of the term “thing-in-itself”—a willingness that many who relished Kant’s criticisms of both Hume and Leibniz were unable to muster.

When the initiators of the linguistic turn decided that it was time to draw a bright line between logic and psychology, they still wanted to do what Kant had failed to do: to put philosophy on the secure path of science. So they announced the discovery of a new discipline—one that would serve many of the same purposes as Kantian transcendental psychology, but would be “purely formal”. This one--variously named “linguistic philosophy”, “philosophy of language”, and “a systematic theory of meaning”--would enable us to do what Kant had tried and failed to do. It would let us either solve or dissolve all the old philosophical problems. It could do this because it would be a theory not of representation in general, but of linguistic representation.

As a result of the popularity of the linguistic turn, “nonsense” became a term of philosophical art--just as “representation” had become one in the wake of Kant. Philosophers began to think of themselves as specialists in detecting nonsense. Philosophy’s job would be done, they suggested, when all our concepts had been analyzed. All that we had to do was use some common sense, and some symbolic logic, and the traditional problems of philosophy would dissolve. Once we realized that the problems of philosophy were, in some sense or other, problems of language, all would be plain sailing.

But the failure of the positivists’ intervention in cultural politics is now evident. The idea that philosophers should employ “linguistic methods” to expose the illusory character of philosophical problems has come to seem merely quaint. Despite the importance of Ryle’s work in clearing the way for philosophers of mind such as Sellars, Dennett, and Davidson, nobody now wants to charge Descartes with having made a “category mistake”. Nobody thinks he unhappily did not notice that statements about the mind are “mongrel categorical-hypotheticals”. Nor does anyone nowadays see much point in Austin’s maxim that “ordinary language is always the first word”. Though many philosophers still accept the label “analytic”, they no
longer undertake to explain what a “philosophical analysis” of a concept is, nor by what rigorous standards alternative analyses are to be judged. They are content simply to argue for one or another philosophical theory, without claiming to wield special, specifically linguistic, methodological tools.

The transcendental turn and the linguistic turn were both taken by people who thought that disputes among philosophers might fruitfully be viewed from an Archimedean point outside the controversies these philosophers conduct. The idea, in both cases, was that we should step back from the controversy and show that the clash of theories is possible only because both sets of theorists missed something that was already there, waiting to be noticed. For Kant, they did not notice the limits set by the nature of our faculties. For those who initiated the linguistic turn, they failed to grasp the conditions of linguistic significance.

This “stepping back” move is hard to reconcile with the “social practice” view of language and thought that pragmatic readers find between the lines of the *Investigations*. That is the view epitomized in the Wittgensteinian maxim “Don’t look for the meaning, look for the use”. It is not a “use-theory of meaning”, but rather a repudiation of the idea that we need a way of determining meanings. It sees the attempt to have such a theory as succumbing to the hope that language can be viewed sideways-on, making visible the hitching-posts at which language is tied to the world. Wittgenstein’s maxims suggest to pragmatic readers that any utterance can be given significance by being batted around long enough in more or less pre-

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14 Davidson does not think that anybody should try to write out a T-theory for a natural language, nor that doing so would put us in a position to dissolve pseudo-problems. Brandom thinks that the content of an assertion is rarely, if ever, the same for any two users of the same linguistic expression. Neither invokes the claim that philosophical problems are problems of language. In “Wittgenstein’s philosophy in relation to political thought”, (included in *The new Wittgenstein*, cited above) page 131, Crary rightly says that if we view a “use-theory of meaning” as a view about how to fix meaning, then we should not attribute any such theory to Wittgenstein. Quite so, but neither should we attribute it to Davidson or Brandom.

Crary (ibid., 127) notes that I have come to repudiate the idea that philosophical views I dislike are “incoherent”, but thinks that I am thereby committed to denying our “entitlement to certain epistemic ideals”. Her criticism of me, and in particular of what she calls my “relativism”, seems to depend upon attributing to me a view I would neither accept nor ascribe to Wittgenstein: that because use fixes meaning, and because meaning must change as use does, the boundaries between differing uses are “inviolable”. Someone who accepts Brandom’s inferentialist view of content, or Davidson’s criticisms of the very idea of a conceptual scheme, has no use for the idea of inviolable barriers—barriers that further conversation cannot break down.
dictable ways. One can distinguish more useful from less fruitful ways of speaking, and thus better scientific or philosophical theories from worse theories. But it is hard to make a place for Wittgenstein’s notion of “disguised nonsense”.

4.

Alice Crary explicitly rejects pragmatic appropriations of Wittgenstein. She thinks it a mistake to read Wittgenstein as having favored “certain metaphysical theses about the nature of logic and language in the Tractatus” and as having rejecting them later “in favor of something like their negations”.15 The view she thinks wrong is pretty much the one I hold, but I would reformulate her statement of it by omitting both the word “metaphysical” and the phrase “the nature of”. Pragmatists, at least those of my persuasion, would rather just say that Wittgenstein changed his mind about how best to talk about logic and language.

I suspect that Crary, Conant, and Diamond would reply that one cannot eschew metaphysics while still offering theories about the relation between language and reality. For Crary defines a metaphysical sentence as a one “presented from an external point of view on language”. Presumably she regards “social practice” accounts of language such as Davidson’s and Brandom’s as so presented. She thinks that such a point of view is one “we aspire to or think we need to assume when philosophizing—a point of view on language as if outside from which we imagine we can get a clear view of the relation between language and the world.” This, she says, is “no more than the illusion of a point of view”. When we assume such a point of view “we don’t wind up saying anything coherent about how things stand.”16

Pragmatic Wittgensteinians are willing to go along with this line of thought to the following extent: we agree that there is nothing useful to say about the relation between two large entities called “Language” and “World”. We suspect that these entities are just the familiar, and rather disreputable, entities formerly known as “Subject” and “Object”. There is, however, a lot to be said about our linguistic behavior. One example is Davidson’s thesis that most of our beliefs must be true. Another is Brandom’s explanation of why we have de re predication, and singular terms, in our language. A suitable selection of such holist and inferentialist doctrines

15 Crary 2000, 4.
16 Crary 2000, 6.
is what I have been referring to, casually and for convenience of reference, as a “social practice” theory of language. This theory found much of its initial inspiration in Wittgenstein’s critique of ostensive definition and of “knowledge by acquaintance”.

Are Sellars, Davidson, McDowell and Brandom assuming “the illusion of a point of view”? I see no reason to think so. They do not seem to suffer from the “natural disappointment with the conditions of human knowledge” that Crary, following Stanley Cavell, says gives rise to “our tendency to become entangled in philosophical confusion”. Their writings do not display any sign of ever having taken epistemological skepticism very seriously.

But Wittgensteinian therapists seem to agree with Cavell that such disappointment comes as naturally to us as does, according to Freud, Oedipal resentment. On this view, philosophy is not just one area of culture among others, an area some people find of interest and many others do not, but rather a trap into which anyone who begins to reflect is bound to fall. “The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language…are deep disquietudes”. (PI 111)

I do not think that that sort of disappointment is widespread, but I do think that the therapists are on to something. That is the fact that many, though hardly all, people who find philosophy intriguing are in search of the ineffable—something that cannot be put into words. Sometimes this is for a vision of the Good or of God. In recent times, however, partially as a cause and partially as an effect of the linguistic turn in philosophy, it has expressed itself as a a desire for contact with “the World” that is not mediated through language. I think Wittgenstein felt this desire very deeply but recognized, early and late, that it could not possibly be fulfilled. So I think that Conant is on the right track when he says that “The aim of [the Tractatus] is to show us that beyond ‘the limits of language’ lies---not ineffable truth, but rather…einfach Unsinn, simply nonsense.”

Wittgenstein seems to have thought that the urge to penetrate beyond the effable, the need to break through language to something better, was more than just a relatively uncommon form of obsessional neurosis—one that he himself shared with certain other unfortunates. He apparently believed it to be part of the human condition. He thought that by looking more closely at the results of succumbing to this urge we might come to understand better what it is to be a human being.

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17 Crary 2000, 8.
18 Conant 2000, 197.
It is certainly true that the desire to get in touch with something that stays the same despite being described in many different ways keeps turning up in philosophy. Resistance to Wittgenstein’s critique of ostensive definition, or to Putnam’s doctrine of the relativity of reference, can easily be seen as manifestations of this desire. The need to shove language aside and get at reality “directly” reinforces the idea that demonstratives mark the location of hitching-posts, the places where language locks on to the world: “This is what we mean by red!”.

The same desire, I think, underlies Kripke’s attempt to use the expression “This very thing” as a way of pinning down an object independent of its description. It motivates Timothy Williamson’s insistence that ontology is prior to philosophy of language because, pace Sellars, “In defining words—for example, natural kind terms—we must point at real specimens.”\(^{19}\) It produces many other such attempts to find what Derrida called “a serene presence beyond the reach of play”.

But it is not obvious that this desire, the one that sometimes manifests itself as the need to “emit an inarticulate sound” (PI 216) has deep roots. A desire may be shared by Parmenides, Meister Eckhart, Russell, Heidegger, and Kripke without being intrinsic to the human condition. Are we really in a position to say that this desire is a manifestation of what Conant calls “our most profound confusions of soul”?\(^{20}\) Wittgenstein was certainly convinced that it was. But this conviction may tell us more about Wittgenstein than about philosophy. The more one reflects on the relation between Wittgenstein’s technical use of “philosophy” and its everyday use, the more he appears to have redefined “philosophy” to mean “all those bad things I feel tempted to do”.

Such persuasive redefinitions of “philosophy” are characteristic of the attempt to step back from philosophy as a continuing conversation and to see that conversation against a stable, ahistorical background. Knowledge of that background, it is thought, will permit one to criticize the conversation itself, rather than joining in it. The Kantian transcendental turn and the later linguistic turn were, as I have already said, examples of such inevitably unsuccessful attempts to step out of the conversation. Kant could not answer the question of how he had managed to acquire so much non-empirical knowledge about the limits of thought. The philosophers who agreed with Bergmann that philosophical problems are problems of language were unable to cope with the fact that their accounts of “the logic of

\(^{19}\) Williamson 2004, 111.

\(^{20}\) Conant 2000, 196.
language” were just practical suggestions about how it might be best for us to talk.

Once we give up on the project of “stepping back”, we will think of the strange ways in which philosophers talk not as needing to be elucidated out of existence, but as suggestions for talking differently, on all fours with suggestions made by scientists and poets. A few philosophers, we may admit, are “like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it”. (PI 194) But most of them are not. They are, rather, contributors to the progress of civilization. Knowledgeable about the dead ends down which we have gone in the past, they are anxious that future generations should fare better. If we see philosophy in this historicist way, we shall have to give up on the idea that there is a special relation between something called “language” and something else called “philosophy”.

Richard Rorty, May 24, 2006

REFERENCES


1. Introduction

Colors play a major role in Wittgenstein’s transitional period, roughly from 1930 to 1932. A considerable number of notebook and typescript entries from this period suggest the importance of colors, as well as some longer remarks in his conversations with the Vienna Circle. Many of these entries and remarks belong to the most opaque material from what is perhaps the least accessible period of Wittgenstein’s philosophical development. After assembling the Big Typescript (1932/33), Wittgenstein put the issues connected with color aside, only to take them up again almost twenty years later, in the Remarks on Color (1950). While his views on color in the last years of his life have found widespread attention among his commentators, little work has been done on his views on color in the early 30s. The aim of the present paper is to shed some light on both the details and the overall strategy of what Wittgenstein, in the early 30s, has to say about color. In particular, it emphasizes the role of the concept of logical multiplicity (logische Mannigfaltigkeit) in Wittgenstein’s approach to color and color representation in the period of 1930–32.

At various places in his notebooks of this period, Wittgenstein ascribes logical multiplicity to colors and color predicates. Obviously, the concept of a logical multiplicity is borrowed, more proximately, from his early philosophy and, more distantly, from the work of Helmholtz and Hertz (who derived it from Riemann). Helmholtz characterizes the concept as follows:

_Riemann _calls a system of differences, in which each particular can be specified by means of _n_ measures a _n_-fold extended multiplicity [n-fach ausgedehnte Mannigfaltigkeit] or a multiplicity of _n_ dimensions. Thus the space known to us, in which we live, is a threefold extended multiplicity of points, a surface a twofold one, a line a onefold one, and time equally a onefold one. (Helmholtz 1977, 12)

The early Wittgenstein uses the concept of logical multiplicity to explicate the concept of internal relation. According to the _Tractatus_, internal relations hold between two states of affairs of the same logical multiplicity,
e.g., between a gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves. Relations of the same kind also hold between elementary propositions and states of affairs (see TLP 4.014). For the early Wittgenstein, having the same logical multiplicity involves two features: (1) the same number of simple, unanalyzable components (names, in the case of propositions, and simple objects, in the case of states of affairs) forming a configuration of the same structure, and (2) a logical space of possibilities of the same structure determined by the modal properties of the simple components—properties determining their possible configurations.

In the period of 1930–32, Wittgenstein modifies the Tractatus view of internal relations in a significant way. One of the decisive moments in his years of transition was that—on January 1, 1930—Wittgenstein came to the view that “the concept of elementary proposition now loses all its significance” (WA 2.158.4). Giving up the apparatus of elementary propositions and (elementary) state of affairs brings with it that he is no longer able to analyze logical multiplicities in terms of the number and configuration of simple constituents of propositions and facts. Moreover it brings with it that he no longer can analyze possibilities in terms of possible combinations of simple objects. On first glance, it might seem as if giving up the apparatus of elementary propositions and simple objects brings an end to the concept of logical multiplicity and, with it, to the concept of internal relations.

Nevertheless, in the period of 1930–32, Wittgenstein keeps on connecting the concept of a logical multiplicity to the concept of a space of possibilities. For example, red is embedded in a space to which, among others, yellow, orange, dark red, blue-red, and blue belong, but not red-green or blue-yellow. Likewise, a color predicate is embedded in a space of possible color predicates. According to Wittgenstein’s view in the early 30s, a proposition describing a color is internally related to the described color if the logical multiplicity of the color predicate matches the logical multiplicity of the color. Intuitively, the idea seems to be that the logical multiplicity of a color predicate matches the logical multiplicity of a color if the color predicate is embedded in a space of possible color predicates in the same way as the color is embedded in a space of possible colors.

In which way did Wittgenstein think that different systems of color representation can have different logical multiplicities? To begin with, different systems of color representation can have different multiplicities in the sense that they involve more or less fine-grained distinctions between color predicates. A more technical question, to which Wittgenstein returns re-
peatedly, is whether orange lies in the same sense between red and yellow as red lies between blue-red and orange (WA 2.213.6). He holds that if “lying in between” in the first case means “being a mixture of two pure colors” and in the second case “being a common component of two mixed colors”, the multiplicity of the application of this expression would be different—a difference not of degree but of category (WA 2.219.2). Different systems of color representation give different answers to this question: using a double cone with a color circle in the middle and white and black at the tops does not differentiate between the two cases. Using such a system of color representation implies a conception of differences of color as gradual differences without marking any shade of color as “pure”. Things are different with a system of color representation using a double eight-sided pyramid, since in this case the “pure” colors red, blue, green, and yellow are marked as points. Representing color by means of a color octahedron adds the relation of “lying in the middle between” two pure colors, since there also red-blue, blue-green, green-yellow, and orange are marked as points (see WA 2.213.6).

In the early 30s, Wittgenstein does not regard the multiplicity of a space of possibilities as something given independently of systems of representation. In particular, in the case of color he holds that there are no language-independent formal properties of colors that necessitate a particular system of color representation (see PR 4). Rather, he maintains that the multiplicity of a given color depends on the multiplicity of the chosen system of representation. The aim of much of what follows in this paper is to explicate Wittgenstein’s views on the role of conceptions in representing color and to make clear the motivations that stand behind his view that the multiplicity of systems of color representation is constitutive of the multiplicity in which we conceive colors.

2. Internal Relations and Color Representation

In his conversations with the Vienna Circle in 1930, Wittgenstein addresses the concept of internal relation and its application to the case of color in some detail. As he points out, “[t]he whole question of external and internal is tremendously confused.” Nevertheless, he goes on to clarify some points about internal and external relations. He draws the following distinction: “A relation that says ‘how?’ is external. It is expressed by a proposition. ‘Internal’—we have two propositions between which a formal relation holds” (WVC 54–55). This way of distinguishing between external
and internal relations suggests that propositions can describe external relations, while relations between propositions exemplify internal relations. Yet there also are other examples of internal relations. Wittgenstein points out: “What I cannot say is that 2 is greater than 1.5. That is internal.” By contrast, that one line is 0.5m longer than another line is an external relation. What is external about this relation is explained as follows: “There I obviously have an external relation; for one can just as well imagine that line a was shorter than b …” (ibid.). This way of arguing for the external character of the relation between two lines suggests that what makes a relation an external one is the possibility of imagining that the relata stand in a different relation to each other. While this is the case with two given lines, it is not the case with two given numbers: if the numbers 2 and 1.5 is given, it is unthinkable that the one is not greater than the other. That this is Wittgenstein’s view of what makes a relation an internal one is confirmed by what he says about relations between different colors: “I cannot say that one color is darker than the other one. For this is of the essence of a color; without it, after all, a color cannot be thought” (WVC 55). Of course, one can imagine that two suits or two points in space have other colors than they actually have. That one suit is darker than another suit and that one point of space is darker than another are external relations between suits or points in space. As Wittgenstein puts it: “I have an external relation as soon as I bring in space; but between pure qualities of color only internal relations can obtain. After all, I have no other means of characterizing colors than by means of their quality” (ibid.). The last sentence in this quotation suggests that, since we have no other means of characterizing colors than by means of their quality, and since relations of being lighter or darker belong to the relations of these qualities, it is unthinkable that colors do not stand in these relations to each other.

Are internal relations between colors, according to the Wittgenstein of the early 30s, independent of the way we represent colors? Interestingly, the notion of color representation occurs in Wittgenstein’s discussion of how colors form a system. Schlick asks Wittgenstein to consider the following case:

How would it be, for example, if a person was locked in a red room for his whole life and could not see any color but red? Or if a person’s entire visual field contained only a uniform red? Could he then say to himself, ‘I see only red; but there must also be other colors’? (WVC 65)
Schlick’s concern is whether the claim that colors form a system is an empirical or an a priori claim, i.e., about whether the system of colors presupposes a system of color experiences. Wittgenstein responds that, in order to know the system of colors, it is unnecessary to ask how many colors a person must have experienced. He compares the case of colors to the case of space, where even a person locked in a room knows that space extends beyond this room, even if this is not a matter of experience. According to Wittgenstein, the possibility of being outside the room is an a priori part of what he calls the “syntax of space” (WVC 65-66). Making the possibilities of being located in space dependent on the syntax of propositions about spatial locations suggests that, in Wittgenstein’s view, the structure of space is not independent of the system of spatial representation. Rather, the possibility of being outside the room is presupposed by the possibilities of specifying spatial locations inherent in the system of spatial representation. In this sense, the logical space of possible spatial locations is not independent of the logical space of possible specifications of spatial locations.

Something analogous holds for the way colors form a system. In the case of the person in the red room, Wittgenstein distinguishes between two cases: The first case is that the syntax of the person in the red room is the same as ours, involving, e.g., distinctions expressed by means of predicates such as “red”, “redder”, “bright red”, “yellowish red”, etc (and, presumably, the exclusion of predicates such as “red-green”). In this case, Wittgenstein holds that this person has our complete system of colors. The second case is that her syntax is not the same. In that case, Wittgenstein holds that she does not know even a single color in our sense at all. As he summarizes his view: “The crucial point is not how many colors one has seen, but the syntax” (WVC 66-67). Tying the system of colors in this way to the syntax of color indicates that Wittgenstein regards the system of colors as involving a system of color representation.

The analogy between the syntax of spatial representation and the syntax of color representation indicates that a space of possibilities plays a similar role in both cases. Indeed, Wittgenstein uses the notion of logical multiplicity to characterize how colored patches on a surface are represented:

[T]he description will contain equations for lines and indices for colors, these elements of description are necessary, i.e. every possible description must have this multiplicity. The description may also be incomplete. I say for example, ‘The inside of a certain patch is blue, outside it the paper is partly white, partly black’ (WVC 75).
These remarks indicate that propositions about colors possess a logical multiplicity. The relevant multiplicities of sentences describing colors or lengths are in the dimension of the space of possible specifications of color. Moreover, the logical space of color specifications presupposes the existence of a logical space of colors. Consider the following passage:

[I]f everything I saw were red and I could describe it, then I should also have to be able to construct the proposition that it was not red. This presupposes the possibility of other colors. Or else red is something that I cannot describe—then I have no proposition either and there is nothing I can deny … (WVC 88-89)

Describing a color presupposes the possibility of other, incompatible descriptions of color, and the possibility of other descriptions presupposes the possibility of other colors. In this sense, both propositions about colors and colors are in a space of possibilities. Moreover, the concept of a space of possibilities clarifies the concept of a system of colors: Colors form a system since each color is embedded in a space of other possible colors. This is why Wittgenstein holds that seeing any color presupposes the possibility of red (WA 2.92.1).

3. Internal Relations and Intermediary Colors

Introducing the concept of a system of colors as what is presupposed by the syntax of color representation provides Wittgenstein with a characterization of the internal relations between a proposition describing a color and the color: the proposition and the color are internally related in case the proposition and the color are part of systems with the same logical multiplicity. However, if the multiplicity of a given system of colors is thought of only in terms of the number of possible colors, any color within the system has the same multiplicity as any other color in the same system. Likewise, if the multiplicity of a given system of color representation is thought of only in terms of the number of possible color predicates, any predicate has the same multiplicity as any other predicate in the same system. But, even if the same number of possibilities is a necessary condition for color representation, it cannot be a sufficient condition, since in this case any predicate in a given system of color representation could represent any color in a color system of the same multiplicity. Indeed, Wittgenstein has a richer notion of the logical multiplicity of color and color predicates. In particular, the possible relations between color predicates are a defining characteristic of the multiplicity of a system of color representation. Like-
wise, the possible relations between colors are a defining characteristic of the multiplicity of a color system. This becomes clear in Wittgenstein’s discussion of the relation of “lying in between” two colors.

In his notebooks of 1930–31, Wittgenstein repeatedly discusses the question of whether orange lies in a different sense in between red and yellow than red lies in between orange and red-blue. In notebook entries of 1930, he considers two plausible ways of thinking about the relations of “lying in between”. One of them is to think of the mixture of two colors in a way such that the resulting intermediate color contains the two colors as components (Bestandteile) (see WA 2.214.2). In fact, thinking about internal relations between colors in this way is closely similar to Helmholtz’s conception of the logical multiplicity of color, and although Wittgenstein does not mention this conception explicitly, the physiological tradition inspired by Helmholtz might well be the background against which Wittgenstein develops his own, diverging, view. Helmholtz holds that the colour system consists of a three-fold multiplicity, insofar as every colour can be represented as a mixture of a certain quantity of the three basic colors. Moreover, he maintains that by using a colored spinning top, one can actually carry out such measurements (Helmholtz 1977, 12). Indeed, Wittgenstein embraces such a view of the mixture of colors at least once, at an early stage of his conversations with the Vienna Circle: “Whatever color I see, I can represent each of them by mentioning the four elementary colors red, yellow, blue, green and adding how this particular color is to be generated from the elementary colors” (WVC 42). However, in his notebooks, he soon becomes skeptical about a conception of mixture in terms of common components. In particular, he realizes that the mixture of pigments is irrelevant for his investigation because, as he points out, this way of thinking about intermediary colors only indicates the way in which the pureness of a color could be defined as an external property (see WA 2.215.1). By contrast, Wittgenstein points out: “To see that pure color is not a property—external property—of a color means to see that I couldn’t think that—e.g.—purple has this color or that pure blue doesn’t have it” (WA 2.220.4). But if mixture is not understood in terms of a mixture of pigments, it becomes questionable whether a conception of mixture in term of common components of a color along the lines suggested by Helmholtz makes sense. Wittgenstein remarks: “Does gray have something of black in the same sense as black of gray?! Obviously not, for I can get from white through gray to black but not from gray through black to white” (WA 2.214.5). There are cases in which a conception of intermediate colors as
having the same components as the colors they lie in between does not make sense. This leaves Wittgenstein with the question of whether there are cases in which it does make sense to say that a color has other colors as components: “The question is whether what is relevant for the internal relation between two colors are only the pathways by means of which they can be transformed into each other” (WA 2.214.10). He considers the following case:

In addition to the transition from color to color on the color circle, there appears to exist a certain different one, with which we are confronted when we see small patches of the one color mixed with small patches of the other color. Of course, I here mean a seen transition.

And this kind of transition gives to the word “mixture” a new meaning, which does not coincide with the relation¹ ‘between’ on the color circle. (WA 2.215.2)

One case in which an analysis of an intermediate color in terms of a mixture of small patches of pure colors seems to make sense is the case of orange. However, Wittgenstein objects, “if I say, in the ordinary sense, that red and yellow yield orange, nothing is said about the quantity of components” (WA 2.217.3). He goes on to explain: “[I]f a certain orange is given, I can’t say that more red would have made it a redder orange (I don’t talk about pigments), although of course it makes sense to speak of a redder orange. But it does not make sense, e.g., to say that this orange and this purple contain the same amount of red. And how much red would red contain?” (WA 2.217.3). His objection seems to be that a quantitative and compositional analysis along the lines suggested by Helmholtz does not have anything to do with the semantics of ordinary propositions about color. And holding on to an analysis of color that does not have anything to do with our ordinary way of speaking is contrary to Wittgenstein’s view that “analysis is analysis of something that we have; not of something that we do not have” (WA 2.158.3). But, then, what are we to make of such patently quantitative expressions such as “add more red”? Wittgenstein suggests the following solution:

The comparison that one is erroneously tempted to make is the one between the color series with a system of two weights on a scale such that by means of augmenting or shifting the weights I can move the point of gravity of the system …

¹ “the relation” inserted by Wittgenstein.
Does it mean anything to say, more of this red? … It can only mean something if I understand with pure red a certain previously assumed number of units. But then, the full number of these units does not mean anything but that the cup stands on red. By means of ratio numbers, again only a place on the scale is specified but not a place and a weight. (WA 2.218.1)

Although this passage is far from being crystal clear, Wittgenstein’s point seems to be that specifying the number of units of a particular color does not make sense, not does it specify the number of components of a given intermediate color. Rather, all that can be achieved by means of a quantitative specification such as “more of this red”—meaning, presumably, more of a particular shade of red—is to specify a place on the color scale. In this case, such quantitative specifications implicitly involve the reference to a particular system of color representation, such as the color scale. The internal relation holding between two colors and an intermediate color, then, is not a relation that involves common components but rather relative positions in a particular system of color representation. Thus, in the case of orange the only sense of “mixture” is the one that coincides with the relation in lying in between red and yellow on the color scale.

In a set of notebook entries of 1931, Wittgenstein comes back to internal relations between colors. He writes:

It must lie in the essence (in the grammar)\(^2\) of this red shade that a more or less of it is possible; a reddish blue can be more or less close to pure red and hence, in this sense, contain more or less red. The proposition that specifies that red, as an ingredient of a color, is present here would have to mention\(^3\) somehow a quantity of red; but in this case, the proposition would have to have sense even apart from the logical product, and it would have to make sense to say that this place is colored purely red and contains\(^4\) this and that quantity of red, and this does not make sense. (WA 4.230; BT 100)

Thus, quantitative statements about colors such as red are not about the quantity of components of, e.g., pure red. Rather, that a given color, such as reddish blue, can contain more or less red is a matter of the grammar of color statements. Again, this suggests that quantitative statements about colors specify a particular position in a system of color representation.

His rejection of a view of internal relations between colors in terms of common components makes clear in which sense Wittgenstein thinks

\(^2\) “(in the grammar)” inserted by Wittgenstein.
\(^3\) First variant: “specify”.
\(^4\) “contains” underlined by Wittgenstein with a wavy line.
about relations between colors as structural relations. He writes: “A mixed color, or rather intermediate color, of blue and red is mixed by means of an internal relation to the structures of blue and red.” The structures of blue and red, however, are not to be understood in terms of a quantitative specification of common components but rather in terms of the grammatical relations between color predicates: “Expressed more correctly: what we call an ‘intermediate color of blue and red’ (or ‘blue-red’), is called so due to a kinship that shows itself in the grammatical determinations about the words5 ‘blue’, ‘red’ and ‘blue-red’.” He explains: “The proposition that talks about an internal relation of the structures already arises from an incorrect conception; from the one, which sees in the concepts red, blue, etc. complicated structures (buildings6); which we at first see from the outside and the inner construction of which analysis must show7.” If intermediate colors are not analyzed in terms of common components, there is no sense in which colors can have a compositional structure. Hence, also internal relations between colors cannot be understood as relations between compositional structures. As an alternative to a compositional analysis of colors, Wittgenstein suggests the following:

[T]he kinship (Verwandtschaft) between the pure colors and their intermediate color is of an elementary kind; i.e., it does not consist in this that the proposition which ascribes to an object the color blue-red consists of the propositions which ascribe to it the colors red and blue. And, hence, also8 the kinship between different degrees of a reddish blue, e.g., is an elementary kinship. (WA 4.238.3)

Moreover, in the first two variants of this passage, Wittgenstein rejects the view that the proposition ascribing the intermediate color is “the (or a) logical product of the propositions” ascribing the pure colors. Because the proposition ascribing the intermediate color does not display the complexity of a logical product of propositions about pure colors, so the argument seems to go, the intermediate color, too, cannot display the complexity required in order to be analyzable in terms of similarities as to compositional structure. The relation of an intermediate color to the colors it lies in between is an elementary relation in the sense that it involves the relation of the predicate of the intermediate color to the color predicates it lies in between in a chosen system of color representation. This how, in the case of

5 First variant: “in the grammar of the words”.
6 First variant: “mechanisms”.
7 First variant: “will reveal”.
8 “also” inserted by Wittgenstein.
intermediary colors, the multiplicity of the system of color representation is constitutive of the multiplicity of the system of colors.

REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

1. Lebensform: the initial exposition

There are two fundamental obstacles when we are trying to make use of Wittgensteinian notions in contemporary philosophical debates. The first one concerns the succinct manner in which those notions are treated; the second one, the problem of interpreting them in the context of Wittgenstein’s methodology and basic philosophical ideas. It can be said that we have to add more than we have expected in order to make the interpretation comprehensible and useful for further discussions of the matter. I guess that the same is true for the notion of Lebensform. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, the canonical text of Wittgenstein, the form of life category appears only a few times in various contexts (Wittgenstein 1998, I, § 19, 23, 241; II, 174, 226). The mere word ‘form’ suggests that we deal with a kind of pattern, model or style of life which has been preserved because of some mechanisms; however, from the data we have in hand, it is not clear what the elements of that form are.

Paragraph 19 of the *Investigations* gives us an opportunity to place the relation between language and a form of life. Wittgenstein reminds us that language can play different roles and it can be used for various purposes, and these purposes vary, because they can be situated within different frames, different Lebensformen. Such a formulation already suggests that there are many forms of life. The interrelation between a form of life and the use of language, which is underlined also in the second part of the *Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1998, 174), can be seen as a metaphysical claim here. On the one hand, language can be viewed as something autonomous
playing a crucial role in forming our world-seeing (Wittgensteinian grammar plays the metaphysical role here). Additionally, language constitutes all imaginable mental activities which can be performed by humans. On the other hand, because of the capacity of using language, we receive access to the form of life. When we are playing many language games, we share our form of life. Only because of language the elements of a form of life can be comprehensible to us. We can make sense of the Wittgensteinian lion’s world; however, we cannot fully understand it for we are not capable of playing the game he plays (Wittgenstein 1998, II, 223).

In the Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics Wittgenstein shows that the way of seeing things is rooted in our form of life. From paragraph 23 of Investigations we know that speaking language, or more precisely, playing a language game, is always an activity. Such an activity can be recognised as meaningful because of different kinds of behaviour which it is accompanied by. It is worth reminding here that for Wittgenstein language is something sophisticated. It has developed in its complicated forms from more primitive ones during the long history of humankind. In the beginning, the most primitive forms were simply activities, or in Wittgenstein’s words deeds (Wittgenstein 1969b, § 402). All language games seem to be based on some extra-linguistic matters which make formulating thoughts in language possible in the first place. For example, according to Wittgenstein, understanding is also a kind of a specific behaviour in which certain circumstances and a certain suitable environment are always assumed (Wittgenstein 1994, VII). Everything that has to be assumed is treated here as a substitute for a form of life, where a form of life moulds a certain ground for playing a language game. According to paragraph 241 of the Investigations, a form of life cannot be seen as something people can agree on. The category of agreement, of making judgments is comprehensible only when we are dealing with a form of life which people already share. Hence, agreement is not something people achieve using words, but something which can be achieved within a form of life which is already there, shared by them (Wittgenstein 1994, 343).

Does a form of life as a specific kind of ground has to be something, at least partly, linguistic? So far we do not know what such a ground consists of. Does Wittgenstein mean a shared use of language which presupposes sharing definitions and life experiences (the same way of being brought up
in the same culture)? Or does he rather mean shared cognitive equipment which is rooted in biological origin? Or maybe, he means both? A form of life is obviously not a ground traditionally understood. But it can still be seen as a ground which is needed for making judgements, playing language games, getting agreement, etc., the ground which has been established within a long history of humankind and which functions as something indisputable now. It could be different and there are elements of it which probably can be changed, but only when we manage to describe the use of words involved in those elements and make reflection upon them. Let us postpone this thread of thought for the time being.

2. Biological vs. Cultural

Discussing the problem of understanding the Wittgensteinian notion of a form of life, Baker and Hacker write, “if Wittgenstein’s conception of human nature is not predominantly a biological one, then a fortiori his concept of a form of life is not biological, but cultural” (Backer, Hacker 1997, 241). There is a tradition in philosophy of differentiating as fundamentally different the biological and the cultural. It applies to substances, domains, aspects, features, laws, etc.. Does it refer to Wittgensteinian notion of a form of life? More precisely, is a form of life something biological or something cultural? Let me start from some general remarks. On average, the biological is treated as something which cannot be changed and which applies to all human beings regarded as organisms, something which cannot be disputed, because generally it cannot be controlled, but something which is still universal. It is also assumed that the biological might be explained by science and there are laws to be discovered in the biological domain. In contrast, the cultural is something contingent, basically something possible to control and discuss, something diverse in distinct historical points of time, and finally different for many communities and groups of people. The cultural element can be described by sociology, anthropology, and ethnology, without hope of finding some strict laws there. Baker and Hacker together with some others interpreters (Glock, Gier, and Cavell among others) claim that a form of life has to be something cultural or ethnological. There are also adherents of treating a form of life as something organic and biological (for example J.F.M. Hunter). It seems that there are
some strong arguments on both sides. Wittgenstein seems to underline that a form of life is an activity always connected to language usage (Wittgenstein 1998, § 23), facts of living (Wittgenstein 1980b, § 630), ways of living, and shared ways of acting in various areas of human life (including making judgements), which are all facts of culture. However, from time to time he emphasizes that a form of life is something which lies beyond justification, something which makes judgements possible at all. If so, it has to be something beyond reasoning (a cultural aspect of humans), hence something organic, something animal (a biological aspect of humans) (Wittgenstein 1969b, § 358-359). His famous example of a lion, who we would not be able to understand even if he could talk, can be read twofold. As a proof that humans can make lions’ concepts comprehensible; however, due to the process of nurture, those concepts cannot be useful to human beings. Or it can be read as a proof that because of different biological equipment and history, lions and humans do not share the same interests, hence cannot understand each other.

As you probably have already noticed, following the authors who use the biological/cultural division, I have tacitly assumed that the biological and the cultural do not need to be explained or defined. I have assumed that we all understand them easily and that everyone is able to give an example of something biological and something cultural. But let us not proceed too fast. The theoretical advantage of the cultural/biological division lies in the possibility of describing the cultural in opposition to the biological and vice versa. Taking all problems with determining the scope of these notions into account suggests that it is worth keeping the division. But at the same time we are faced with a more general problem of stating exactly when something (feature, activity, behaviour) is strictly biological and when it is strictly cultural. It is extremely difficult to do it in the case of humans. It is far more reasonable and harmless to claim that there are deep inseparable interrelations between the biological and cultural equipment in human history. However, saying that one must remember that there are properties which can still be characterized much more easily when using only one of the perspectives, either biological or cultural description (Sluga 1995, 855-859). It seems to me that the Wittgensteinian form of life, in order to play an explanatory role, has to be understood as a ground which contains both the biological and the cultural. In that sense, it cannot be
equated with the notion of culture seen as an opposition to nature (biology). Following the Wittgensteinian naturalistic proposal, as I call it, the natural is neither biological nor cultural, it rather contains all elements which have formed human beings during the history of human species, including the biological and the cultural, both of which have made the use of language possible.

To call the Wittgensteinian approach naturalistic helps to understand his view, but without stating further reservations it can also be misleading, especially when taking into account the sheer number of different naturalistic theories we can find in contemporary philosophy. Let us assume the following as the most basic thesis of naturalism. Everything that is in existence is natural, which means that everything belongs to the world of nature. This general statement will be explanatory only when we specify what ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ mean (Feldman 1999). Taking naturalism at its face value, one may claim that there are no supernatural entities which philosophy has a privilege to study (Wittgenstein 1969a, 29). In other words, philosophy is not the so called first science, and there are no such entities as Plato’s ideas, Descartes’ res cogitans or Kant’s noumena. Wittgenstein’s unique naturalism consists of several tightly connected claims. He underlines the need for idiosyncratic attitudes in philosophy (instead of constructing general theories) (Wittgenstein 1969a, 47). He treats forms of life, meanings, thoughts, mental processes, logic as common phenomena which can be studied in practice. The social context is for him an important factor in describing them, and he does not look for hidden essence or fundamentals. Philosophy in his view is a kind of therapy and a special kind of description. There is no place for enthusiasm about scientific methods incorporated into philosophy here, and there is no idea of progress which should be applied to the philosophical theories. In this perspective we do not use an adjective ‘natural’ as an equivalent to ‘biological’; however biological elements of human cognitive capacities are important in realizing what a form of life is. In such an approach we can avoid a regress ad infinitum, which we have to face, while using the cultural as a notion which explains everything. On the other hand, in order to describe any fact about humans in the context of a form of life (for example the value of dialogue between different communities and traditions), we have to take into account many
3. Universalism vs. Relativism. When is the Dialogue Theoretically Possible?

There are two interpretations of the notion of a form of life which are deprived of its possible explanatory power and make our attempts of using it in formulating theoretical foundations for the intercultural dialogue hopeless. An important question arises when a form of life is treated as a given, unchangeable, primary, indispensable groundless ground within which all human activities can only be achieved. Is there one such ground or are there many grounds? If there is only one for all humans, the lack of dialogue among different communities of people should not be possible at all. For we all would speak ‘the same language’. If there are many and they create the foundations of many cultures, and there is no meta-ground which would make translation of judgements among them comprehensible, the intercultural dialogue would be impossible by definition. Saying that, we come to the point where in fact we are playing the same old philosophical game of the opposition between universalism and relativism. From such a perspective, both using the notion of a form of life in singular form and in plural form, will not help us in making use of the Wittgensteinian concept here.

It is plain to see that it is impossible to define the notion of a form of life, especially when we understand it as a complex set of interrelated biological and cultural elements, and in fact there is no such need. What we want is the description of these elements of a form of life which would help us to specify the matters and problems about humans we want to understand. What can we put to use from a form of life for our purpose? First of all, it seems that that category is quite a general one, since it serves as a ground for everything which can be played within the language game. Such a ground is something indisputable and it is taken for granted by participants of a given language game when they play that game. But Wittgenstein does not treat it in a traditional metaphysical way; hence, he does not look for the essence of it and he does not reach one correct description or one possible theory. He does not believe that it can be given once and
for all. In that sense there is nothing universal about a form of life, though we can still say that there is something common for a certain group of people. In a very minimal sense we could also say that there is something in common for the whole humankind, namely, the capacity for using language, which seems to be a fundamental feature of humans.

According to Wittgenstein the aim of a philosophical theory is to gain full description of the phenomenon we investigate in its day-by-day usage. As a result, we will have many theories and many answers to the question of what a form of life consists in; answers which are initially determined by the assumptions we have already taken. Studying the assumptions of theories is the most important part of a philosophical job as I, following Wittgenstein, understand it. Although we cannot reflect upon all assumptions and claims which build our final vocabulary (Rorty 1989) for there are always some theses which we will not be aware of at the moment, we still can analyse some of them and change them if there are good reasons for doing that. It seems that if we can reflect on some elements of a form of life, which constitute the language game we play, we can also change them. It gives us some hope for making the intercultural dialogue possible without taking for granted that there must be one universal form of life in order to reach it.

There are many philosophical proposals which can be shown as the examples of a non-traditional approach to the problem of dialogue. Apart from different philosophical traditions where proposals come from, they have one important thing in common, and that is the idea of changing our stereotypic understanding of the dialogue between humans. I can very shortly mention just one of them, namely Josef Mitterer’s proposal.

Mitterer analyses the long history of Western philosophical theories and claims that philosophy is an arbitrary activity, where the dualistic way of speaking is developed and the rhetoric power plays a very important role (Mitterer 1992). Specifically, while refining notorious philosophical debates set in oppositions (realism/antirealism, realism/constructivism etc.), he shows how to avoid stalemate situations in the philosophical discussions and how to gain positive theoretical results (which he treats as something desirable). In the dualistic way of thinking we take for granted the opposition between the description and something which has to be described (usually object). In the argumentative process there is a certain point, when
the dualist has to refer to the object itself (essence, nature, etc.) which cannot be disputed and is treated as something obvious or epistemologically unobtainable. As a result there is nothing more to discuss, there are only convictions which may or may not be taken for granted. The real dialogue cannot be carried on, because the parties involved in the dialogue are not able to find a common rudimentary level they can base their dialogue on. If we want to try to get beyond philosophy in its dualistic shape, we have to employ another strategy. When we realise that we as people always deal with something on a cognitive level, namely with descriptions, we will understand that something which we call an object (essence, nature) is in fact given by the so called description so far (Mitterer 2001). This description can and should be re-worked again if we want to avoid a stalemate situation. When we want to keep a conversation going we do not look for something in common which is already there, but we are trying to establish something new which we could share from now on. It will take shape of the description from now on, acceptable for all involved in the dialogue. In other words, we can communicate even when we differ in fundamentals, because we can establish something new which will be shared in the process of the dialogue. Let us call it a new element of a form of life. So, in order to remain comprehensible for each other, we need a so called common ground. However, it can be created as something new from the elements which we already have, and does not have to be given in advance. In the case of the (intercultural) dialogue it would be important not to concentrate on looking for shared values and ideas (which can be a dead-end), but on determining common interests and possibilities of acting. I believe it can be done.

Personally, I think that Wittgenstein would agree that philosophy is an important human activity because of its practical results. It is worth doing philosophy only when philosophical solutions influence practice. Philosophy can be significant, because it forms certain ways of reasoning, it preserves certain ideas, it gives them importance, and hence it affects various areas of human life. The therapeutic character of the Wittgensteinian philosophy can be interpreted as a postulate for doing critical metatheoretical considerations in philosophy. When approaching philosophy from such a perspective, you have to be careful about your own assumptions, about the status of your own convictions. As a result, we can hope that there are
some linguistic traps from which we can escape. We may expect that even though we will always be bewitched by means of language, we will sometimes be able to change the language order and change the claims which are based on them. Especially when those claims interfere with someone else’s values. Wittgenstein’s works should not be just a source of attractive quotations, which help to illustrate almost every thought and every theory. There are many theoretical traces and important philosophical issues developed in his books. We simply must learn how to derive conclusions from them for our own philosophical works.

REFERENCES


Wittgenstein's Ethnological Approach to Philosophy

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1. An ethnological approach to philosophy?

On July 2, 1940, Wittgenstein wrote a remark that was later published in *Culture and Value*:

> If we use the ethnological approach does that mean we are saying philosophy is ethnology? No, it only means we are taking up our position far outside, in order to see the things more objectively. (Wittgenstein 1998, 45e)

This citation on its own opens up more questions than it answers. Wittgenstein implies that in philosophy he uses a perspective that allows for a »more« objective view. But what exactly does he mean by »the ethnological approach«? Why does it go beyond ethnology? Why is it an approach to philosophy? What are »the things« he refers to? Why did he underline the definite article with a wavy line? And why does the ethnological approach allow for seeing things »more objectively«? *Culture and Value* is a highly unsystematic collection of remarks and neither this citation alone nor its context completely illuminates what Wittgenstein means. From his previous remark on the same day it is merely clear that the »ethnological approach« stands in contrast to the »causal approach« (Wittgenstein 1998, 45e):

> What is insidious about the causal approach is that it leads one to say: »Of course that's how it has to happen«. Whereas one ought to say: It may have happened *like that*, & in many other ways.

The causal approach is misleading because it suggests that its description is the only possible one. The present tense »how it has to happen« indicates that the causal approach applies to all happenings alike, while with the past tense in »it may have happened *like that« Wittgenstein concentrates on one event. He does not regard his description as revealing some necessary truth but rather as providing a comparison and explicitly mentions the possibility of other descriptions.
But what exactly does Wittgenstein mean by »the causal approach« and »the ethnological approach«? Wittgenstein provides no detailed definition and I do not claim that there is only one possible answer. But I do think that we can make sense of the »ethnological approach« to philosophy, realize that it is found throughout the whole of his later work, and understand why he made such broad use of it.

An important part of this is his seemingly ethnological preoccupation with Frazer’s magisterial treatise, one that began no later than 1931 and probably lasted over 20 years.1 Sir James Frazer’s The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion represents a milestone in the development of anthropology and ethnology, and also had a significant impact on other sciences as well as on literature. For philosophy, however, it initially does not appear to be of great interest, and it seems surprising that Wittgenstein spent such a considerable amount of time and thought on it. One might speculate that the reason for Wittgenstein’s extensive and intensive occupation with Frazer’s Golden Bough was simply that he expected to learn something about other cultures: About the ordinary and the extraordinary behavior of other people, their rites and customs, their art, their myths, their world-view and the »pictures« they apply when interacting with and apprehending the world.2 But Wittgenstein’s harsh rejection of Frazer’s explanations casts doubt on this speculation. Wittgenstein disparages Frazer’s explanations as »crude« (RFGB, 131), as expressions of a »narrow spiritual life« (RFGB, 125), and accuses Frazer himself of being much more »savage than most of his savages« (RFGB, 131). Such disparaging remarks indicate that Wittgenstein did not believe that Frazer succeeded in explaining

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1 Wittgenstein had long wanted to obtain The Golden Bough and started reading it in its abridged version in 1931 (cp. Rhees 1984, 119). He repeatedly revised some of his remarks and included them in his PI and other works – this can easily be retraced using the electronic Bergen Edition (Wittgenstein 2000).

2 I will use the term ›culture‹ in its broad sense, which includes not only ›high culture‹ but also both common behavioural patterns and views (e.g. ›myths‹, ›world-picture‹ and ›pictures‹), in addition to much more. I do not think that culture is a rigid fundament of meaning, or that cultures are homogenous, or that one can sharply distinguish one culture from another. The lack of a strict definition of the term ›culture‹, however, does not mean it is useless.

I did not use Wittgenstein’s term ›forms of life‹ because I did not want to introduce a term that could easily be misinterpreted as a technical term. ›Culture‹ in the broad sense as it is used in more recent discussions might be more appropriate to express the broad interrelatedness of language games, behavioural patterns and view. Unfortunately, here there is not enough space to discuss these terms extensively.
the customs. I will argue the reverse: Wittgenstein continued to read Frazer not to learn more about other languages and cultures, but about something else inadvertently revealed by Frazer's explanations, namely the influence of his own language and culture on the explanation of other cultures. By considering such influences, Wittgenstein did not attempt to solve problems concerning the ethnological understanding of different cultures and languages, but rather reflected on our own language and culture and their influence on philosophy.

Thinking about (real or imagined) other cultures might fulfill several purposes for philosophy. For instance, it might show the dependence of language on normal use and the regular rule-following of the members of a culture. It can provide hints on what is involved in understanding the behaviors and concepts of different cultures and in turn elucidate what is involved in understanding the behaviors and concepts of one's own culture. It could be used to imagine some concept in a different context, allowing for a clearer understanding of the dimensions of that concept. It might connect fundamentally different concepts or at least tell how they are possible. These connections might also indicate what necessarily belongs to the concept and what does not. Besides these there may be many more possible reasons for philosophy to think about other cultures. However, given my very limited space here, I will concentrate on the approach to philosophy that Wittgenstein developed from thinking about ethnological investigations of different cultures. While comparisons to philosophers pursuing related ideas promise further insights, I will restrict this essay to the context of Wittgenstein's work only.

2. Wittgenstein’s critique of the causal approach to ethnology

Wittgenstein defines the ethnological approach as being in contrast to the causal approach. What he means by the latter can best be seen when we compare some of his later writings on philosophical description to his remarks on Frazer's way of explaining rites, customs and behaviors of past cultures and their continuance to the present. Following Wittgenstein, Frazer does not apply the proper ethnological approach to ethnological questions, but the causal approach. The latter has two sides. Wittgenstein's critique on Frazer's causal approach is harsh because he argues that both sides completely miss what Wittgenstein thinks is essential for ethnology.

The one side is characterized by the question of the appropriate method for ethnological investigations. Frazer applies the scientific method of stat-
ing hypotheses and then sets out to confirm or disprove them. Frazer’s explanations at a first glance seem like empirical science. Wittgenstein reveals that in fact these explanations often do not result from scientific method but from sensationalism and subjective biases. His main critique, however, is not to Frazer’s way of hypothesizing, but to the fact that Frazer puts forward hypotheses to be proved or disproved like empirical hypotheses in the positive sciences. Frazer adopts a positivistic approach in the tradition of Auguste Comte, who thought that all of sociology’s questions are open to strict empirical investigation. Wittgenstein in contrast thinks that the methods of empirical science are not equally applicable to ethnology.

This disagreement has its source in a disagreement about how ethnology can sensibly describe the customs to be investigated. Frazer’s explanations are not only misleading because he puts forward hypothetical assumptions, but furthermore because these concern the cause of the customs he is trying to explain. He looks for what caused them – their historical origin – and continues to pursue its development into the present. One example is the rain dance. Frazer tries to trace the custom back to the original »error«, the misunderstanding that caused the superstition, and asks why it was passed down over centuries. Wittgenstein does not necessarily think the origin is irrelevant. However, he points out that the original belief might have been lost or became unimportant to the practitioners and that at different times the custom might fulfill different purposes. Even if people once thought that the rain dance caused rain (and some might still think so), this is not necessarily the reason for why it is practiced today. Following Wittgenstein, ethnology can easily misinterpret customs if it is merely looking for their original cause.

The other side of Frazer’s causal approach concerns the question of what the different customs possibly could mean: their significance for their practitioners, their role and function for the life of their practitioners and the context in which they are practiced, among other features. Frazer is not only trying to use the scientific method himself, but he also believes all customs are expressions of some form of scientific reasoning. He applies a particular understanding of evolutionary theory to ethnology when he assumes that all customs of all cultures at all times can be fitted into a developing scheme in which more complex habits evolve from primitive ones. According to Frazer they all fall under one of these three main categories: »magic«, »religion« and »science«. Magic is the most primitive form, religion is somewhat more sophisticated, while science is the most sophisticated of all. Here again his account is reminiscent of Comte’s positivism
with the distinction between the »theological«, the »metaphysical« and the »positive« phases.

While Frazer believes in evolutionary progress, he does not subscribe to the reductionistic supposition that only material, biological or sexual aspects play a role in the progress of culture and that therefore the concepts of those who practice its customs are negligible. He is very interested in what the practitioners associate with the custom. Also he considers other cultures’ languages for he believes that the myths of cultures are expressed in the words they use.

However, he has a simplistic understanding of what the other people might associate with the custom. He takes all three main levels of customs – »magic«, »religion« and »science« – to follow the same scheme: They provide ways of dealing with hypotheses concerning the causal interrelations in the world; they are all nothing but more or less primitive science. The practitioners of the customs believe they help them to dominate some forces in the world because they are a result of their hypothesizing. Frazer thus assumes that the customs always indicate some (often insufficient) scientific thinking. His approach is pejoratively ethnocentric because he tries to fit all customs of all cultures at all times into a simplistic scheme that doesn’t admit the possibility of other ways of thinking than his own.

An example of Frazer’s scheme to interpret every custom as following some kind of scientific reasoning is again the rain dance. Frazer considers it to be a crude method of producing rain. The dancers believe that their dance will somehow cause it to rain and they want it to rain, therefore they take part in a rain dance. Eventually it does rain, and so, according to Frazer, the hypothesis is confirmed and the false belief is passed down from generation to generation – possibly over centuries.

Wittgenstein, in contrast, thinks it unlikely that the error will go unnoticed for a lengthy period of time, and wonders why the rain dance takes place at the beginning of the rainy season when it will rain anyway, and not during the dry season when the rain is most needed. He does not necessarily consider the rain dance to be a primitive form of science following the hypothesis that it causes rain, but writes that it could also be an expression of a »wish« (RFGB, 125). Analogously, kissing the picture of a beloved one in the English culture of Frazer’s time does not necessarily express the belief in some mystical causal power. Wittgenstein accepts that the customs on occasion might be based on some hypotheses the practitioners have, but he thinks that often they indicate a different significance to the practitioners.
Indeed, the practitioners might not associate any special reason to the custom. They might participate in it because it is what they are used to do or because it is what they are supposed to do. Ethnology has to consider the possibility that customs are not always an expression of conscious reasoning. The practitioners might even deceive themselves about their ›actual‹ reasons and the custom might be better described with regards to e.g. the function it fulfills for something else. These different possibilities do not imply that the practitioners’ concept of their custom is superfluous, but support the claim that there is not one scheme all customs follow.

3. Wittgenstein’s critique of the causal approach to philosophy

Similarly to ethnology, philosophy could be tempted to pursue the causal approach – both in terms of its method and in terms of what concepts could mean. With regards to philosophy’s method, it could be tempting to borrow the method of positive sciences and postulate »hypothetical entities« (PI, §109) in addition to phenomena and then try to prove or disprove them. Such hypothetical entities might be causes (PI, §466), natural facts (PI, §89), or causal connections (PI, §89).

Some interpreters think that Wittgenstein himself is providing merely empirical explanations since sometimes he describes the linguistic and psychological sources of some philosophical mistakes. While it is true that Wittgenstein occasionally describes causes in order to explain how one could come up with erroneous ways of thinking, he explicitly says he is doing more than describing causal connections (cp. PI, 198).

Echoing his critique on Frazer’s attempt to find the original cause of some custom, Wittgenstein speaks against attempts of founding philosophy in original causes. We can give reasons for our way of following a rule and the question »How can I follow a rule?« is either a question for causes or for justification (PI, §217). Wittgenstein admits that »justification through experience has its end« (PI, §485), but this end is not an original cause. Rather, Wittgenstein compares the end to a »rock« that bends back the »spade« (PI, §217). The ground of our rule-following consists of the manners of behavior and common views of a culture (in my definition of ›culture‹ in footnote 2). It is not a last cause or unchangeable fundament, but can be compared to the bed of a river. The riverbed changes with time (some sand moves quicker and some rocks only imperceptibly), but we can distinguish it from the water that runs through it (cp. Wittgenstein 2000, Item 174, 22r; or On Certainty, §94-99).
Following Wittgenstein, the postulation of hypothetical entities can easily lead to misinterpretations of one’s own culture’s concepts. To better understand them, we have to clarify how they are used: We have to describe their function, their significance for the people who use them, the context they stand in, etc. Philosophy’s task is not to solve empirical problems (\textit{PI}, §109) but to clarify concepts: »our problem is not a causal but a conceptual one« (\textit{PI}, 203e). The conceptual clarifications are neither empirical in the sense of the positive sciences nor are they independent of the actual use of the concepts.

With regards to what concepts possibly could mean – their significance for their users, their role and function for the life of their users and the context in which they are used, among other features\(^3\) – some philosophers think language always works the same way. They might believe e.g. that all we do with words is name things, that words stand for persons or objects in the world, mental objects, feelings, etc. The later Wittgenstein writes he himself once succumbed to an error of this kind. In sentence 4.5 in Wittgenstein’s \textit{Tractatus} he introduces what he then took to be the logical form of every proposition: »… Such and such is the case«. Wittgenstein later on rejects such a »formal unity« (\textit{PI}, §108), which seems to comprise both language and the world (cp. \textit{PI}, §114) and calls the latter assumption »nonsense« (\textit{PI}, §134). »Such and such is the case« is a general form only because it in itself is already a meaningful sentence of an already existent language (cp. \textit{PI}, §134). It misleadingly seems to provide a criterion for determining what a proposition is, but really is dependent on ordinary language.\(^4\)

To understand the sentence in question we thus have to see how it is ordinarily used. This will involve giving examples and inductively applying them to other cases (cp. \textit{PI}, §135). We have to understand the rules with which sentences can be built. Understanding the rules for the use of a concept includes understanding the application of the rules, the latter not being self-evident.

\(^3\) That we »mean something« with concepts, of course, does not imply there has to be a »thing« the concepts refer to. Instead of searching for some hidden »meaning«, Wittgenstein looks at how the concepts are used.

\(^4\) With »ordinary« I do not vindicate the myth of an original myth- and theory-free language. On the contrary I believe that many philosophical problems already arise from what is suggested by ordinary language. Wittgenstein writes that the »main source of our lack of understanding« is the lack of perspicuity of grammar (\textit{PI}, §122). However, one can still distinguish ordinary from special use and point out that the latter is dependent on the former.
Analogous to the many possible significances, roles and contexts of a custom (among other features), there are as well many possible ways to use words. Wittgenstein compares the understanding of the concept of ›sentence‹ to understanding the concept of ›game‹ (*PI*, §135). As there can be many different games, there also can be many different sentences. Wittgenstein’s term »language game« expresses that there are many ways to use language that are not reducible to the same type.

Wittgenstein’s critique of the causal approach in ethnology is mirrored in his critique of positivistic approaches to philosophy. Both ethnology and philosophy should not hypothetically explain facts by providing causes and both should not simplistically assume all customs or concepts follow a certain scheme. Since the causal approach disregards these requirements, it is inapt for both ethnology and philosophy.

4. Describing and explaining

To steer clear of the pitfalls of the causal approach both with regards to method and with regards to what the customs or concepts possibly can mean, the ethnological approach has to be ›open‹ to the possibility of different kinds of customs and language games. However, this specification by itself is not enough, as it leaves unclear how exactly we can be ›open‹.

Concerning method, Wittgenstein in many places seems to promote a purely descriptive approach. He writes that only the hypothesis Frazer puts forward ›seems to give the matter depth for the first time‹ (*RFGB*, 143). This depth is merely apparent, because Frazer does not describe the function of the customs, their role in the life of their practitioners, their significance for their practitioners etc., but rather ascribes them a certain function, role and significance. Wittgenstein in contrast thinks that »... one must only correctly piece together what one knows...« (*RFGB*, 121) and states:

Here one can only describe and say: this is what human life is like. (*RFGB*, 121)

This remark on Frazer's Golden Bough echoes even stronger in Wittgenstein's *PI*:

We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. (*PI*, §109)
Prima facie it looks like Wittgenstein is demanding to replace evaluative explanation by neutral description. This would mean that Wittgenstein himself pursues a positivistic approach. However, to what extent can the description be neutral and what kind of explanation is it supposed to replace?

Frazer is writing in a suggestively grim tone (cf. RFGB, 121) and negatively judges the »many strange foreign lands, with strange foreign peoples, and still stranger customs« (Frazer 1922, chapter I, part 3) even before he explains them. His explanations thus entail biased evaluations. Wittgenstein’s investigations, in contrast, are not evaluative in this sense, even though they might eventually lead to evaluative judgments. However, his description of the different customs is not an unsystematic concatenation of observations but structured by showing commonalities between different customs. Even description in this weak sense is evaluative since the commonalities shown would exclude others and thereby favor a certain view over other views. Wittgenstein’s descriptions are evaluative in the sense that they aim to eradicate certain »misunderstandings«, and in that they provide alternative pictures. With »description« Wittgenstein does not mean »merely descriptive« in contrast to »evaluative«.

With the contrasting term »explanation« Wittgenstein denotes something we ordinarily would regard to be a special case of explanation. In the sentence before the latter citation from his PI, he turns against hypothesizing. For him, »Every explanation is after all a hypothesis« (RFGB, 123). The kind of explanation he rejects comprises explanations of the causal approach in the senses shown above, i.e. explanations that put forward hypothetical causes and assume everything can be explained in the same way. Wittgenstein argues against ascribing an imagined »depth« by drawing on misleading references, but this does not mean he is against drawing any connections to one’s own language and culture.

Concerning the question of how this description can be pursued, Wittgenstein is sometimes interpreted as a pure relativist claiming that in our language we cannot describe the behavior or concepts of a different culture. Other interpreters object that Wittgenstein speaks of a »common human behavior« (PI, §206) and take the latter to be the universal ground of communication. In the German-speaking world there has been extensive discussion around »common human behavior« which I pursued at the Wittgenstein Symposium in Passau (Durt 2005a). For a sensitive interpretation it is crucial not to assume Wittgenstein’s thought must fit into sim-

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5 References to both types of interpretation can be found in Durt 2005a.
plastic categories. He does not need to claim some behaviors are universal or that there is an objective meaning in a positivistic sense in order to be able to differentiate more from less problematic concepts. Wittgenstein distinguishes between concepts such as »ghost«, »shade«, »soul« and »spirit« and concepts such as ›head‹ (as a body part) and ›fall off‹ (as the motion of a body part). The former terms can more easily mislead because they depend more on certain myths and pictures Frazer inadvertently uses.

As I explained in my presentation at the Kirchberg Wittgenstein Symposium last year (Durt 2005b), Frazer's explanations of different cultures also provide examples of the dependencies of language on the myths, pictures and worldviews of one's own language and culture. Frazer extensively uses myth-laden terms such as »soul«, and thereby misleadingly ascribes conceptions from his culture onto other cultures. This is a problem for all terms connected to the myths, pictures and worldviews of our own culture, as they make us prone to formulating erroneous views on language and culture, both with respect to other languages and cultures as well as within our own. Wittgenstein writes that »an entire mythology is stored within our language« (RFGB, 133), which might lead to »temptations«, »seductions« and »bewitchments« (e.g. PI, §374, §194, §109) that distort our understanding. However, does this mean we should dispense with terms connected to our myths, pictures, and world-views? Should we just describe what we see on the surface in order not to be misled by some apparent deeper connection?

5. Wittgenstein's approach to other languages and cultures

While for Wittgenstein it is important to show commonalities between the different customs, he also writes that something more is needed to »give the account its depth«:

Besides these similarities, what seems to me to be most striking is the dissimilarity of all these rites. It is a multiplicity of faces with common features which continually emerges here and there. And one would like to draw lines connecting these common ingredients. But then one Part of our account would still be missing, namely, that which brings this picture into connection with our own feelings and thoughts. This Part gives the account its depth. (RFGB, 143)

6 The full paper and its amended PowerPoint presentation can be accessed at www.durt.info. Also available for download is the PowerPoint presentation relating to this paper.
The »multiplicity of faces with common features which continually emerges here and there« evokes Wittgenstein's concept of »family resemblance«. Finding »family resemblances« within a different culture is important for connecting seemingly disparate parts. However, this is not enough as the description would continue to be superficial, and would be little more than an enumeration of the connections that emerge superficially like patterns in a void. To give the description depth we must find meaningful connections that relate to our feelings and thoughts. We have to find family resemblances not merely within their customs but also between their customs and ours. Not all family resemblances we immediately find will withstand subsequent scrutiny. But we should not stop searching for them, since only the connections between our patterns of behavior and theirs can give the description a profound sense.

Wittgenstein gives many examples of how this search for connections might be pursued and what peculiarities it leads to. In considering different cultures, Wittgenstein investigated how we can differentiate language games. One example is the different »form of life« with its unusual way of playing chess that he describes in §200 of his PI. The chess players yell and stamp their feet in a manner that could be translated into the game we know as chess. Wittgenstein writes:

[…] now imagine a game of chess translated according to certain rules into a series of actions which we do not ordinarily associate with a game – say into yells and stamping of feet. And now suppose those two people to yell and stamp instead of playing the form of chess that we are used to; and this in such a way that their procedure is translatable by suitable rules into a game of chess. Should we still be inclined to say they were playing a game? What right would one have to say so? (PI, §200)

Wittgenstein is able to ask the question of whether their behavior can be called a ›game‹ only because there is translatability from their behavior to ours. Such translatability, however, could be argued to exist with respect to very remote forms of behavior. The movements of a crowd of people, for example, using the respective rules for translation, could also be described as a chess game. But we would not therefore say ›they are playing‹. The translatability of some forms of behavior such as yelling or the stamping of feet is not enough to answer the question of whether we should call it a game. So what is missing?

The answer to this question lies in the other forms of behaviors enacted by those yelling and stamping their feet: Do they act like players, e.g. do
they think about their next move? Are there winners and losers? What would they say they are doing? We can ask hundreds of questions like these to try and determine whether some behavior constitutes the playing of a game. Not every single one has to be answered with a ›yes‹; instead we will be satisfied in concluding they are playing a game when a significant component of their behavior resembles important features of our game playing behavior.

This example suggests that in order to understand some behavior in an unknown culture we have to find connections between their behavior and our behavior that together are strong enough to indicate a family resemblance to our concepts. As there may be various meaningful connections, we should not automatically assume that they are all of a certain kind. But we can look into how to describe the family resemblances without presupposing their nature.

Wittgenstein calls the description that allows for seeing the family resemblances »perspicuous representation« (»Übersichtliche Darstellung«): 7

The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of our representation, the way we see things. (A kind of ›World-view‹ as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler.) This perspicuous representation brings about the understanding which consists precisely in the fact that we »see the connections«. Hence the importance of finding connecting links. (RFGB, 133)

The perspicuous representation shows the connections between different ways of behavior in a clear manner. This includes describing their concepts since to understand their behavior we also have to understand what they attribute to it, and for that we have to consider the concepts they use.

Different concepts can be perspicuously described in the same way: By finding connecting links between them and between them and one’s own language. Some of the connections to be found are obvious, while others have to be strenuously sought or invented. Perspicuous representation does not explain what the ways of behavior or concepts ›really‹ mean according to some presupposed scheme, but it enables us to see how they are connected to each other. This way, very different concepts can be linked. Wittgenstein in his Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics even considers connections to different concepts of counting and calculating. Such

7 While Wittgenstein borrows some of his ideas concerning the Übersichtliche Darstellung from Spengler, he criticizes Spengler for his »dogmatism« (cp. Wittgenstein 1998, 30f).
links can allow for understanding the possibility of other concepts of what seemed to be a logical necessity (cp. Stroud 1987).

6. A »more objective« approach to one’s own language and culture

While Wittgenstein worked out the concept of perspicuous representation specifically with respect to Frazer, it can be applied to other cultures and languages as well as to our own. With only slight revisions, the notion can be found in Wittgenstein's reflections on philosophical methods in the *PI*:

[…] A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ›seeing connexions‹. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a ›Weltanschauung‹?) (*PI*, §122)

In the German original the citations are even more similar. The only major differences are that the order of the sentences is reversed and the reference to Spengler in the *RFGB* is replaced by a question in the *PI*. The terms »connecting links« and »intermediate cases« are two translations of the same term. While both translations emphasize correct aspects (e.g. that their position is in between, that they connect, that they provide examples), I will use the term »Zwischenglieder« from the German original to accord with the fact that the same term is used in the *RFGB* and in the *PI*.

Most significantly, in the *RFGB* Wittgenstein does not speak of ›inventing‹ Zwischenglieder. However, he subsequently gives the example of an ellipse that is gradually converted into a circle. The connecting intermediate cases are not used to claim that the circle historically evolved from an ellipse. Rather, they show a ›formal‹ connection between ellipse and circle that makes their relation visible. Such ›hypothetical‹ Zwischenglieder can just as well be found as invented. We can therefore assume that at the time of writing the *RFGB* Wittgenstein already considered Zwischenglieder in this way.

To explain historical developments it would be necessary to show that Zwischenglieder factually existed. However, even if this were our final aim, we would first of all need to consider what has to be connected, i.e. the function, role and significance of different concepts and customs. To do so we would need to find family resemblances. When searching for the latter it makes no difference whether the Zwischenglieder are found or in-
vented. What is important is that they help highlight the connections within an individual concept, view, or behavioral pattern and/or between the concepts, views and behavioral patterns.

Does Wittgenstein himself thus presuppose with his perspicuous representation the positivistic assumption that there is an objective explanation independent of our culture? The term »Übersichtliche Darstellung« might suggest this, as the two word parts ›über‹ and ›sicht‹ in the German original (English: ›over‹ and ›view‹, together: ›survey‹) can be interpreted as meaning a view of cultures from above. Accordingly, in the English version of *Philosophical Remarks* »Übersichtliche Darstellung« is translated as a »bird's eye view« (Wittgenstein 1975, I §1). Where possible, the view from above appears to be the best position from which to »see connections«. But the translation »bird's eye view« is misleading and has often been criticized.8 Wittgenstein does not try to give an objective description independent of language and its underlying views and behavior patterns. Instead, he looks for connections to his own language and culture. Wittgenstein does not think it absurd to ask if his concept of perspicuous representation is a world-view (which usually entails beliefs, pictures or views peculiar to a group of people). If it is a world-view, it is so because it replaces the view of the world as a realm of objectively describable causes. But it is not a world-view in that it would limit itself to one certain perspective.

The philosopher who uses perspicuous representation is describing his or her own language and culture in a similar manner to the ethnologist who describes a different language and culture. The perspicuous representation is the kind of description that is entailed by the ethnological approach. Considering its objectivity might therefore make clearer what Wittgenstein means with his claim in the first citation of this essay that by using the ethnological approach we are »taking up our position far outside, in order to see the things more objectively«. Wittgenstein underlined the definite article with a wavy line in order to indicate his doubt concerning its correctness. He does not wish to say that there is a given set of objects (›the things‹) that is independent of our recognizing them. For the same reason he does not speak of »seeing things objectively«. Instead he uses the expression »more objectively«. In the German original this is expressed by only one word (›objektiver‹), thus both English words are written in italics. If Wittgenstein had been writing in English, he might well have written

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8 For example, by Hacker, who introduced instead the term »surview« (Hacker 1986, 151ff).
more objectively« to emphasize the point that there is not one single objective approach (compare e.g. PI, §133) that can be used, but instead a more objective approach. This more objective approach is what Wittgenstein calls »the ethnological approach«.

It is more objective in the sense that it is less prone to be misled by scientific and other preconceptions or by the prejudices of one language or culture, for two reasons. The first is that it does not presuppose a given method such as the search for causes, and does not assume that all customs and concepts must be of a certain kind, as is entailed by the causal approach. The second reason is that the ethnological approach allows meaningful connections to become visible that were previously invisible in the views suggested by one's language and culture.

The Zwischenglieder are links between (»zwischen«) the different concepts and patterns of behavior. Their difference is not dissolved, lifted, neutralized or compensated in the dialectical sense. The perspectives entailed by the different concepts and patterns of behavior are not merged into an all-encompassing picture; Wittgenstein does not attempt to abolish either perspective. Rather, he leaves »everything as it is« (PI, §124) and merely highlights the links between the different behaviors and customs. The understanding consists just in »seeing connections«.

Wittgenstein’s view is not completely objective as it is not free from all suggestions or even »myths«, »temptations« »seductions« and »bewitchments« pertaining to one's own language and culture. On the contrary: they are necessary for finding the connections to different concepts and customs. Under the ethnological approach, however, one's own concepts do not lead to incorrect suppositions but are used to more clearly see the connections. Because it is in this sense more objective, Wittgenstein used the ethnological approach to philosophy.

Unfortunately, in this paper I could only hint at what Wittgenstein’s ethnological approach amounts to, how it connects to the concepts Zwischenglieder and Übersichtliche Darstellung, and what role it plays in his philosophy. Despite this, I hope to have shown that the ethnological approach plays a fundamental role in Wittgenstein’s philosophy, and that more detailed analysis would prove worthwhile.
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Cultural Dialogue and Human Solidarity: 
The Rorty – Habermas-Debate Revisited in 
the Light of Wittgenstein´s Philosophy

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The R. Rorty - J. Habermas debate on the issues of cultural dialogue and 
the horizons of human solidarity is largely based on the problems raised in 
of L. Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Despite their discord in interpreting the 
subject, both thinkers appeal to Wittgenstein’s understanding of language, 
communication, and culture thus revealing possible strategies of approach- 
ing this issue related to his theoretical heritage. Although Rorty and 
Habermas differ in evaluation of Wittgenstein’s thought, they are in com- 
plete agreement concerning the radical changes in contemporary philoso- 
phical stance of philosophizing that made his theoretical heritage highly 
significant. Declaring their opposition to the traditional metaphysics, Rorty 
and Habermas show philosophical and political divergences that become 
evident in their treatment of the issue of cultural dialogue and human soli- 
darity.

Wittgenstein’s criticism of the classical metaphysical tradition paved 
the way for the contemporary attempts to generate a new pattern of phi- 
losophical reflection. His irony was aimed first and foremost at destroying 
all forms of metaphysical constructions pretending to provide a global and 
all-embracing picture of reality (Wittgenstein 1980, 16e). Any finite foun- 
dation of our chain of arguments is questionable, but the infinite field of 
our thought confined within limits of language always surpasses our under- 
standing (Wittgenstein 1980, 16e). This kind of ‘theoretical mysticism’ is 
the origin of his irony revealing the futility of all uncritical metaphysical 
constructions. It evidently gives nourishment to the anti-metaphysical decl- 
larations of his followers.

Opposition to the classical stance of philosophizing means for both 
Rorty and Habermas the rejection of Platonic-Aristotelian ontological con- 
structions of reality, as well as the Cartesian-Kantian philosophy of con-
sciousness. Their interpretations of Wittgenstein’s role in the change of the philosophical paradigm from metaphysical to post-metaphysical are motivated by non-coinciding visions of this radical change. Given the existing polarity of their views, Rorty believes that this kind of disagreement is more philosophical than political due to the fact that he and Habermas share the same liberal values. However, their philosophical differences lead to a serious divergence in interpreting the task of contemporary liberalism.

Critisizing the metaphysical tradition of the past, Rorty launched a strong attack on the foundations of the Platonic-Aristotelian view of the universe, its essential foundations (Rorty 1979, 43f). At the same time, he hopes “to break with the picture which, in Wittgenstein’s words, ‘holds us captive’- the Cartesian-Lockean picture of a mind seeking to get in touch with the reality outside itself” (Rorty 1999, XVII). Among the European post-Nietzschean philosophers, who helped to destroy the fortress of metaphysics, he mentions not only Wittgenstein’s name, but also M. Heidegger, J.-P. Sartre, H.-G. Gadamer, and J. Derrida, while the most famous American post-Darwinian thinkers in this process are W. James, J. Dewey, Th. Kuhn, W. Quine, H. Putnam, and D. Davidson. (Rorty 1999, XIX).

Rorty’s farewell to the classical metaphysics is apparently based on the idea that language is the only reality we are capable of knowing in its uniqueness and contingency: “To drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language, would be to de-divinize the world” (Rorty 1989, 21). However, trying to be true to the spirit of Wittgenstein’s language philosophy, Rorty comes to conclusions that sound like obvious deviations from his thought. Wittgenstein spoke of the representation problem as related to a variety of existing language games translating our experience in terms of their rules - “our method of representation” (Wittgenstein 1964, 25). Simultaneously, irrespective of his theory of family resemblances and in accord with it, he opposed extreme nominalism: “Nominalists make the mistake of interpreting all words as names, and so of not really describing their use, but only, so to speak, giving a paper draft on such a description” (Wittgenstein 1964, 118). Within the format of language-game theory, the rules prevailing in their context are playing a quite important role thus revealing certain general aspects within the concrete communicational milieu.
Nominalism and historicism, Rorty believes, should be viewed as a direct result of his liberal ironist pattern of philosophical reflection that is deeply rooted in the tradition of Romanticism and contradicting the rationalism of the Enlightenment. This kind of ironism is inconceivable without the contemporary understanding of language contingency in the key of Wittgenstein and Davidson. “Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal meta-vocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one’s way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old” (Rorty 1989, 73). Nevertheless, despite the conventional basis of the comparison between vocabularies, the history of producing different branches of human knowledge is nothing other than the process of such a competition. Meta-language production is a legitimate part of any kind of knowledge although one is never able to introduce a perfect meta-discourse clarifying scientific or non-scientific problems.

In the key of liberal ironist pattern of reflection, the claim of the incomparability of different vocabularies is a step forward to denying the idea of rationality as belonging to the classical stance of philosophical thought and incompatible with nominalism and historicism (Rorty 1989, 74f). Rorty’s hostility to the idea of rationality could not be justified on the basis of Wittgenstein’s language philosophy. If we follow Wittgenstein’s train of thought, rules may be interpreted as certain rational patterns that govern human language practices (Wittgenstein 1964, 27). Wittgenstein introduced also the idea of certain continuity in language games, claiming that less complex language games could help more general ones to emerge. “We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms” (Wittgenstein 1960, 17). If so, one should reflexively uncover rules governing language games in their continuity revealing the inner rational patterns that persistently survive and change in time. “Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (Wittgenstein 1960, 47). Its task, in the key of Wittgenstein’s interpretation, is a rational activity clarifying rules of language games as well as life forms that exist in human culture.

Davidson, whose theoretical thought was a source of inspiration of Rorty’s understanding of language, spoke of the inner rationality existing in its milieu. “Seeing rationality in others is a matter of recognizing our
own norms of rationality in their speech and behavior. These norms include the norms of logical consistency, of action in reasonable accord with essential or basic interests, and the acceptance of views that are sensible in the light of evidence” (Davidson 2005, 319). Thus, representing and interpreting human actions, Davidson believes, we are attributing to them a kind of rationality (Davidson 2004, 169). Otherwise, understanding of the other peoples, who exist in different language milieus, becomes totally impossible (Davidson 2005, 315-327).

In his severe criticism of metaphysical philosophizing, Habermas is very close to Rorty’s line of arguments. The first version of metaphysical interpretation of reality was formed, in his view, in the manner of Platonic-Aristotelian search for its ultimate substantial ground and was prevailing throughout the antiquity and the Middle Ages despite the existing opposition of different forms of materialism and nominalism. This holistic view of the world was deeply related to the desire to find the ideal patterns of the existing realities in the way Plato did. With the arrival of Modernity, the philosophy of consciousness from Descartes to Kant took the major role in the further development of the metaphysical tradition (Habermas 1994, 31). The strong understanding of theory accompanied the metaphysical world view that was destroyed in the course of successful attacks launched by the representatives of different currents of contemporary philosophical thought.

Wittgenstein’s “therapeutic” criticism of metaphysics together with the efforts of the representatives of structuralism, post-structuralism, neo-Marxism and neo-pragmatism contributed greatly to the devaluation of metaphysics and the growing persuasion of a need to find a new strategy defining philosophy’s future (Habermas 1994, 37f). However, despite the acknowledged value of Wittgenstein’s thought for discrediting metaphysics, Habermas is not at all willing to accept his program. “Wittgenstein championed the notion of a therapeutic philosophy, therapeutic in the specific sense of self-healing, for philosophy was sick to the core... The weakness of this particular farewell to philosophy is that it leaves the world as it is” (Habermas 1995, 11). No less skeptical is his attitude to Rorty’s interpretation of Wittgenstein that is evaluated as being detrimental for the understanding philosophy’s role in contemporary philosophical situation (Habermas 1995, 11). Unlike Rorty, Habermas is not at all willing to break
with the Enlightenment’s pattern of philosophical reflection and its rationalist and universalist foundations.

Despite the crisis of the classical metaphysics, Habermas is convinced that philosophy should find new horizons for its development in a radically changing world. Its mission today consists of being a witness and a mediator. As a rational effort to reconcile various branches of diversified human knowledge and to build a bridge of confidence and understanding between alienated areas of culture, philosophy should be free to develop on a communicative basis. Rationality and universality may triumph not only in the sphere of knowledge, but also in the realm of norms governing the relations of society where I. Kant’s categorical imperative should be persistently present as a guiding principle of norm justification and selection (Habermas 1995, 58).

Responding to Rorty’s criticism, Habermas claims that universality and rationality in the activity of theoretical and practical reason are quite independent of the context of particular lifeworlds. At the same time, only a particular lifeworld is able to translate the universal insights into concrete moral action (Habermas 1995, 109). If so, one can discover a possible reconciliation point between Habermas and Wittgenstein despite their differing views. Life forms existing within the variety of language games may produce certain rules of accepted human behavior that can either nourish and support a particular kind of moral persuasions and norms of law based on a certain agreement or facilitate their refutation.

Rorty believes that his disagreement with Habermas is purely philosophical leading to no basic political disaccord (Rorty 1989, 67). At the same time, it is obvious that both Habermas and Rorty are preparing the ground for their political thought by the chain of philosophical arguments. Rorty’s liberal ironist approach to politics based on his nominalism and historicism produces the effect of a radical divorce between the private and the public spheres. On the contrary, Habermas bridges the gap between the spheres of private, public, and political life through communication revealing certain universal norms of human conduct that should be established through transcendental-pragmatic justification (Habermas 1996, 368f). Thus, communicative philosophical approach and a republican-liberal pattern of political thought appear to be mutually complementary.
Habermas believes that Kant’s categorical imperative should constitute a basis for morality and politics of a democratic society. But this universalist perspective needs some kind of permanent translation process given a vast variety of lifeworlds and is therefore unacceptable for someone like Rorty. Dealing with this problem, Habermas comes closer to Wittgenstein and is willing to accept the value of his thought. At the same time, despite the adopted nominalist and historicist perspective of thought, a liberal ironist still needs the common ground of human solidarity for constructing a picture of inter-human social relations. A feeling of solidarity is born out of our sensibility to the other human being’s pain and humiliation and is a specific fruit of consciousness of the “inhabitants of the democratic states” (Rorty 1989, 198). Solidarity thus understood has to be constructed “out of little pieces” rather than found as a universal “ur-language”. In this perspective, even if solidarity is a fruit of a community of liberal democratic societies, it is conceivable as something leading to a general notion of human dignity that is coined in the process of communication. To put a certain boundary on the way of its expansion would be totally undemocratic and contradicting the spirit of an open language game.

Like in the area of theoretical philosophy, dealing with social and political issues, Rorty interpreted Wittgenstein’s language game theory in the key of extreme nominalism and historicism. Rightly emphasizing the uniqueness of different cultural worlds, he came to a paradox of human solidarity that demands the coinage of a general notion of solidarity applicable in communicative praxis in different lifeworlds. Thus, political philosophy most clearly reveals the limits of his understanding of Wittgenstein’s thoughts. In the same political philosophy area, one can also locate a certain deficit of Habermasean thought. Habermas acknowledges Wittgenstein’s role in the criticism of classical metaphysics, but underestimates his philosophical strategy as merely a “therapeutic” one. Defending rationalism and universalism on the basis of his theory of communication within the format of his debate with Rorty, Habermas comes to the problem of translating of general moral and legal norms into the practice of human action. His interpretation of norm formation and their translatability in the lifeworld context looks like an invitation to a more complete analysis of this problem that might be possible in the perspective of Wittgenstein’s language philosophy.
Summary

The R. Rorty-J. Habermas debate on the issues of cultural dialogue and horizons of human solidarity is largely based on the problems raised in L. Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Rorty’s radical postmodernist stance of neopragnmatist philosophizing is totally opposite to the strategy developed within the neo-Marxism of Habermas. Following D. Davidson, Rorty believes that the uniqueness of each culture means its non-translatability into the language of the alien cultural context. Habermas, on the contrary, is persuaded that language constitutes the milieu of universally expanding communication bringing about the opportunity of an ideal pattern of human understanding. Deeply rooted in the reflexive pattern of the Enlightenment, his theory of communicative action culminates in the claim that I. Kant’s categorical imperative is still of vital importance providing the universal foundation of human relations irrespective of cultural and social diversity. As a liberal ironist, Rorty declares his indebtedness to the Romantic pattern of cultural reflection. However, his emphasis on the uniqueness of cultural phenomena appears to be reconcilable with the quite universalistic view permitting to accept the values of fellow-humans on the basis of compassion and the need for human solidarity in a combat against cruelty and violence.

REFERENCES


1. Prolegomenon

Wittgenstein dominated analytic philosophy from the 1920s until the 1970s. His followers were numerous, his influence was extensive and even those who were not attracted by his thought were forced to orient themselves by reference to the landmarks he had established. After the 1970s, his influence progressively waned, first in philosophy of logic and language, where Fregean and Tarskian influences came to predominate, and later in philosophy of mind, which engaged in speculative debates concerning brain/mind relationships, on the one hand, and the ‘mysteries of consciousness’, on the other. It is striking that this turn against Wittgenstein’s philosophy was not accompanied by a firm understanding, let alone by an argued refutation, of his grammatical overviews. Rather, these developments in the last decades of the twentieth century exemplified the philosophical scientism of our times. While Wittgenstein’s influence waned, Wittgensteinian scholarship continued to flourish for another two or three decades. By the end of the century, however, Wittgensteinian scholarship itself was in danger of deteriorating into an arid scholasticism, characterized by fruitless inward looking debates concerning precisely what sort of nonsense the author of the *Tractatus* produced and whether the results of his later labours were anything more than person-relative therapies. Unsurprisingly, philosophers who were unfamiliar or unsympathetic with his work felt increasingly safe in by-passing it either in silence or in contempt.

This is a sad state of affairs – for the ideas of the greatest philosopher of the last two centuries are in effect being shelved. I do not doubt that they will be revived in the fullness of time – if our subject survives; if our civilization survives; if our planet survives. However, contemporary philosophers with a serious interest in the works of Wittgenstein have much with which to busy themselves, despite the fact that Wittgenstein is currently being sidelined. The tasks I have in mind are of two kinds: those pertaining to Wittgenstein scholarship, and those concerned with Wittgenstein-
inspired philosophy.

The tasks of Wittgenstein scholarship bifurcate into editorial work that remains to be done and exegetical labours. Despite the great achievements of the Bergen electronic edition of Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass*, and Joachim Schulte’s magnificent *Kritisch-genetische* edition of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, there is still substantial editorial work to be done or re-done, especially on the mathematical manuscripts. As far as clarification of Wittgenstein’s philosophy is concerned, it seems to me that the greatest unmined goldfields he left us are in his writings on philosophy of mathematics. This is the domain in which his work is, I think, least understood, and where painstaking exegesis of his writings is needed.

The tasks of Wittgenstein-inspired philosophy can likewise be bifurcated. In an important sense, Wittgenstein denied that philosophy was a cognitive discipline, and denied that the results of philosophy are discoveries on the model of the sciences. Nevertheless, he gave our subject, for the first time in its history, a license to interfere in the affairs of the natural and social sciences. For any form of conceptual entanglement – whether in physics or neuroscience, in empirical psychology or theoretical linguistics, in economics or art history – is a fit subject for philosophical investigation. Wittgenstein’s methods and his elucidatory endeavours have given us the tools and the model for identifying and disentangling conceptual confusions in extra-philosophical intellectual disciplines. Here there is much work to be done – it is, after all, virgin territory – and a task that, like medicine, has no end.

The traditional problems of philosophy are, of course, amenable to the methods Wittgenstein bequeathed us. So a further task for those who have learnt from Wittgenstein and who wish to make good use of the ideas that he advanced is to tackle problems that he did not discuss, or perhaps only touched on. The greatest service that can be done to the cause of Wittgenstein’s philosophy is to show the fruitfulness of his methods and to demonstrate the manifold ways in which his insights can be applied.

The paper I am about to present is such an attempt. It is conducted, I believe, in the spirit of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, and it makes use of his methods – even though the insights of Aristotle also loom large. In *Investigations* §283 Wittgenstein remarks that only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains. He then adds ‘For one has to say it of a body, or, if you like, of a mind which some body *has*. And how can a body *have* a mind?’ This is a baffling remark, which invites reflection on our curious idiom of *having* a mind and of *having* a body, and pro-
vokes consequent thought on the relationship between the body one has and the mind one has. It is with these themes that the following paper is concerned.

2. Homo loquens

Human beings are substances of a certain type – an evolutionary offshoot of the anthropoid apes, whose upright posture and consequent laryngeal changes made articulate vocalization possible. The human species has not only a distinctive appearance and anatomy, posture and mode of locomotion – but also a unique form of life. Our rational powers endow us with a horizon of possibilities of action, thought, and feeling vastly more extensive than anything accessible to other animals. Our ability to reason enlarges the possibility of knowledge and enables us to strive for theoretical understanding. Our ability to act for reasons makes us uniquely answerable for our deeds. We alone in the animal kingdom have knowledge of good and evil, have a conscience, and are susceptible to feelings of guilt, shame and remorse for our wrong doing. It is no coincidence that only human beings can be said to have a soul.

All but the lowliest forms of animal life are conscious. It was a far-reaching Cartesian confusion to identify the human mind with the domain of consciousness. Animals undergo periods of sleep or unconsciousness, and duly awaken and regain consciousness. Their attention is caught and held by objects and events in their environment, and it is of these that they become, and then are, conscious. They enjoy or suffer various states of consciousness, such as contentment, hunger, thirst and pain. But only human beings are self-conscious. We can reflect on what we are doing or undergoing, on our reasons for acting, thinking or feeling, on our motives and motivations, on our likes and dislikes, on our character traits and relations to our fellow human beings. Being able to reflect on these, we can often come to understand them better, and in some cases to modify them in the light of our evaluations. We can take into account, in our reasoning and behaviour, facts about ourselves, about our experiences, past and prospective, and about our own character traits and dispositions. For we can not merely feel cheerful or depressed, we can also wonder why we are so feeling, and be pleased or disturbed that we are. We can be aware that we are ignorant or well-informed about something, that we have certain beliefs or doubts, that we have done and undergone various things in the past. Such facts about ourselves may weigh with us in our deliberations and occupy us
in our reflections; they may be our reasons for acting, feeling or thinking thus-and-so here and now. This is partly constitutive of our being self-conscious creatures.

Other animals have cognitive abilities – they see their prey moving to the left, hear a mouse in the undergrowth, smell a female in heat. They know their young, recognize their call, they know how to do innumerable things, know the way to waterholes, remember where salt is to be found, and so forth. They can think things to be thus and so, and be right or wrong, even though it makes no sense to say of them that they think something to be true or false. When they are wrong, they can sometimes recognize and rectify their error. But the horizon of their thinking is determined by the limits of their behavioural repertoire. They can intelligibly (truly or falsely) be said to think only what they can express in their behaviour. The horizon of human thought is vastly wider. We can think of specifically dated events, of the distant past and remote future. We can think general thoughts, discover and reflect on sempiternal laws of nature, and understand and come to know the timeless truths of arithmetic, geometry and logic. We are blessed, and cursed, with the ability to think of how things might have been, and with the ability to imagine countless possibilities – an ability that lies at the heart of our story-telling, and more generally, of art. For, again, we are unique in nature in possessing an imagination, which also makes possible artistic creativity and aesthetic appreciation. Only human beings create works of art, and can be awestruck by the sublime, moved to tears by works of the imagination. Only creatures with imagination can have a sense of humour. We can apprehend the incongruous with laughter, be amused at jokes, and rise above our suffering with irony.

Non-human animals live in the perpetual present. Human beings live in time in a quite different sense. Other animals too have a memory; but only human beings have a past. Human beings have, and can know, a history. In this sense, they can be said to have, and to be able to tell, an ‘autobiography’. They can dwell lovingly, proudly or guiltily upon their lives. Many other animals are social creatures, but humans are also socio-historical beings, conscious of themselves as belonging to a social group with a history. Our sense of identity and cultural form of life is bound up with such a history, both actual and mythical. Similarly, only human beings can dwell on, and in, the future and the possibilities it holds. Animal life is full of fear; human life is also full of hope. Only human beings are aware of their mortality, can be occupied or preoccupied with their death and the dead. We are unique among animals in being able to strive to understand our lives
and the place of death in life. So we are uniquely God-creating, myth-
generating creatures – making the gods in our image, initially to explain
the phenomena of nature and appease the forces of nature, later to try to
make moral sense of our lives and fortunes by holding out vain hopes (and
unwarranted threats) of a life after death.

Whence these unique powers? Alone among animals (with the possible,
 marginal, exception of chimpanzees), human beings have a crucial, highly
specific, innate capacity (a second-order ability to acquire an ability): it is
part of our nature to be born with the ability to learn to speak a language.
From this, from our animal nature coupled to mastery of a language, all
else flows. We are language-using animals – *homo loquens*, not *homo sapiens*. Stripped of language, we are but killer apes. All the distinctive
powers I have cited are either constitutive of or corollaries of our mastery
of a developed language. The horizon of possible thought is determined by
the limits of the expression of thought; but with us, unlike other animals,
those limits are set by the *linguistic* expression of thought. If one has mas-
tered the use of tenses and of temporal referring expressions, one can think
of the past and future. One can remember not only *where* – as exhibited in
an animal’s seeking or homing behaviour – but also *when*. Non-human
animals may *prepare* for the future – bury food for later consumption,
build dams or dig burrows, but only man can *plan* for the future.

If a creature has mastered a language with logical connectives and
quantifiers, then and only then is it possible for it to conceive of general
truths, to think both of how things are and how they are *not*, to think both
of what exists and of what does not exist, to think conditional thoughts,
and with the aid of tensed verbs and modal expressions, counterfactual
thoughts. With our powers of linguistic representation go also our powers
of pictorial representation – no other animal can make an image. Some
other animals can recognize an image. No other animal can recognize an
image as an image – if a cat paws at a picture of a mouse, it is not trying to
deface an image. Only a language-using creature can apprehend the ‘eter-
nal truths’ of mathematics. That is because such truths are essentially
norms of representation that find their ultimate rationale in rules for the
transformation of empirical *sentences* concerning magnitudes.

Our linguistic skills not only extend the limits of thought, they also shift
the horizons of desire and will and introduce the ‘if only-s’ that haunt us
with regrets and remorse, and gild our wishes and longings. Non-language
using animals may now want food or drink, but cannot now want food or
drink next Wednesday. Animals have purposes, pursue goals, and opt for
different ways of attaining them. But the trajectory of their desires reaches no further than their behavioural repertoire can express, and the objects of their desires are constrained by their limited non-linguistic recognitional abilities. They can opt for one or another alternative, but not deliberate. There are reasons why an animal acts as it does, but, only in the most tenuous of senses can we say that they have reasons for acting as they do. Only a language-using creature can reason and deliberate, weigh the conflicting claims of the facts it knows in the light of its desires, goals and values, and come to a decision or make a choice in the light of reasons. In so far as non-human animals can be said to decide, such animal decision is not a matter of calling a halt to a process of reasoning, of weighing the pros and cons of a course of action and coming to a reasoned conclusion. It is only a matter of terminating a state of indecision.

A creature that has mastered a language with demonstrative and indexical devices, including the personal pronouns, can acquire the self-reflexive cognitive and cogitative abilities that constitute self-consciousness. To have grasped the meanings of typical psychological verbs requires both knowledge of the grounds for third-person ascriptions and mastery of the groundless first-person use. Only if a speaker has mastered the Janus-faced use of pivotal psychological verbs, is he in a position to reflect on his own sensations, attitudes and feelings, on his thoughts, plans and projects. Only if he has learnt to give reasons can he be in a position to reflect on the reasons he has. Only if he can reflect on his reasons and probe his motives can he strive for that self-knowledge that is attainable by self-conscious creatures. Hence too, only human beings can wrap themselves in the tattered cloak of self-deception.

3. Mind

That we speak of ourselves as having a mind is a crucial aspect of our discourse about human beings. English idiom is rich in phrases incorporating the word ‘mind’. These are far from universal (many languages, even closely related languages such as German, do not have a word that precisely corresponds to ‘mind’). The usage of the ancient Greek ‘psuchē’ is by no means homologous with that of the word ‘mind’, and the ancient Hebrew terms ‘nephesh’, ‘neshama’ and ‘ruakh’ are likewise dissimilar. Nevertheless, there is much to be learnt about the mind-body problem from reflecting on our talk of the mind, even if not all of what is to be learnt is directly relevant (but may nevertheless be indirectly relevant) to the psuchē
-soma problem or to the nephesh-goof problem. Our concern is with the mind-body problem, hence with the concepts of mind and body. The only way to investigate these concepts and their logical relationships is to investigate the words that express them.

Careful scrutiny of the use of the word ‘mind’ will enable us to resist, at least pro tempore, the temptation to answer the philosophical question ‘What is the mind?’ by giving a definition. ‘The mind’ being a nominal, ‘What is the mind?’ is commonly construed as ‘What sort of entity is the mind?’ But this is as pernicious a question as ‘What sort of entity is a number?’ It raises the wrong kind of expectations, and sends us along the wrong paths before we have had a chance to get our bearings. So the first step to take is to examine the use of the noun ‘mind’.

The English word ‘mind’ is etymologically derived from expressions in Indo-Germanic languages that were associated primarily with memory, thought, opinion, and intention. To hold something in mind is to retain it in memory, to turn one’s mind to something is to begin thinking about it, to know one’s mind is to have formed one’s opinion, to make up one’s mind is to decide. It is noteworthy that these idioms are largely associated with the exercise of the powers of the intellect and will. English idiom ramifies in further directions. At the most general level, the mind is associated with intellectual faculties: a person is said to have a powerful, agile, subtle or devious mind if he is skilful, quick and ingenious at problem solving, or if his solutions, plans and projects display subtlety and cunning. Hence too, it is connected with appropriate intellectual virtues and vices: a person has a tenacious, idle, vigorous, judicious or indecisive mind according to the manner in which he grapples with problems requiring reflection and according to the typical upshot of his reflections. A person is of sound mind if he retains his rational faculties, and out of his mind if he thinks, proposes or does things that are irrational. He is not in his right mind if he is distraught, and he has lost his mind if he is bereft of his rational faculties.

The second step is to derive some morals from these reminders of linguistic idiom. First, each such use, as is evident from the above examples, is readily paraphrasable without the word ‘mind’. All that is needed is a corresponding psychological predicate predicatable of the human being. In this sense, reference to the mind is eliminable without loss. Talk of the mind, one might say, is merely a convenient façon de parler, a way of speaking about distinctive human faculties and their exercise. Of course, that does not mean that the mind is a fiction. It does not mean that human beings do not have minds of their own – which would be true only if they
were pathologically indecisive. Nor does it mean that people are mindless – which would be true only if they were stupid and thoughtless. It would be quite wrong to suggest that ‘minds should be written off as an intellectual loss.’\(^1\) What is true (and perhaps what was intended) is that the *philosophical construal* of the mind as an immaterial substance is incoherent. It is similarly mistaken to suggest that our minds ‘are pretend entities’, that the agency of the mind ‘is not a real agency ... but an agency we pretend exists, and the qualities of which we pretend explain the behaviour’.\(^2\) It is true that the mind is no agent, but we no more *pretend* that our mind is an agent than we pretend that our character is an agent; and we no more *pretend* that our mind is an entity than we pretend that our abilities are entities. Rather, in superficial reflection on the mind, we are easily misled by our language into thinking that the mind is a part of a human being, that it is an immaterial substance – the person or self, and we are prone to ascribe agency to the mind thus conceived. That is a conceptual confusion. But our rich and elaborate talk of the mind is not at all like our talk (and pretence) of Father Christmas. To repeat, to say that our ordinary talk of the mind is a mere *façon de parler*, or that it is a *logical construction*, is not to say there are no minds. On the contrary, it is to say that there are, only that they are not kinds of things. The mind, it might be said (adapting a phrase from Wittgenstein), is not a *nothing*, but it is not a *something* either.

Secondly, it is obvious that in the various idioms one is not speaking of one and the same thing, called ‘the mind’. When we say that someone changed his mind, that he has a dirty mind, and that he has turned his mind to a certain question, we do not imply that there is one thing: a mind, which has changed, is dirty and has been turned. We are indeed speaking of the very same thing, *namely the human being*, and from case to case, and phrase to phrase, we are saying different things of the human being.

Thirdly, it is evident that the question of whether the mind is identical with the brain, under one interpretation, becomes transparently absurd, since the mind is not a kind of entity that might be identical with anything. The question is accordingly transformed into a different one: can psychological attributes be identified with neural states, processes or events in the brain. I shall not discuss this question here.

Fourthly, the very distinctive range of idioms appertaining to the mind suggests that it is not because we have minds that psychological predicates apply to us, but rather because a fairly specific sub-set of psychological

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1 Squires 1970, 355.
2 Hunter 1986, 442, 444.
predicates apply to us that we can be said to have minds. That fish can see and hear, that birds can be frightened of a cat, that cats can want to catch a bird – all of which Descartes denied – does not show that he was wrong to deny that they have minds.

Fifthly, although we speak of someone’s having a quick, agile, original mind, or a slow, idle, and dull one, it is a categorial mistake to suppose, as Reid (and others) did, that the mind is ‘that in [man] which thinks, imagines, reasons, wills’. We ascribe agile, devious, imaginative minds to human beings, but do not, on the whole, speak of the mind as if it were an agent, although we do sometimes speak of it as if it were a patient, as when we say ‘my mind is paralysed (numb)’. It is not my mind that thinks, imagines, reasons or wills, it is I. It is not my mind that makes up its mind or decides, that changes its mind or reverses its decision, that has half a mind, or is inclined, to do something – it is I, a human being. It is not the mind that feels pain, perceives, knows, is conscious of this or that, feels happy or upset, desires this or intends that. It was a Cartesian confusion to ascribe the whole range of psychological attributes to the mind. That incoherence is multiplied by present-day materialists’ identifying the mind with the brain, and ascribing the same range of predicates to the brain.

What then is the mind? If a definition is meant to provide a rule for the current use of a word, then there is no useful definition of ‘the mind’, although from idiom to idiom we can explain what is meant. But if we cannot fruitfully define ‘mind’ in this sense of ‘definition’, we can ask what must be true of a creature for it to be said to have a mind. It is evident that it is above all human beings that are the subjects of this array of idioms. What then is it about human beings that inclines us to invoke the whole panoply of the language of the mind? Surveying the range of characteristic English idioms yields interesting results. They are clustered around forms of thought, opinion, recollection and will that are possible only for language users. For the vast majority of idioms of the mind are concerned with the intellect and will, their exercise, and the traits and dispositions that exemplify these faculties. Talk of the mind is concerned with the distinctive rational powers of human beings and their exercise.

Once this is clear, it becomes evident that the domain of the idiom of ‘mind’ coincides roughly not with that of the Cartesian mind – the domain of consciousness, but with that of the Aristotelian rational *psuchē*. The Aristotelian *psuchē* is not a kind of entity, and the question of whether the organism and its mind are one thing or two is, according to Aristotle, as absurd as the question of whether the wax and the impression on it are one
thing or two. The possessor of a mind is an animal of a certain kind, namely a human being. To have a mind is not to be in possession of a kind of entity. It is rather to possess a distinctive range of powers.

Aristotle’s profound account of *psuchē* was concerned with demarcating the animate from the inanimate, with the classification of the animate into (very general) categories according to the classes of powers that characterize living beings – the vegetative *psuchē* and the sensitive *psuchē* being the powers that characterize plant and non-human animal life. What is distinctive of humanity over and above the powers of the vegetative and sensitive *psuchē* is the rational *psuchē* – the ability to reason and to act for reasons. To have a mind, according to the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, is to have an intellect and rational will. It is to be able to reason, to apprehend things as affording reasons for thinking, feeling and acting. It is to be able to deliberate, decide or choose what to do or believe, and to modify one’s feelings and attitudes, in the light of reasons. These far-reaching and complex powers are corollaries or consequences of being language-users.

4. The body

The nature of the mind has been obsessively discussed since Descartes, and examined in detail by analytic philosophers of the twentieth century. It is, however, surprising how little attention has been given, in the analytic tradition, to the ways in which we think and speak about our own bodies. It has generally been assumed that the concept of the human body is unproblematic. But that is wrong.

I *have* such-and-such a body, just as I have such-and-such a mind. Am I my body? Surely no more than I am my mind. Am I then a third thing? Is the body of a living human being the same as the body he leaves behind when he dies, that he leaves to science or wishes to be cremated? – Same *what*? It is not the same *corpse*, since the body of a living human being is not a corpse. It is not the same *living body*, since the living body is not to be cremated. Same body? – that depends on what exactly is meant by ‘body’ and on whether ‘a person’s body’ is a covering sortal for such statements of identity.

NN has a head, two arms and two legs. Does his body have a head, two arms and two legs? ‘Of course!’ , we are inclined to say. But perhaps we should take things slowly. If NN went to war, and lost his left leg on the Normandy beaches, it can be said of him ‘Poor fellow, he lost his left leg
in the war’. Can it be said, ‘Poor fellow, his body lost its left leg in the war’? If NN dies, we may say to the undertaker: ‘His body has only one leg, he lost his left leg on the Normandy beaches (not: ‘it lost its left leg on the Normandy beaches’). I can have my mother’s eyes and my father’s nose. Can I have my body’s nose? Does my body have a nose? Presumably only if it has a face? Can we speak of my body’s face? – Well, it is perhaps not false that it has a face; but it is not obviously true either. (And if it is indeterminate what we should say, that too is an important datum.) NN had a quick mind and a noble soul. Did his body have a quick mind and a noble soul? What would a person’s body do with a mind? or a soul? The thicket through which we must find a pathway are dense. Let us first generalize the puzzlement.

What is it to have a body? What has to be true of a being for it to be said of it that it has a body? – after all, trees and plants certainly do not have bodies. My body cannot think, or speak, and it cannot walk or run; so, what attributes can the body of a living human being have? We have two arms and two legs. These are parts of the human being, of the human organism. By extension, they are also said to be parts of the body a human being is said to have. We speak of ourselves as having a body, and are prone to think, by analogy with having arms and legs, that the body we have is likewise a part of ourselves – the material part, the other part being the mind. That is a natural movement of thought. But in philosophy what is natural is to err. So we must investigate how the mind that a human being has is related to the body that he has.

The word ‘body’ in English has many different uses. At its most general, a body is simply a spatio-temporal material continuant. In this sense, human beings are bodies, as are plants and other animals. They are differentiated from inanimate (mere) material bodies in virtue of being alive. That marks a qualitative difference (as Aristotle emphasized, and Descartes denied), which has left its mark on our conceptual scheme – not because our remote ancestors were so sapient, but because the primitive human reactions to what is alive as opposed to what is dead, and to what is alive as opposed to what is inanimate, are so profoundly different.

The animate body that a human being is is the human organism. Clearly, a human being does not have the organism that he is. So the body – the organism – that he is, is not the body that he has. The human organism has parts: head, torso and limbs, which are parts of the human being.

It should be noted that we also use the term ‘body’ to refer to the trunk or main bulk of a living thing. A quite different use is to refer to a corpse,
as when we say that the dead monarch’s body is lying in state, that NN’s body is in the next room, or that the battlefield was strewn with bodies of dead soldiers. A number of interesting features attend this use. First, it is striking that not all modern languages employ the same word to refer both to the body a person has and to the body he leaves behind. German, for example, uses ‘Leib’ (a cognate of ‘Leben’) or ‘Körper’ (derived from ‘corpus’) to signify the living body, and ‘Leiche’ to signify the corpse. Secondly, it is unclear what creatures can be said to leave a corpse when they die. Certainly a dead tree or plant is not the corpse or body of a tree or plant. The sardines we buy at the fishmongers are not *corpses* of sardines. A dead horse or cow may be a carcass, but not a corpse. Thirdly, it is the human being – the mortal man – that dies, not his body. Leonidas died fighting valiantly at Thermopylae. It was he, not his body, that was killed. What was left upon the stricken field was his corpse – his *remains*. Cleopatra killed *herself*, but it is doubtful whether one can cogently say that the beautiful body she had then *became* a corpse. Nor can one say that the alluring body she *had* is dead – she is dead, and what is left is her corpse. Fourthly, we are inclined to assent to such assertions as ‘When I die, I shall no longer exist, but my body will persist for a while’, and perhaps even to ‘When I die, my body will cease to be me, and I will no longer exist’\(^3\). But the body I have when I am alive cannot, as we shall see, be said to be me, and the body I leave behind, i.e. my corpse, is not the living body (the animate spatio-temporal continuant) that I am. A living body is not the same *anything* as a corpse – no common sortal subsumes both. Of course, they can be said to be the same ‘spatio-temporal continuant’ – but that is no sortal. The corpse is the dead human being, and a dead human being is no more a human being than a counterfeit five pound note is a five pound note.

The most common use, and the one most pertinent to our concerns, signifies the physique or figure of a human being, the appearance, condition of health and fitness. Commonly ‘body’, thus used, goes with a modifying adjective, as in ‘a supple / healthy / frail / crippled / athletic / powerful / muscular / beautiful / attractive / sexy / sensual / body’. Often it is used to draw a contrast with the person’s mind, as when we say ‘His body is frail, but his mind is as active as ever’ (i.e. he is physically frail but mentally alert) or as when young males, ogling at an alluring young woman on the beach, say ‘Look at her body!’ (i.e. look at her figure) and as when we ob-

\(^3\) Kenny 1988, 24.
serve that a man has a powerful body (i.e. a powerful physique). It is this use that we need to examine.

What ranges of things can be attributed to my body or NN’s body? – what can a person’s body be? It can be suntanned all over, be white through lack of exposure to the sun or red from excessive exposure. It may be painted blue (like the bodies of the ancient Britons), gleam with oil (like the bodies of the ancient Greeks in the palaestra), or be covered with dust, mud or blood. It may be badly lacerated or covered with mosquito bites. It may be tense or relaxed, strong or weak, fit or out of condition, muscular and hard or fat and flabby. It may be paralysed or shaking uncontrollably in shock. And it may be beautiful or ugly, graceful or ungainly, gangly or dumpy.

If a person’s body is suntanned all over, then that person is suntanned all over. If someone has a powerful, badly scarred body, then he is physically powerful and badly scarred. And if someone’s body is out of condition then the person is out of condition. It is tempting to conclude that anything true of a person’s body is also true of the person. That is generally true, but we should note exceptions. If Daisy’s body is beautiful (if she has a beautiful body), it does not follow that she is beautiful – for we may continue: ‘but she has an ugly face’. One may admire her body without admiring her (she may be a dreadful person).

It is noteworthy that our form of discourse about our body licenses describing it, as well as our parts (limbs, head and torso) as sensitive. My leg may itch, my swollen hand may throb, and my body may ache all over. It was mistaken of Descartes to suppose that the human body is an insensate biological ‘machine’. It was mistaken to draw the boundary of mind and body between sensibility (and other forms of Cartesian thought) and insensate matter. We allocate sensation to the living body no less than to the human being – it is an aspect of the sensitive psuchē. Localized sensations such as itches, pains and tickles are perfectly literally in the body; ‘I have a pain in my foot’ is no metaphor. But they are not in the body in the manner in which pins or bones are. We specify their bodily location when identifying such sensations, and we point to the place of an ache, tickle or itch when asked where it aches, tickles or itches. We assuage the sensation, rub or nurse the part of the body that hurts. Bodily sensations typically have a physical cause. Its locus is typically, but not necessarily, the place of the sensation. Hence we contrast physical pains with the pains of grief, distress, and other forms of mental suffering that have no somatic location.

Sensations then are in the body. What is the relationship between the
sensitivities of my body and the sensations I have? If my body aches all over, I ache all over, if my back aches, then I have a back-ache, and if my hand hurts, then I have a pain in my hand. But my back does not have a back-ache, and my hand does not have a pain, let alone a pain in it. If I have hurt my hand, then I have hurt myself – but my hand has not hurt itself.

What else cannot be said of a living person’s body? A person’s body is not the subject of voluntary and intentional predicates. My body may tremble or be paralysed, but it does not move itself, it does not walk, jump or run. Nor is it the subject of perceptual, cognitive, cogitative or affective predicates. A human being’s body does not see or hear, know, believe or think, feel cheerful or angry. It may drip with sweat, but it cannot weep. It may be unfit, but it cannot take exercise. Since a person’s body is logically excluded from being the subject of these distinctive attributes, we are inclined to think that something other than, and distinct from, his body must be their subject, namely his mind. But it is the human being that is the subject of experience and the agent of action. What then is the relationship between a human being and the human being’s body?

5. The relationship between human beings and their bodies

It has been suggested that a human person is constituted by his body. The relation between a human being and his body, it is suggested, is the same as that between a statue, such as Michelangelo’s David, and the piece of marble that constitutes it. But a statue is neither constituted by a piece of marble, nor is it a piece of marble, any more than a cake is constituted by a piece of cake or is a piece of cake, or a car is constituted by a piece of metal or is a piece of metal. ‘Piece’ is one of the most general partitives. It applies both to abstract and to concrete non-count nouns (as in ‘a piece of news’ and ‘a piece of bread’), by contrast with such type-specific partitives as ‘grain’, ‘bar’, ‘drop’, ‘loaf’, ‘lump’, ‘sheet’, ‘slice’, ‘sliver’, ‘strip’. A desk is not a piece of wood, although it may consist of pieces of wood and also may have been made out of pieces of wood. The David was made out of a large piece of marble already worked and then abandoned by Agostino di Duccio. It is made of, consists of, marble (more than a ton of it), but it does not consist of a piece of marble. Nor is it constituted by a piece of marble, any more than Rodin’s Balzac is constituted by a chunk of bronze.

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or Leonardo’s Sforza monument was constituted by a lump of clay. A human person does not consist of a piece of flesh. He is made of flesh and blood, but not made out of flesh and blood. And he is not constituted by his body.

A quite different conception is vehicular. One might be tempted to claim that ‘my body is the vehicle of my agency in the world’.

5 It is tempting to say that my body is the body the arms of which rise when I raise my arms, the legs of which move when I walk, and that it is the body with the eyes of which I see when I open my eyes. The temptation should be resisted for two reasons. First, my relation to my body is not that of a driver to his car (my car is indeed the car the front wheels of which turn left or right when I turn the steering wheel). When the driver turns the steering wheel, he makes it go round, but when he raises his arm he does not make it rise, or cause it to rise. When he turns the steering wheel with his hands, he brings it about that the steering wheel goes round and the car changes course, but when he raises his arm, he does not bring it about that his arm rises. A person controls his body, but not as a driver controls his car. Nor is he in his body as a driver is in his car – but not because he is ‘more closely intermingled with it’.

Secondly, while it is true that I see with my eyes and walk with my legs, it is far from obvious whether we can speak of my seeing with my body’s eyes, and walking with my body’s legs. My head, torso and limbs are parts of me – of the human being I am. I have a body, and my limbs are parts of my body. But my body does not have a body, and although my arms and legs are parts of my body, my body cannot be said to have arms and legs (although a corpse can). Although the mereology of the human being is homologous to the mereology of the body he has, it is the human being that has arms and legs, not the body he has – that is, we do not, by and large, extend the very peculiar form of representation of possession from the human being to the living body that is his. My leg may be bruised, but we would not say that my body’s leg is bruised. I may suffer from meningitis, but we would not say that my body’s brain suffers from meningitis. These are forms of words that have been given no use – and it is best left that way. Could we use them? Of course – if we changed a great deal of the surrounding grammar.

One might try to clarify the relationship between a human being and his body by reference to the dependency of perceptual experience upon facts

5 Swinburne 1984, 22.
about the body. Whether one sees anything at all depends on whether one’s eyes are open. What is visible to one, it is said, depends on where one’s body is located, on the direction in which one’s head is turned and on how one’s eyeballs are oriented. Such facts of experience-dependency might be thought to explain why the ‘possession’ of a particular body should be ascribed to the same thing as states of consciousness. They might be thought ‘to explain why a particular body should be spoken of as standing in some special relation – called “being possessed by” – to that thing’, that human person. They are said to explain why a subject of experience should have a very special regard for just one body, why he should think of it as unique and perhaps more important than any other. ... they might even be said to explain why, granted that I am going to speak of one body as mine, I should speak of this body as mine.6

This passage is subtly mistaken. We may grant (with deliberate rephrasing) that the visual experiences a human being has depend on where that human being is, on the state of his eyes and on the direction in which he is looking. But such truths do not explain why ‘a particular body’ should be spoken of ‘as standing in some special relation – called “being possessed by”’ to that human being. The body a human being has is not a body he literally possesses, any more than the birthday, the wife, and the mind he has, are things he possesses. To think otherwise would be to confuse the form of representation with what is represented. One may have a house, a ticket to the opera or a copyright. These one can sell or give away – and once sold or given away they are no longer one’s own, but belong to another. One can sell one’s body – but to do so will not leave one bodiless. (Similarly, when Faust sells his soul to the devil, he is not left soulless.) To sell one’s body is to sell sexual services; it leaves one bereft of certain freedoms, not of a body. Is not having a body logically akin to having two arms or legs? No; for I can lose an arm or a leg, but I cannot lose my body. Of course, someone may find my body – but then he needn’t return it. (And if I lose my mind, there is no point looking for it in the lost property office.) Could one not say that the relationship between a human being and his body is one of ownership, but that unlike humdrum relations of ownership, the possession of a body is inalienable? No; something can be inalienably possessed only if it makes sense for it to be alienated.

It is mistaken to suggest that the various forms of the experience-dependence of a human being on his location, orientation and the condition

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6 Strawson 1959, 93.
of his sense organs ‘explain why a subject of experience should pick out
one body from among others, give it, perhaps, an honoured name and as-
cribe to it whatever characteristics it has’ (ibid.). For, to be sure, a subject
of (conceptualized) experience does not ‘pick out one body from among
others’ and call it his own. One has no choice, and could have no choice, in
what to speak of as ‘my body’. Furthermore, nothing could explain ‘why,
granted that I am going to speak of one body as mine, I should speak of
this body as mine’. As an English speaker, I am going to use the English
phrase ‘my body’; I speak of my body as aching, showing its age, fit or out
of condition. But I do not speak of ‘one body among others’ as mine. If I
say ‘my body is aching all over’, no one could ask ‘Which body is yours?’.

It is tempting to claim that ‘that which one calls one’s body is, at least,
a body, a material body. It can be picked out from others, identified by or-
dinary physical criteria and described in ordinary physical terms.’7 But this
is misleading. ‘Which body is my body?’ has little use, other than to ask
what ‘my body’ means. ‘This [pointing reflexively] is my body’ has no
use in picking my body out from others, although it might be used to ex-
plain the phrase ‘my body’. The material body, the animate spatio-
temporal continuant made of flesh and blood, that can be picked out (by
others), identified and described in ‘physical terms’, is me. But I don’t call
that which I am ‘my body’. I am a body; but I don’t have myself, don’t
have the body I am. We sometimes speak of ourselves as being embodied,
but mistakenly so. It is but one step from this figure of speech to thinking
of ourselves as residing in our body. It would be far less misleading to
think of ourselves, with Aristotle, not as embodied but as ensouled
(empsuchos) – endowed with the powers that characterize humanity.

We have seen that the mind is not a kind of entity, that our customary
talk of the mind is no more than an abstraction from our talk of human be-

7 Strawson 1959, 89. To be sure, if one claims that ‘that which one calls one’s body is
at least a body, a material body’, then one lays oneself open to the question of how the
body one has is related to the body (the organism) one is? Then one might indeed
wonder whether the body one has occupies the same space as the body one is. But that
would be akin to wondering whether, given that doing something for my sake is doing
something for me or on my account, the sake I have is identical with me or with the
account I have. All talk of ‘my body’ is no more than an idiomatic way of speaking of
the somatic characteristics of the human being that I am. It is not a way of talking of
anything other than myself nor is it a way of talking of some subordinate part of my-
self. (Remember that to say of someone that he has a decisive mind is just to say that
he is decisive – it is not to say that there are two decisive things: him and his mind.)
ings, of their intellectual, mnemonic and volitional abilities and their exercise. It should by now be evident that our parallel talk of our body is in a like manner largely derivative from our talk of human beings. We have and exercise an array of cognitive, cogitative and volitional powers that we exhibit in our behaviour. As agents of this kind, we are said to have a mind. We likewise have a variety of corporeal determinables – a physique, a figure, physical appearance, susceptibility to sensation, degrees of fitness (ability to engage in physical activity) and health. As such agents, with a mind that is manifest in corporeal activities and reactions, we are also said to have a body, and can be described as having such-and-such a body (powerful, muscular, lithe, graceful). We describe ourselves thus when we wish to focus upon such attributes, and to manifest our attitudes to them. For we may be proud of our body (if it is fit and beautiful) or ashamed of it (if it is fat, flabby and ugly), admire the beautiful bodies of the young and be shocked by the mutilated bodies of the injured. We may be comfortable with our body, or ill at ease with it (e.g. if we are pathologically obsessed with our physical appearance and condition). Being self-conscious creatures, much preoccupied with sexual attraction and commonly given to degrees of hypochondria, it is hardly surprising that we should think a great deal about our physique, aesthetic appearance, attractiveness, our physical condition.

In the sense in which ‘a body’ is a material spatio-temporal continuant, then, of course, human beings are bodies – although this is a quasitechnical use of ‘body’, and not something that can be said unmisleadingly or inoffensively in extra-philosophical discourse. Material spatio-temporal continuants may be inanimate or animate. Those that are animate are organisms of varying degrees of biological complexity. Human beings are highly complex organisms, and in this sense too are bodies. Being a body in this sense, being an organism, implies being a body in the most general sense. We further speak of ourselves as having a healthy, ageing, weak or strong body. To be sure, only a creature that is a body in the previous sense can thus be said to have a body. The moot question is: what has to be true of a creature that is an animate spatio-temporal continuant for it to be said to have such-and-such a body? The most coherent answer is: only if it can also be said to have such-and-such a mind. No doubt we sometimes extend the idiom to other animals, by analogy with ourselves. We may well say of an injured horse that its poor body was terribly lacerated, just as we may say of a stubborn horse that refused to do what we want it to do that it has a mind of its own. Such uses are harmless extensions, but they show little
about the rich web of connections in the paradigmatic, human, case. One might also say that the idiom of *having a body* is a formal mark of advanced sentient life that also leaves a corpse on death.

So, talk of our body is no less derivative from, or parasitic on, talk of the human being as a whole than is talk of our mind. We say of Jack: ‘He has a stocky body, handsome face, lively mind and kind heart’. Until we stop to think about it, it would not occur to anyone that we are doing anything other than talking about a single human being – specifying a variety of different modes that our complex species may exemplify in a variety of complex ways. But, like Augustine, once someone asks us, once we stop to think, we become entangled in the web of words.

What then is the relationship between the mind and the body? The mind/body problem *is* insoluble. For it is a hopelessly confused residue of the Platonic/Augustinian/Cartesian tradition. It cannot be solved; but it can be *dissolved*. The mind is not an entity that could stand in a *relationship* to anything. All talk of the mind that a human being has and of its characteristics is talk of the intellectual and volitional powers that he has, and of their exercise. The body that a human being *is*, the living organism, has and exercises those distinctive intellectual and volitional abilities that we speak of when we speak of people’s minds. But the body that a human being is said to *have*, when we speak of human beings as having beautiful or athletic bodies, is not the kind of thing that could be said to possess intellectual and volitional abilities. For we speak of a human being’s body thus when we focus upon corporeal characteristics that the human being in question has. These characteristics, the very distinctive range of corporeal features of a human being that we assign to the body he has, are not the kinds of thing that could make up their minds, call things to mind or change their minds.

The mind a human being has and the body he has are not the kinds of things that could stand in *any* relationship to each other in the sense in which Jack and Jill (or London and Paris, or a man and his property) may stand in a relationship to each other. The apparent relationship is comparable to the ‘relationship’ between the meaning of a word and the phonemes into which the word can be analysed – both being abstractions from the meaningful word in use. The English word ‘cat’ *has* a meaning (it means the carnivorous quadruped *Felix domesticus*), but does not stand in a *relationship* to its meaning, any more than I stand in a *relationship* to my mind. The phoneme *kæt* neither has a meaning nor stands in a relationship to a meaning – it is a phonologists’ abstraction from the meaningful English
word. Similarly, my body does not have a mind and does not stand in a relationship to my mind. (I have a mind – and a body; what would my body do with a mind?) One might compare the question of how my mind is related to my body with the question of how the value of five pounds is related to the colour of the paper on which the note is printed. For here too one might explain that the five pound note has a value of five pounds, but the colour of the paper on which the note is printed does not stand in any relationship to the value of five pounds. So the mind-body problem as traditionally conceived simply evaporates.

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Allerdings verrät Wittgenstein nur an wenigen Stellen seiner Aufzeichnungen, was ihn an der Psychoanalyse Freuds so faszinierte. Seine Ausführungen laufen im Gegenteil auf eine vernichtende Kritik am psychoanalytischen Verfahren hinaus und schließen zumeist mit der für ihn charakteristische eindringliche Warnung an seine Schüler ab, sich ja vor den verhängnisvollen Verlockungen der bezirzenden Methode zu hüten: „[Freud] steckt voller fragwürdiger Gedanken, und sein Reiz und der Reiz seines Themas


Die Auseinandersetzung mit Wittgensteins Bemerkungen zur Freudischen Psychoanalyse gewinnt ihren Reiz vor allem daraus, daß Wittgenstein, trotz aller Kritik an der psychoanalytischen Methode – also einer nicht physiologisch fundierten Therapie seelischer und, soweit das Bewußtsein angesprochen ist, mentaler Zustände –, offenkundig so fasziniert war, daß er bei der Ausarbeitung seiner „Späthand“ nach 1929 selbst immer wieder auf psychoanalytische Motive zurückgriff. Auch wenn die vorherrschende sprachanalytische Wittgenstein-Interpretation solchen Beeinflussungen nur unwillig nachgeht und den Sprachphilosophen zu meist „enthistorisiert“, wird man anerkennen müssen, daß Wittgensteins Philosophieren in mancher Hinsicht dem Analyseverfahren Freuds durch-


Auf die nicht eindeutige Verwendung dieses Begriffs in Freuds Abhandlungen zielt Wittgensteins zweiter Einwand. Freuds Rede vom „Motiv“ ist äquivok – er gebraucht ihn einerseits zur Bezeichnung eines intentionalen (Bewußtseins)Zustands des Patienten, andererseits markiert es eine verborgene Ursache für diesen mentalen Zustand. Wenn Freud von einer kausalen Determinierung des psychisch-motivationalen Geschehens beim Patienten spricht, müßte er eine eindeutige Beziehung zwischen einer isolierbaren („latenten“) Ursache und ihren („manifesten“) Wirkungen naßhaft machen können, die auch unabhängig von der Wahrnehmung der Beteiligten bestehe. Freud scheint dies in der Tat anzunehmen, ist für ihn die Korrektheit einer Diagnose doch auch ohne oder sogar gegen die Zustimmung des Patienten möglich. Allerdings lassen sich dann die Korrektheitsbedingungen der vermeintlich objektiven Diagnose nicht mehr unabhängig vom Therapeuten angeben. Wittgensteins Einwand, daß sich hinter dem manifesten Geschehen möglicherweise gar keine „latente“ oder eine ganz andere als die vom Analytiker erkannte Ursache verbirgt, kann der Therapeut bloß mit der Versicherung begegnen, daß das, was er erkenne,
wirklich der Fall sei. Ein solches Verfahren wird man allerdings kaum noch als wissenschaftlich im Sinne des von Freud reklamierten Kausalitätsprinzips betrachten können. Es tut sich vielmehr eine Begründungs lucky zwischen dem wissenschaftlichen Selbstanspruch und der tatsächlichen, als „spekulativ“ zu bezeichnenden Praxis der Theorie auf (vgl. VG 65). Die Folgen sind für Wittgenstein fatal: Freud „wollte eine einzige Erklärung finden, die zeigen sollte, was Träumen bedeutet. Er wollte das Wesen des Traumes ergründen, und er hätte jede Vermutung, daß er teilweise, aber nicht ganz und gar recht haben hätte, von sich gewiesen. Wenn er sich teilweise irrte, dann hätte das für ihn bedeutet, völlig falsch zu liegen.“ (VG 69)

Da die Psychoanalyse in Wahrheit kein wissenschaftliches Fundament besitzt, das laut Wittgenstein allein dem Erfahrungswissen zukommt, so entbehrt auch drittens die vom Analytiker reklamierte prinzipielle Überlegenheit gegenüber seinem Patienten, also die Asymmetrie in der therapeutischen Situation, der wissenschaftlichen Legitimität. Daß die Deutung des Analytikers in vielen Fällen interessant (Wittgenstein nennt sie in VG 42 „vernünftig“), ja sogar meistenteils zutreffend sein mag, bestreitet Wittgenstein keineswegs. Ihm irritiert vielmehr der Umstand, daß diese Therapiehoheit in allen Fällen am Ende dem Analytiker zugeschrieben, ohne hierfür überprüf bare, nicht-rekursive Begründungen geben zu können: „Freud [zeigt] niemals, wo aufzuhören ist, wo die richtige Lösung liegt. [...] Manchmal sagt er, daß der Doktor weiß, was die richtige Lösung oder Analyse eines Traums ist, wohingegen es der Patient nicht weiß: der Doktor kann sagen, daß der Patient sich irrt.“ (VG 63)

Wittgensteins inhaltliche Einwände gegen die Freudsche Psychoanalyse sind grundsätzlicher Art und führen ihn dazu, sie als Theorie zu verwerfen. Es handelt sich bei ihr, wie er einmal drastisch formuliert, sogar um scheinenden „Betrug“. Daß er ihr dennoch mit unübersehbarem Respekt begegnet, liegt an ihren außerordentlich erfolgreichen Techniken, deren sie sich zu ihrer Vermittlung bedient. Wenn Wittgenstein feststellt, daß Freud die Menschen dazu „überrede“, seine Lehren anzunehmen, so ist dies keineswegs nur abschätzig gemeint. Zwar hält er der Freudschen Instanzenlehre das von Bischof Butler überlieferte Motto entgegen: „Alles ist, was es ist, und nicht etwas anderes“ (VG 44) – eine Erledigung des psychoanalytischen Theoriekonzeptes gleichsam im Handumdrehen –, doch findet er in

Freuds Verfahrenweise durchaus Momente, die seinen eigenen Intentio-
nen sehr nahe stehen.

Bereits in der *Logisch-Philosophischen Abhandlung*, also lange vor sei-
ner genaueren Bekanntschaft mit den Schriften Freuds, hatte Wittgenstein
die Darstellungstechnik eingesetzt, seinen scheinbar rhapsodisch angeord-
neten, oft apodiktischen und stets kryptischen „Sätzen“ über das, was der
Fall sei, eine konsistente Deutung zu geben, indem er sie als ein Therapie-
angebot für irregelteilte Philosophen anbot. Allerdings könne sein Buch,
schrieb er in das Vorwort der *Abhandlung*, wohl nur den überzeugen, der
ihre Voraussetzungen bereits teile – aber diese Vorbedingung für den an-
gestrebten Therapieerfolg gilt ja gerade für die Psychoanalyse. Und am
Schluß der *Abhandlung* bilanziert er lapidar, daß der Leser, nunmehr zur
richtigen Sicht der in Frage stehenden Probleme gelangt, das Buch fortwer-
fen solle – schließlich komme es nicht auf den Text, sondern auf die Ände-
run der Sichtweise des Lesers an – eben dies ist es, was Freud als den ei-
gentlichen Zweck seiner Analyse bezeichnet hat.

Die Engführung von philosophischer Reflexion, Therapie und Ein-
sichtsfähigkeit des Patienten ist für Wittgenstein auch nach 1929 leitend
für die Entwicklung seiner Überlegungen. Fast hat es den Anschein, er ha-
be wesentliche Teile seines eigenen philosophischen Verfahrens von Freud
übernommen. Zumindest verwendet er gern dessen methodische Grund-
überlegungen, zuweilen sogar seine Terminologie. So notiert er 1930: „Ei-
ne der wichtigsten Aufgaben ist es ja, alle falschen Gedankengänge so cha-
rakteristisch auszudrücken, daß der Leser sagt ‚ja, genauso habe ich es ge-
meint‘. Die Physiognomie jedes Irrtums nachzuzeichnen. Wir können ja
auch nur dann den Andern eines Fehlers überführen, [...] wenn er diesen
 Ausdruck (wirklich) als den richtigen Ausdruck seines Gefühls anerkennt.
Nämlich, nur wenn er ihn als solchen anerkennt, ist er der richtige Aus-
druck. (Psychoanalyse.)“ (BT 277)

An der Psychoanalyse kann also exemplarisch studiert werden, wie die-
scher „richtige“, also anerkennungsfähige Ausdruck des „Gefühls“ zu finden
ist: Freud „spricht davon, den Widerstand aufzugeben. Eine ‚Instanz‘ wird
von einer anderen ‚Instanz‘ getäuscht. [...] Der Analytiker gilt als stärker,
as fähig zu kämpfen und die Täuschung der Instanz zu überwinden. Aber
es gibt keinen Weg zu zeigen, daß das ganze Resultat der Analyse nicht
 ‚Täuschung‘ sein wird. Es ist etwas, was die Menschen annehmen wollen,
was es für sie einfacher macht, bestimmte Wege zu gehen: es macht für sie
bestimmte Verhaltens- und Denkweisen natürlich. Sie haben eine Denk-
weise aufgegeben und eine andere angenommen.“ (VG 65)

Freuds Genie besteht für Wittgenstein darin, neben der „Erfindung“ neuer Begriffe und Sprachspiele eine „Kartographie“ der Seele geschaffen zu haben, durch die viele der verwirrenden Phänomene in eine übersichtliche Ordnung gebracht wurden und auf diese Weise den Sinnbedürfnissen

keine neuen Regionen der Seele entdeckt worden [...]. Das Vorführen des Traums [...] ist ein Vorführen von Gleichnissen.“ (V 198)


Blick größer ausschaue als er in Wirklichkeit sei, in ihren Werken beifällig zitierten.


Im selben Atemzug allerdings aber belehrt der Kulturpessimist in Freud im Namen der Aufklärung die Aufklärer über die Grenzen ihres Tuns. Es scheint geradezu so, daß der Arzt gezwungen ist, mit den Mächten des Irra-


Freilich droht damit auch die Idee der gelingenden Therapie in sich zusammenzufallen. Wenn die Philosophie „alles läßt wie es ist“ (BT 282) und eines ihrer größten Hindernisse die „Erwartung neuer tiefer/unerhörter/Aufschlüsse“ (ebd. 283) sein soll, dann hat sie am Ende nichts vorzuweisen, wofür der Einsatz sich lohnte. Gewiß hat Wittgenstein die Arbeit am Mythos philosophisch schonungsloser und vielleicht sogar authentischer betrieben als Freud, der sich als Arzt und Wissenschaftler zeitlebens zum naturalistischen Weltbild der Kausalbeziehungen und des psychischen De-

Die Krankheit einer Zeit heilt sich durch eine Veränderung in der Lebensweise der Menschen und die Krankheit der philosophischen Probleme konnte nur durch eine veränderte Denkweise und Lebensweise geheilt werden, nicht durch eine Medizin die ein einzelner erfand. (BGM 132; Hervorhebung M.K.)

Man mag darüber spekulieren, ob Freud, hätte er länger gelebt und wäre er Zeitleute dessen geworden, was der Menschheit – und auch Ludwig Wittgenstein – nach 1939 widerfuhr, diesen Überlegungen zugestimmt hätte. Wahrscheinlich hätte sein ärztliches Ethos, dem er trotz seiner Distanz zum Berufsstand, stets treu blieb, obsiegt und ihn auf das Modell der kausal-deterministischen Diagnostik und der aktiven Therapie verpflichtet. Sein Bestreben wäre wohl dahin gegangen, die grundlegenden ethischen Probleme des Holocausts oder der Atombombe, die Wittgensteins letzte Lebenszeit überschatteten und seinen Kulturpessimismus noch verschärften, mit den Mitteln der Analyse zu „objektivieren“. Die Psychoanalyse tendiert aufgrund ihrer naturwissenschaftlichen Fundierung per se dazu, ethische Fragen auszuklammern und auf diese Weise eher noch zu verschärfen als zu ihrer Lösung beizutragen. Wittgenstein, der die logischen Analysen in seiner Abhandlung als ein philosophisches Mittel zu einem ethischen Endzweck begriff, ist diese ethische Indifferenz der Psychoanalyse nicht entgangen. Er notiert: „Sich psychoanalysieren zu lassen ist irgendwie ähnlich vom Baum der Erkenntnis essen. Die Erkenntnis, die man dabei erhält,
stellte uns (neue) ethische Probleme; trägt aber nichts zu ihrer Lösung bei.\" (VB 76)


Dennoch hielt Freud selbst am Ende seines Lebens hartnäckig an jenen „Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit“ (XVI 219ff.) fest, durch die eine desillusionierte Menschheit die Extremität und Monstrosität ihres Zeitalters zumindest zeitweise im Zaum halten könnte.

Aber Freud blieben, anders als Wittgenstein, die düstersten Geschehnisse des Zweiten Weltkrieges erspart. Entsprechend düster fällt dessen Verdikt über sein Zeitalter aus. Anfang 1947 schreibt er:

Die apokalyptische Ansicht der Welt ist eigentlich die, daß sich die Dinge nicht wiederholen. Es ist z.B. nicht unsinnig, zu glauben, daß das wissenschaftliche & Technische Zeitalter der Anfang vom Ende der Menschheit ist; daß die Idee vom Großen Fortschritt eine Verblendung ist; daß an der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis

Freud bestreitet [...] die Autonomie der Moral – in einer letztlich reduktionistischen Weise arbeitet er an der (naturwissenschaftlich) geleiteten Entmoralisierung der Moral – freilich mit dem paradoxen Ziel, kraft dieser Entmoralisierung im Grundsätzlichen die faktische Moralentwicklung zu fördern. (Brumlik, 161)

Für Wittgenstein ist die Atombombe das Anzeichen der nunmehr erreichten vollkommenen Verschmelzung von Wissenschaft und Barbarei. Die Bombe könne wie ein brutaler Erzieher wirken, um die Menschheit über das Wesen der modernen Wissenschaft drastisch zu belehren, schreibt er eine Woche nach den Bombenabwürfen über Hiroshima und Nagasaki (VB 98f.). Und nur wenige Tage vor seinem Tod spitzt er seine Wissenschaftskepsis in folgender Überlegung zu:

Auf die Praxis der „Überredung“ hatte sich Freud gewiß hervorragend verstanden, die theoretische Einsicht in ihre beunruhigenden Aspekte hat er zuweilen gestreift, in ihren Konsequenzen erfaßt hat er sie offensichtlich nicht mehr. Im dritten Teil des unvollendet gebliebenen Abriß der Psychoanalyse, der den Titel Der theoretische Gewinn trägt, beschwört er statt dessen noch einmal die Analogie zur Physik. „Wir haben“, heißt es dort, „die technischen Mittel gefunden, um die Lücken unserer Bewußtseinsphänomene auszufüllen, deren wir uns also bedienen wie die Physiker des Experiments.“ (XVIII 127). Während Freud sich weigerte, die ethische Kränkung in ihrer Radikalität anzunehmen, wußte Wittgenstein am Ende kein Mittel mehr, die Krankheit seiner Zeit zu heilen. Es bleibt also unsere Aufgabe, die Bedeutung der ethischen Kränkung des 20. Jahrhunderts für unsere Zeit zu er messen.

**LITERATUR**

1. **Freud/Wittgenstein**


2. **Sekundärliteratur**


Language in Archaic, Pre-referential Cultures. The Emergence of Dualism

EWA BIŃCZYK, TORUN

When one analyses cultures, the paths of conflicts or possible dialogue between them, then it is also worth mentioning a very exotic kind of cultures: cultures of the past. They are the main subject of concern in my paper. The so-called archaic, magical or preliterate cultures (comprehended here as models or methodological idealizations) are connected with hunters-gatherers and their relatively simple societies. They were societies without the division of labour and without any complex forms of social hierarchy. Anthropologists localize them before the invention of literacy and also before the neolithic revolution when humanity invented agriculture and breeding.

The exoticism of the archaic world can be reconstructed to some extent by anthropology and I would like to present such a reconstruction, mainly on the basis of some Polish anthropological conceptions of Anna Pałubicka, Jerzy Kmita, Wojciech Burszta, Michał Buchowski and Andrzej P. Kowalski. I hope such a reconstruction can turn out to be fruitful, for the very existence of the pre-referential world makes many traditional philosophical assumptions to some degree controversial (as being historically contingent).

But before let me mention the main inspiration of my paper. According to Josef Mitterer – the author of a very fascinating book titled Das Jenseits der Philosophie, Western philosophy and also Western common thinking originates from the crucial assumptions of dualism (Mitterer 1996). The so-called dualizing mode of speaking, comprehended simply as a set of argumentative techniques and practical rules of conversation, assumes and creates the ontological difference between the object and its description, between the world and language. Philosophical problems of truth, reality or reference (as the problem of some mysterious gap between language and reality) arise as simple side-effects produced by the dualizing practices of
communication. In the process of socialization, individuals internalize rules and norms of dualism as obvious and overwhelming. They are forced to construct descriptions according to them and, being often corrected by others, they start to discuss in a proper, dualizing way. An important methodological advantage of Mitterer’s hypothesis for me is that the dualizing practices of communication, and also its drawbacks, can be empirically noticeable and descriptable by history, anthropology, philosophy of language, theory of speech acts or sociology of communication.

In a very simple way, described by Mitterer, the dualizing mode of speaking creates the other side of discourse, which plays an important role of the independent instance that can settle any debate or argument. The other side of discourse can possess many faces, like the single God in monotheistic religion, like objective reality in scientific argumentations, like the essence or nature of things within every type of essentialism. Frequentley the other side of discourse is given a priori, essentialized and in effect it cannot be subjected to any external discussion. But of course, being mute it needs professional spokespersons who can speak in the name of it. When the other side of discourse becomes the only God we hear theologians speaking, when it becomes an objective nature, we see scientific experts who speak in the name of facts.

It is also interesting that many contemporary conceptions create the other side of discourse as epistemically elusive. In that role we can find, for example, causal pressures in Richard Rorty’s neopragmatism or the negative instance of resistance in the strong programme of the sociology of knowledge. But even if they make no discernable difference to our descriptions or conventionally shaped beliefs, they still play their role of some very important ontological assumptions constituting dualism.

As Mitterer writes, the dualizing mode of speaking has its historical roots. Probably, we can historically observe processes in which dualizing techniques emerged, stabilized and institutionalized, becoming more and more obvious, rooted and unproblematic. This is exactly the point of the main interest in my paper. First of all, I would like to describe the archaic,
pre-referential and pre-dualizing use of language, and then to ask about possible reasons and necessary conditions of the emergence and institutionalization of the dualizing mode of speaking.\(^2\)

In the world of magic, before Max Weber’s first disenchantment of the world, while spheres of sacrum and profanum differentiated and religion emerged, every dimension of human experience was magical. Archaic cultures were *syncretic*, without any clear difference between the practical-technical sphere, the communicative-symbolic dimension or the sphere of outlook and transcendent values (Palubicka 1984, 44-48). We should remember that by distinguishing those spheres we impose or impute our modern European way of understanding anthropological data (cf. Kmita 1984). In tribal societies, where practical and symbolic elements were intertwined, those dimensions constituted integrated aspects of social practice.

But magical cultures, which is be even more interesting in the context of this paper, are also defined by the very specific way of understanding language within them. Magical spells, curses, solemn promises, the special function of proper names and also linguistic taboos, suggest that language is here seen as dynamic, deeply performative and even “glued together” with reality (Zybertowicz 1995, 218-224). That merging leads to the situation in which the assumption that language and reality constitute two different ontological spheres is absent. As a result, it is not possible to use language in a clear, referential way. In other words, it is not possible to relate words to things comprehended as having a different ontological status. Let me describe the details of this archaic feature or tendency using selected anthropological conceptions.

According to Ernst Gellner we observe the lack of a clear referential use of language in primitive cultures (Gellner 1988, 44-55, 78, 72). The use of language, like any other action, is here a kind of *multi-strand activity* that realizes many aims at the same time and that can be subordinated to many different criteria. The use of words is a kind of social ritual in the

\(^2\) It is fascinating that we can find some analogies between anthropological reconstructions mentioned in the paper and the so-called evolution of language and theories of grammaticalization. For example, both areas stress that not referential, but phatic, coordinative function was basic in the first stage of the evolution of language (Aitchison 2002).
community, playing many important functions, for example: affirmating and performing loyalty to the social order. In such a context linguistic denoting or clear informing, separated from normative functions is not possible.

As Michał Buchowski and Wojciech Burszta write, in the context of the magical world we should better speak only about speech (parole), not about language (langue). Language, comprehended as an abstract, stable system of meanings and rules that are located on a superindividual level, is not present. When analysing archaic cultures, we are reconstructing the stage before the emergence of symbols. Semantics or conceptual knowledge is not yet crystallized. Separating language or any conceptual, mental domain from the practical activity of archaic men in their community is unjustified. Language is not an equivalent of thought. Rather than any abstract symbols, we observe noises correlated with the specific, current situation. It follows that a conventional, arbitrary character of symbols is not yet recognized (Buchowski, Burszta 1986, Burszta 1986).

According to Andrzej P. Kowalski’s conception, the archaic thinking proceeds in terms of continuous metamorphosis (Kowalski 2001). It is connected with an image of the dynamic of things and also with the deep presupposition of the permanent changeability of being. In a such context every object can undergo any changes in another object. In fact, the very notion of stable object or stable being is not present. Metamorphosis is not regulated by any convention. It is context-dependent and can even be accidental. Such image appears with the assumption of some peculiar homogeneity of being: axiological, practical, mental and physical aspects of being are mixed together. We can reconstruct to some degree and describe those features analysing the structure of archaic languages.

The exotic situation sketched above leads to many interesting consequences described by Kowalski. First of all, in the archaic mind there is no separate mental sphere: perceptual, emotional, conceptual and imaginative layers are not separated. The archaic experience is deeply holistic or syncretic. Secondly, the archaic thinking is not individual, but rather social or common, and always rooted in context and practice. The subject of knowledge, as a kind of independent, reflexive instance, is not present. Moreover, things, mental representations and words can fluently undergo metamorphoses in each other. Consequently, language penetrates reality and
minds. This is the reason why magic is possible and also effective. The use of words, spells or curses allows making real changes in reality. Names are seen as parts of their carriers. The act of calling can change the essence or nature of a person or thing that is called. Language is superperformative. The distance between words and things is not present, words exert a direct and immediate influence on reality. What is more, the magical speech cannot “break free” from the context of the current action. Those languages have no stable semantic rules, no third person pronouns, no possibility of commenting or citing, no abstract ideas or meanings. Archaic languages rather use constructions with dynamic verbs than with nouns. Consequently, magical cultures include only practices of manifesting or demonstrating in the context, without abstract denoting. They are pre-referential.3

Probably, the process of some peculiar “unsticking” language from reality was long-lasting and, of course, very complex. We can only speculate about possible cultural causes and necessary conditions of the emergence of the dualizing mode of speaking. Let me start with asking how did magical, syncretic cultures disintegrate? How did the symbolic sphere emerge from the holistic background of magic? According to Kowalski, axiological symbols were probably recognized and generated in the first stage. In axiological symbolizing some gestures, actions or noises started to substitute or replace values. Originally it was connected with some selected professional magical groups, for example specialists in the treatment of metals and their magical procedures. Some of those procedures started to play a role of axiological symbols (cf. Kowalski 1999).

Probably, Plato is not responsible for everything, but when we search for the possible origins of dualism, we should remember the influence of Greek philosophy with its essentialism. What is very important, ancient Greek philosophy was built in a very specific environment. In Greece of those times the real confrontation between oral and literate culture took place. When looking for possible roots of dualism, we should not forget about the role of technological innovations, first of all, about literacy and its mental and cognitive consequences. According to Jack Goody the invention of literacy and an alphabet facilitated the decontextualization of

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3 We can find a lot of motives suggesting the existence of the magical view of language in the Bible (see Bińczyk 2003).
speech (Goody 1978). Literacy objectified speech, it stabilized the content of communication or oral transmission. Critical analysis of arguments became possible. The rational style of discussion was invented together with new techniques of argumentation. Greeks discussed the problem of falsity and fiction, and have tried to understand the linguistic conditions of lying. They gave us first systematic reflection on semantics, on the nature of signs, on grammatical and logical rules, which were here understood as arbitrary conventions. When the changeability of being was replaced by its stability, essentialism and objectivism became possible. Metamorphosis had to disappear. Gradually, the symbolic use of language emerged. It was described and understood better, when literacy became popular. Literacy proves to be an important condition for the emergence of the clear referential use of language. Probably, at the same time the epistemological relation appeared as the relation that presupposes the subject of knowledge, its object and problematic questions of truth, and knowledge or reference as ontologically distinct (Zybertowicz 1995, 73).

Nevertheless many authors provide examples of the magical and performative use of language in many subsequent contexts. Tzvetan Todorov describes the magical understanding of language among Europeans discovering America (Todorov 1996). Michel Foucault reconstructs magical elements in the episteme of similarity in the 16th century in Europe (Foucault 1966). It is visible that the style of communication and thinking reveals many differences between elites and masses. It proves that the institutionalization of the dualizing mode of speaking was context-dependent and also gradual.

Another interesting issue concerns the origins of the other side of discourse as an important instance settling arguments. It is possible to reconstruct historically, how the dualizing techniques did produce such instances and how they did undergo institutionalization. One of those instances was the single God. Gellner stresses here the role of clergy as professional interpreters of the Holy Scriptures. Clergy invented new techniques of argumentations, speaking as spokespersons, in the name of God. Another important instance settling arguments in Western culture was Nature. We should take here into account new scientific experimental practices invented in 17th Europe and the specific style of representing facts popularized by Robert Boyle. Since the 17th century, a scientific expert can speak
in the name of any mute fact. Thanks to his artificial experiments, an expert can settle every human question concerning Nature. Of course, new techniques of speaking in the name of facts had to be justified. Those processes are described by Bruno Latour, who used the historical reconstruction of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer (Latour 1993; Shapin, Schaffer 1985).

What I wanted to indicate in my paper until now is that: 1) essentialism is inscribed in dualism due to the notion of the other side of the discourse; 2) dualism and essentialism have their historical roots and can be seen as contingent; 3) dualism can be empirically reconstructed when it is defined as a set of argumentative techniques. At this moment, in conclusion, let me suggest that the dualizing mode of speaking can also be impractical in dialogue and even dangerous in some context. The rejection of dualizing assumptions can prove to be useful for ethical reasons. As Mitterer’s book indicates, if we reject the blockades of essentialism we can conduct our negotiation freely in many directions. We avoid deadlocks and idle debates. We are rather looking forward for the future consensus, than back to appeal to the other side of discourse to prove that we are right. What is more, the specific usurpation of speaking “in the name of…anything” can have its political negative consequences. So, in some conditions it would be probably better to stay distrustful of usurpators who play the role of spokespersons. Of course, a very strong Western, political elitism of experts makes it very difficult.

Essentialism has its political consequences in the contemporary context of the global risk society as well. What we observe in present condition is the growing significance of scientific experts. But at the same time we see scientific controversies and debates that turn out to be so difficult to close. Very often there are experts on both sides speaking in the name of objective facts. Contemporary controversies are so difficult to close not because science is week or because scientific experts have bad intentions. The reason is rather that the world of global heterogenous associations is too complex, unpredictable and risky. Let us think here, for example, about ecological crisis, the ozone hole, financial risks, virtual markets, technological

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4 Of course, dualism constitutes the common sense of the Western world. It is deeply internalized and recognized as “natural” and useful. But it does not mean that the dualizing techniques of argumentation have no drawbacks.
unemployment or political terrorism. As a result the Greek ideal of *episteme* as knowledge, which can be absolutely certain and true, cannot be achieved today. We rather observe unpredictable side effects of our technological interventions. But still we need political decisions to be made (very often almost on the spot). So this is not a good time for people who want to be sure before they start to act. Today we have to make political decisions in the conditions of uncertainty (Latour 2004, 263), putting aside our essentialistic habits and hopes.

We live in such a dynamic collective that maybe it is better to think beyond the assumptions of essentialism. I think here mainly about an essentialistic view of Nature as stable and safe. But Nature is now rather an unstable, human artifact in a dynamic, technological process of continuous transforming (cf. Beck 2002). Technological innovations and scientific discoveries permanently reshape the global world. Those two spheres introduce new possibilities, new limits and also new entities, like prions, viruses or the ozone hole. Essentialism is not a good tool for describing this dynamic, and even less so to predict anything. Scientific work is done without any previous, sufficient ethical or political reflection and dialogue. The parameters of the human future are shaped without the discussion about the consequences of human innovations. They are shaped almost freely, governed mainly by the rules of the market.

All dangerous consequences of essentialism mentioned above remain invisible due to some strong philosophical assumptions of the Western world. Let us mention here the modern vision and hope of progress, which is almost never undermined; strong faith in the liberty of scientific research which is good in itself and the value of freedom to invest in the market. Progress, science, and the free market are still comprehended as the only tools to save humanity in the future. I hope it would be true. But I am afraid it is not.
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Consequence Theory of Truth. Reflections on Certainty and Conflict

BERNHARD POERKSEN, HAMBURG

For Josef Mitterer

Summary: The constructivist criticism of truth can be reconstructed as a theory of truth that will be called consequence theory of truth; this theory of truth oscillates between epistemological understanding and ethical-moral concern. It does not deal with the conventional question of traditional theories of truth that explain the concept of truth and describe the realisation of truth (by correspondence, experience of evidence, internal consistency of statements within a system of statements etc.). The focus of a constructivist criticism of truth that may be conceived of as a theory of truth are the potential consequences of the belief in truth, which can be assigned to a logical-semantical level, an individual-cognitive level, and the domain of relations. The strict belief in (absolute) truth can be seen, as certain constructivist authors imply, as a source of interpersonal conflict.

1. Conditions of dominance

The variability of the possible views of the connection between epistemology and ethics becomes clear when one compares the comments on the concept of truth offered by some of the protagonists of constructivism. “I think”, writes Humberto R. Maturana, amongst others, “there is a fundamental alienation to which we are prone: the search for truth, the search for the absolute, the desire for ultimate stability through the denial of change; the desire that the world should be in the manner that satisfies our desires, and as such and with respect to that, stable. [...] But how do we act? We invent systems of consensual stability that we claim are absolute truths that must be protected against change because we deem their value to be universal. In their name we deny the individuality of others that live in a different consensus and, without allowing them to disagree, we submerge them in a systematic social abuse that we expect they should accept as legitimate. This is our most frequent alienation: our blindness about the world of relative truths that we create with others, and in which man is the absolute reference, and our immersion in an ideology that justifies this
blindness.” (Maturana 1985, 29; author’s original English text, unpublished.) Some speak of truth terrorism, some of “reality terror” (Weischenberg, quoted from Neuberger 1996, 228). Paul Watzlawick writes that there is, “hardly a more murderous, more despotic idea [...] than the delusion of a `real´ reality” (quoted from Neuberger, ibid.). The claim to absolute truth, Siegfried J. Schmidt states succinctly, “inevitably leads to oppression” (quoted from Neuberger, 228f). Thus, all these and similar pronouncements, we may conclude, practise a form of criticism of an emphatic notion of truth that connects epistemology and ethical-moral concern. This kind of criticism may be taken to be a proper constructivist theory of truth\(^1\) and will from now on be called consequence theory of truth.\(^2\)

To elucidate this thesis, some general remarks on the philosophical treatment of the question of truth will be helpful; only this necessary detour and such an unavoidable excursion into the domain of philosophy can yield the relevant criteria of description that will then enable us to explicate the peculiarities of a consequence theory of truth. What can be stated right away, in any case, is that the theories of truth discussed by philosophers

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\(^1\) Constructivism is an interdisciplinary school of thought firmly rooted in science, especially biology, and of particular relevance to the understanding of media-generated realities. The champions of this school of thought emphatically reject representationist theories and realist conceptions of perception and share the conviction that objective knowledge is essentially unobtainable. They do not deny the existence of an external world; they negate, however, its unconditional cognitive accessibility and, therefore, insist on a critical examination of how concepts of reality are manufactured. All the varieties of constructivist theorising, whether centred in neurobiology, psychology, the sociology of knowledge, or communication science, additionally share the fundamental conviction that knowledge does not consist in a direct correspondence with an external reality (correspondence theory of truth) but exclusively and inevitably in the constructions of an observer, a knowing subject. However, these constructions are neither arbitrary nor capricious, on the contrary, they are massively dependent on all sorts of preconditions: construction is not an individual act of creation, nor a process under conscious control, but something multiply conditioned by nature and culture, history, language, and in particular also by the media that operate as central instances of socialisation in modern societies. The reader should be aware that I use the term constructivism in order to refer to the work of Humberto Maturana, Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Siegfried J. Schmidt, Francisco Varela and Paul Watzlawick. They have also been labelled as radical constructivists. Other constructivist schools of thought are not meant and not mentioned.

\(^2\) The concept of theory used in this context – in contradistinction to the more rigorously developed philosophical theories of truth – is obviously a diffuse one and means something like conception, understanding, view. It is not a terminus technicus. See also Gloy 2004, 5.
are primarily the subject of epistemological, not ethical, reflection. With reference to a famous distinction introduced by Immanuel Kant, they deal with the key question of what human beings can know, and not the question of what they should do, how they should act (which would accordingly belong to the domain of ethics).

This localisation of the question of truth in the domain of epistemology is made additionally clear by the fact that all the different conceptions of truth, and ultimately also all the different types of truth theory, may be sorted according to the guiding difference subject/object, and that the kind of chosen relation between subject and object, i.e. between observer and observed, makes it possible to observe the differentiation of all the particular theories of truth. Depending on the peculiar relation established between subject and object one may, in a first step, distinguish between three fundamentally different possibilities of characterising this relation. The first basic type results from “preferring the objective side and neglecting the subjective. The domain of the objects is given absolute or at least relative dominance. It is assumed that the objects in their being and suchness, in their determinants and their relationships with other objects, exist in themselves, quite independently of whether there is a cognising being apprehending them or not. The things possess their own peculiar being in themselves as well as their own specific properties to which the human subjects must subordinate themselves in an act of apprehension. [...] In a process of acquiring knowledge, human subjects must subordinate themselves to what is given, must appropriate what is available. [...] This is the position of common sense, of the natural, everyday, pre-scientific way of handling things. Elevated to a philosophical position, it represents realism from its most naïve to its most sublime forms.” (Gloy 2004, 68) According to the systematisation introduced here, the other epistemological extreme is marked by idealism; here the hierarchisation of subject and object is inverted, as it were; the world of objects becomes dependent on the cognitive grasp of the knowing subject. The third type of knowledge emerges “when the two relata within the cognitive relation, the knower and what is to be known, are treated as equivalent and as of equal status, so that a correspondence is achieved between the world of the subjects and the world of the objects.” (Gloy 2004, 69)
2. Philosophical theories of truth

It is this variable evaluation and hierarchisation of subject and object, which leads to three different concepts of truth and types of truth theory:

- The assumption of ontic truth (also: objective truth, factual truth etc.) which is advocated in the frame work of a so-called theory of ontic truth, assigns unconditional primacy to the world of objects; the subject’s task here is to open up, to become permeable, in order to receive “what there is such as it is in itself” (Gloy 2004, 78), uncluttered and undistorted. The experience of truth, possibly supported by existentially dramatic feeling, consists in a kind of revelation, a becoming-apparent of the world of objects in its archetypal gestalt, and thus clearly exhibits mystical-metaphysical colouring: within such a conception, the idea of Being possesses qualities otherwise only granted to the Divine, as Karen Gloy has shown with reference to Martin Heidegger. (Gloy 2004, 78f.)

- The position maximally removed from this understanding of truth relocates the apprehension of truth to the rational sphere of the subject (logical truth) and transforms the experience of suchness into a perception of coherence, freedom from contradiction, or perhaps consensus. The result are subject-immanent theories of truth; they have been given different forms and thus exist in diverse variants. The coherence theory of truth in its pure form restricts itself to “the subjective domain of knowledge” and relies on “the ability of a statement to be integrated into a system of statements, to be compatible with the other statements.” (Gloy 2004, 168) Here truth means: freedom from contradiction, consistent integration. The consensus theory, or discourse theory, of truth as proposed by Jürgen Habermas, for instance, also rejects any kind of reference beyond discourse, insists on subject-immanent argumentation; truth is here conceived of as the discursive satisfaction of claims to validity and is founded upon consensus manufactured in an ideal speech situation.

- The concept of truth mediating between the object side and the subject side has recourse to the famous formula coined by Thomas Aquinas (adaequatio intellectus et rei) and aims to understand truth as correspondence between subject and object, as a relation of correspondence between the knowing subject and the known object. The actual exposition of the diverse correspondence theories of truth depends heavily on how the kind of correspondence is specified, how the accommodation of subject and object
is worked out in detail. Is there a mapping relation, a mirroring of what is apprehended in the knowing mind? If so, this correspondence theory could be interpreted as a kind of reflection theory. Is there a causal nexus, a relation of cause and effect? Then the knowledge reached by the subject would be the result and consequence of the impression emanating from the object world which is received by the subject, in fact imposes itself on the subject in its archetypal formation. In any case, each one of the variants of a correspondence theory must face up to the problem how correspondence is to be understood and how all those essentially heterogeneous entities (subject, mind, cognition) and domains (world of objects, things, phenomena) are - or can at all be - integrated with each other in such a way as to achieve the desired ultimate state of assimilation and total structural isomorphism.

3. Criticism of truth as theory of truth

If the observer schema that underlies the discussion of traditional theories of truth is also used for the reconstruction of the constructivist theory of truth, then striking differences become apparent. The systematic locus of the consequence theory of truth is not only epistemology but also ethics, i.e. the concern for the other that may be oneself. This means that there is a characteristic uncertainty regarding its disciplinary placement, which may be summarised in the following formula: consequence theory can be justified epistemologically, its ultimate motivation, however, is an ethical-moral one. In the context of an epistemological discourse, one deals – quite traditionally – with the relationship between subject and object, observer and observed. Ontic and correspondence-theoretical concepts of truth are rejected, subject-immanent ones favoured.

Arguing, however, from an ethical-moral perspective, makes a different relational structure emerge: it is the relation between subject and subject, between various observers, possibly including ourselves as observers reflecting the cognitive costs and the consequences of our very own ideas of truth. Furthermore – and again in contrast to traditional theories of truth –, the central problem for consequence theorists is not primarily the definition of the concept of truth or the specification of criteria of truth (evidence, consensus, utility etc.), i.e. the explication of the realisation of truth. Nor is it a primary goal to pass judgment on the truth or falsity of statements and to set up the corresponding criteria of differentiation, but much rather to ponder and bring to awareness the possible effects of the distinction

3 On the variants of correspondence theory see Gloy 2004, 93ff.
true/false – therefore the chosen label consequence theory of truth. It asserts nothing about the essence of truth like traditional theories of truth, says nothing about its realisation, but deals with the consequences that result from the conviction to be in the possession of unquestionable truth. One can distinguish, at least as ideal types, logical-semantical consequences, individual-cognitive consequences and consequences for the domain of relations.

3.1 The logical-semantical level

Heinz von Foerster has graphically highlighted the logical-semantical consequence of the use of the concept of truth with his aphorism that truth is the invention of a liar. It formulates succinctly that truth and lie depend on each other, refer to each other, and form a logical-semantical system of reference that remains in force even when the possibility of any access to truth is rejected. The meaningfulness of the concept is affirmed, in any case, and a conceptual master currency is introduced that directs one’s orientation – however clear its restrictions. Tied to such a logical-semantical perspective, it is impossible to free oneself from concepts considered problematical by means of their negation because their very negation still accentuates their relevance. One can only get rid of them by simply not mentioning them, thus pushing them back into a sphere of non-existence, depriving them of their pedestal and fundament as the transcendental condition of their thematisation. They will then drop back into an amorphous and shapeless field that one cannot appropriate cognitively because it is unmarked by distinctions and designations. In this case, the fundamental statement by George Spencer-Brown, the first commandment regarding the creation of a concept of observation based on a logic of distinctions, would have to be changed. The requirement would no longer be: “Draw a distinction!” but: “Drop a distinction!” One puts distinctions, perhaps even systems of distinctions, behind oneself by flatly refusing to discuss, negate, affirm, defend or criticise them. Distinctions are deleted from the discourse because they no longer occur, because they are no longer needed.

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4 See Foerster/Poerksen 2002, especially 30f., in addition, with reference to the distinction sickness/health, 76ff.
5 This operator is discussed in the conversation with Foerster in: Poerksen 2004, 20ff.
3.2 The individual-cognitive level

It is one of the basic tenets of constructivism that there is an almost limitless plurality of reality designs, of concept arrangements, of ways to punctuate an event, to construct causality and to create meaning. By contrast, the defenders of a single truth reduce the multitude of potential interpretations of reality to one single certainty, to one ultimate determination of what is or should be considered absolutely right. One possible individual-cognitive consequence of such certainty about truth is, therefore, that it makes alternatives of thinking, feeling, and acting invisible, as it were, and that it may grow into the compulsion to say the same thing on all occasions, or to have to offer more or less similar answers all the time, to say the least. Although one may thus be protected from the endless circling in the labyrinth of undecidable questions, such certainty about truth may make the sympathetic re-enactment of other, contrary, views difficult, perhaps even impossible. (See Morin 2001, 82) It may, moreover, eliminate the need for radical scepticism and may, according to Humberto R. Maturana, as long as it is not a question of securities required by the situation in hand, “make all further reflection seem a waste of time: We believe we already know in advance the only possible result of any renewed reflection effort. What, in fact, do we really mean when we say we are absolutely sure of something? We say: There is no point in entertaining doubts; our beliefs are so overwhelming that it must appear completely absurd to think about the conditions of their origins.” (Maturana/Poerksen 2004, 45)

3.3 The level of relations

The majority of the writings from constructivist circles, which deal with the problem of the presumption of truth, however, do not refer to the logical-semantical or the individual-cognitive level. They are devoted to the sphere of human relations, the sphere of interaction. The basic point of reference is the relationship between autonomous individuals, a relationship constituting, as it were, the prototypical pattern of a potentially ethical or unethical relation. Two possible variants of consequence may be distinguished on this level: on the one hand, there is the negation of the other as well as of other views, which is inherent in the belief in absolute truth. Numerous protagonists of constructivism – recall only Heinz von Foerster, Niklas Luhmann, Humberto R. Maturana, Josef Mitterer, Siegfried J. Schmidt, Paul Watzlawick and Siegfried Weischenberg – have argued in
this way, and have never failed to insist on the need for careful gradation.\(^6\) Quite conceivable are concepts of truth that – although contradicting most of the definitions of truth – do not, or are not intended to, claim validity for anyone else but their advocates. They are excepted from the criticism, which targets only the generalisation of individual assumptions by means of dogmatically justified claims to truth. Truth in the sense of a concern based on consequence theory entails a static-dogmatic view of the concept that negates other views and considers the respect for these views to be wrong and counterproductive and therefore dispensable, in the service of a good cause. At issue is the argumentative or pseudo-argumentative appeal to the truth concept and related ideas, which are, for the purpose in hand, considered equivalent, like *true, real, definite, certain, with ultimate certainty, objective, reality, the absolute*. They are functionally equivalent; they all serve comparable purposes, e.g. making something plausible, convincing and persuading people, but also discrediting and defaming people in conflict discourses.\(^7\)

In one of Humberto R. Maturana’s exemplary formulations: “If we do not accept our interlocutor totally, or we want to assert our position, or we are certain that we are right, or we want to force the other to perform certain actions, we explicitly or implicitly claim that what we say is valid because it is objective (that is, founded on an objective reality), that we know how things really are, that our argument is rational, and that the other is objectively wrong and cannot honestly ignore it.” (Maturana 1988, 46) Some of the possible consequences of this first consequence-theoretical reflection in the domain of relations would be: intolerance and a dogmatically fought quarrel, a lack of respect for other views, attempts at conversion, the menace of homogenising reality designs, demands for subordination, discrimination and defamation. The second variant of possible consequences deals with the *legitimation of violence*; in such justifications of aggressivity the use of power and, in the extreme case, even of physical force is endorsed with the argument that only in this way – thus runs the figure of thought elaborated by consequence theorists, and which is subjected to criticism – truth could regain its rightful place, and detrimental untruth be eliminated. (See Mitterer 2001, 64) Paul Watzlawick has de-

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\(^7\) On the concept of *conflict discourse* see Mitterer 2001, 77.
scribed in precise words this gradual transition from the initial desire to convert the other to the wish to subjugate them, ending finally in an act of purposeful aggression: “The idea to be in the possession of ultimate truth will at first lead to a messianic attitude clinging to the conviction that the truth will prevail *qua* truth in any case. At this point, the protagonist of an ideology may still believe in the possibility of enlightening and perhaps convincing the heretic. As the world, however, soon proves to be hard-hearted, unwilling or incapable to open itself to the truth, the inevitable next step is what Hermann Lübbe has called the ideological self-empowerment for the use of force. The world must have its eyes opened for its own best interests.” (Watzlawick 1994, 204f; author’s emphasis) The appeal to an ultimate, dogmatically conceived truth is, therefore, generally seen to be a destructive incentive in the field of human relations. Truth in this understanding is not only a means to deform these relations and to ruin the climate of communication but may also lend an air of apparent necessity to violent disputes.

4. Between epistemology and ethics

The essential features of a consequence theory of truth have now been described, of a theory that oscillates between epistemology and ethics in a characteristic way, that analyses conflicts and reconstructs strategies of legitimating the privileged establishment and enforcement of views decreed to be true. It may, at this point, be a mere matter of speculation but it does indeed seem more than accidental that the very founders of constructivism developed reflections of this sort; all of them had to suffer under dictators, were confronted with dogmatically founded realities. Heinz von Foerster, working in Berlin during the period of National Socialism without the obligatory “Ariernachweis” (proof of “Aryan” descent), had to evade the inevitable checks by a careful tactic of procrastination. Ernst von Glasersfeld left Vienna after the National Socialists had seized power; Paul Watzlawick has repeatedly deplored how deeply shocked he felt by the NS-regime. Francisco Varela – after the death of Salvador Allende and the military coup of the putschist Pinochet – fled to Costa Rica. Humberto R. Maturana stayed in Chile – despite repeated threats – in order to experience, “what it means to live under a dictator” and in order to observe, “how people gradually go blind “, even though they may be well aware “of the dangers of a blindness produced by ideology”. He recollects: “I also asked myself whether I might be able to observe in such a dictatorial system how
people gradually go blind, and what the causes of such perceptual depriv-
tation were. Can one, if one has been duly forewarned and is aware of the
dangers of ideologically produced blindness, prevent it from developing
and retain one’s capabilities of vision and perception?” (Matu-
trana/Poerksen 2004, 168)

An instructive picture such as this one, illuminating the background of
individual lives as well as the history of the practice of science, can of
course contribute nothing to the plausibility of the criticism of truth and the
criticism of truth theories presented here; it may, however, speak for exam-
ining more closely the links between theory development and individual
biography. It also shows that the justification of the arguments introduced
here can only be achieved in a wider context. The polemical overstatement,
too, has no proper justifying quality, although it may be an acceptable cor-
rective. It certainly is, as has become clear, a reaction against mental rigid-
ity, against dogmatically defended reality designs, and against the form of
the authoritarian-dictatorial presumption of truth which declares the use of
force in conflicts – explicitly or implicitly – a legitimate means of its prac-
tical implementation.

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I wish to consider a number of abstract issues regarding truth and dialogue. Philosophy is a critical inquiry into the fundamental ideas and principles of human thought and action. We live now in times when there is a possibly unprecedented need for inter-cultural dialogue about just such matters. It might have been thought that in actual practice philosophy would be fully dedicated to such a project. Unfortunately, there are philosophical doctrines that are incompatible with the possibility of dialogue. An example is the doctrine of faith as a kind of access to truth that is inaccessible to rational probing. Another is the notion that the truth value of a belief is relative to the criteria that happen to be operative in a culture or society or an even lesser group in the sense that it cannot be legitimately called into question by any observer belonging to another group. In this discussion I shall suggest that certain theories about the concept of truth itself are antagonistic to dialogue, and that a judicious and dialogue-friendly theory of truth must align theory with the conditions of human thought and practice.

Take first the question of faith. I shall treat of this here only briefly. According to some conceptions of faith, one can come into possession of some truths about quite large issues, such as the origin of the entire universe, through non-cognitive efforts or circumstances. Once in that condition of mind, one becomes certain of the propositions at issue “by faith.” An instance would be a sudden conversion to a religious faith. This type of acquisition of knowledge is claimed to protect the given subject from all rational scrutiny. That is, the subject gains the right to consider it legitimate to ward off any attempt at rational criticism with some such protestation as, “This is a matter of faith, not argument, and I won’t be drawn into an argument.”

Imagine, then, a scenario in which one group armed with beliefs vouchsafed by faith encounters another group similarly equipped but with a contrary faith. One great problem that is going to complicate such a situation is that people entertaining such beliefs tend to be urgently driven to disseminate their beliefs to all and sundry. Their method of persuasion, however, is usually through exhortation and sometimes through threats and warnings. In the imagined confrontation one can only anticipate ill-will or even violence.
This anticipation manifests despair about dialogue. The reason why dialogue is unlikely is that neither party has any perceived need for it. Dialogue is useful only if both principals grant the possibility of a change in their positions as a result of a rational exchange of ideas. This implies that both parties are fallible with respect to the relevant issues. But they cannot admit this, since their positions, as they perceive them, are not vulnerable to critique. In short, then, they see themselves as infallible in the given context. When infallible groups disagree, it would be good if they could hold their peace; but the chances are that they will break it. In the conflicts that have had unspeakable consequences of death and destruction in the contemporary world, the issues are not usually directly or officially couched in terms of competing infallibilities, but the veil is often only skin deep.

In the present sense, then, faith is a real adversity to humankind. Note, however, that these remarks are about faith only in the sense specified above. This word has a variety of meanings, in some of which it may, indeed, refer to a noble habit of mind, such as in “faith in justice for all.” To be noted also is the fact that unhappiness about faith in the offending sense does not imply that one must always have the ability to give a ratiocinative justification for one’s beliefs.

Consider a deductive system, say a model propositional calculus. Myriads of theorems can be proved in it. But its axioms or rules – I think that axioms and rules are equivalent, though I cannot argue it here – cannot be proved within it. One might try to prove them or adduce considerations in their favor outside the system by truth tables or by some intuitive considerations, but eventually there will be principles presupposed beyond which proof cannot go.

Such end points of justification are, however, provisional, and have to be avowed as such in a spirit of fallibilism: It is always conceivable that some relevant consideration has eluded one. Therefore, if an interlocutor should raise questions regarding a declared end point, one will have to be willing to examine the arguments or considerations proffered. Thus the present writer believes the principle of Non-contradiction to be one such end point, but he does not dismiss dialetheism out of hand. It should be clear that end points need not be stations of irrationality. It may be rational to stop where it seems we cannot go further, but the door (of dialogue) must be kept open in case we can go further after all. Moreover, if an end point is rational, it can be explained, and if it can be explained, then it can be said to be warranted.
I shall come back to the relation between fallibilism and dialogue; but let us, before then, try to open a door to dialogue that relativism, to which we made a reference in our opening paragraph, by nature closes or tries to close. Relativism (with respect to cognition) argues as follows. The truth-value of a proposition can only be determined on the basis of a given set of standards. But such standards vary from group to group. Therefore, no proposition can be said to be true universally. With this disappears any prospect of intercultural dialogue or dialogue among even smaller groups.

Relativism is notoriously open to criticism. I shall only urge here an objection oriented towards dialogue. It is simply that the relativist’s second premise is false: Cognitive standards do not vary from group to group in the relevant sense. The species-wide similarity of constitution and the common ability to perceive an external world and learn from our experience of it provide us humans with all the methodological bases we need for learning one another’s language and entering upon dialogue in search of knowledge, peace and other good things. The principles and standards involved can, of course, be misapplied. That is one cause of the variety of opinions in different cultures as well as in identical cultures.

Moreover, as in science, a superstructure of sophisticated methodologies can develop undreamt of by many, including even some masters of humane learning. That is one cause of the uneven distribution of knowledge. All these may shape divergent approaches to the acquisition of knowledge among groups and even in the thinking of the same person over time. But this diversity is what dialogue thrives on. You don’t even have the possibility of dialogue if you don’t have any divergence of understandings and approaches. What the relativist sees as a disabling proliferation of methods turns out, then, to be an enabling situation.

With dialogue thus regained, it should be easy to understand that it does not presuppose just diversity. A set of divergent beliefs cannot all be true. So, some of them must be false. But the erroneous ones may be due to my mistake or yours. Accordingly, we have to acknowledge our fallibility as a precondition of dialogue.

By confessing our fallibility, we also show a predisposition towards rational inquiry or discussion. If our habit has been to base our beliefs on rational inquiry, we would be aware that errors may occur in a variety of ways. We may, contrary to our best intentions, misperceive an object. Or we may be caught up in a fallacious inference or an unsound analysis. Of course, if we can go wrong in these modes of thinking, we can also go right.
We have alluded to sensible perception, inference and analysis. We might also mention memory and synthesis as allied phases in the fixation of belief. All these are resources of rational inquiry and hence also of dialogue. If we have used such resources carefully, intelligently and industriously, we have done all that can be expected of a human being. We will return to this thought later.

Meanwhile, let us be clear about what dialogue is. Dialogue is trying to settle disagreement by the method of rational discussion. Not every way of settling a disagreement, therefore, is dialogue, even if it is peaceful. Thus, if the principals agree to settle an issue by killing an animal and studying its entrails, that may be a way of peacefully resolving an issue, but not the way of dialogue. Also trying to consolidate friendship through the exchange of praises and pleasantries is not dialogue either. Even less is the exchange of abuses a form of dialogue.

It must be understood, furthermore, that dialogue does not guarantee the resolution of all issues. However, it carries prospects of further discussion. More importantly, it can facilitate consensus despite the survival of some kinds of disagreements.

Three kinds of issues often face groups trying to decide what to do. There are questions of what can be done (and its consequences), what ought to be done and what is to be done. The first kind of question is factual, the second normative, the third pragmatic (using this word in a non-technical sense). Disagreements regarding the first and second can remain after a lengthy dialogue. Yet, by dint of compromise, agreement can be reached as to what is to be done.

Regarding what is or can be the case, no compromise is possible: \( X \) is \( Y \) or \( X \) is not \( Y \) (or perhaps \( X \) or \( Y \) is fuzzy), and that is an end of the matter. I cannot, for example, say that, despite this, I am willing to compromise and say that although \( X \) is \( Y \), it is not \( Y \). I can, of course, say that \( X \) is \( Y \) but I am willing to concede that I may be wrong and \( X \) may, in fact, not be \( Y \). This is applicable to the normative case too, though the admission of fallibility here can, in some cases, be quite agonizing.

In the pragmatic scenario things are significantly different. Let the number \( \text{one} \) represent what would be done, if I had my way, and \( \text{two} \) what would be done, if you had your way. Given that there has been a rational discussion in which our differing positions have been given a full and respectful hearing, we might each, without changing our minds about the factual or normative issues, modify our initial positions so that we each agree that the action represented by \( \text{one and a half} \) is what is to be done.
Indeed, I might agree that your proposal, i.e. the one represented by *two* is what is to be done. I might do this, for example, if I am fully convinced, among other things, that a similar concession on your part is a foreseeable possibility.

In both cases what is at hand is consensus, and the method, by which it was obtained, dialogue. If human beings could arrange so that political decision making (at both the national and international levels) was more thoroughly informed by consensus than as of now, politics might perhaps shed off some of its well earned reputation for ugliness.

From a world-historical standpoint, however, factual and normative issues have been the matters needing the most urgent attention. And here dogmatism has been the bane of human relations. Dogmatism is not just holding an opinion with excessive zeal. It is something worse; it is holding an opinion so confidently as to be inexorably unwilling to offer reasons or entertain any, pro or con, if offered. Believing “by” faith in the sense previously noted is a perfect model of dogmatism. It is not, however, the only such model. In politics, for example, people can be so carried away by enthusiasm, not to say fanaticism, that they become dedicated to the *truth* of certain doctrines without regard to any question of epistemic justification. Thereby any chance of dialogue is forestalled. A great part of the reason why the religious and moral and political disputes among nations and cultures are so intractable is traceable to this circumstance.

Consciously or unconsciously, there is, in the dogmatic outlook on truth and justification just noted, a distinction between truth and justification such that one might have truth without justification and vice versa. It is only if one can have truth without justification, rational justification, that is, that one can have any pretenses to faith. But it is not only in the dogmatic consciousness that the distinction in question exists; it is to be found also in various areas of ordinary discourse. Moreover, much philosophical theorizing about truth is sympathetic to it.

In philosophical terms the question is whether truth can be defined or explained in terms solely of epistemic concepts. I shall argue an affirmative answer. The claim is that truth is warranted assertibility, given an identical point of view. This recalls Dewey to whom we shall return. Warranted assertibility is what you get at the successful closure of inquiry. Terms like “justified belief” or “rational grounding” will be taken to be cognate. We shall use the word “inquiry” broadly to include even the most routine cognitive activity. The following depicts the form of my argument. Suppose
that truth cannot be defined as warranted assertibility (in the way indicated). Then a warranted belief will need some further property (or will have to stand in some further relationship) in order to yield truth. But no such circumstance can, in principle, exist. Therefore, truth must be definable or explicable in the way suggested. It is assumed here that truth can be known. Obviously, if truth cannot be known, any epistemic conception of truth is futile ab initio. Nevertheless, I shall not argue this presupposition, on the principle that not everything can be done at once.

In fleshing out my argument let us recall a point made earlier. We noted that in inquiry all we can humanly do is to use such resources as sensible perception, memory, inference, analysis and synthesis carefully and industriously. What that effort can achieve for us is nothing else than a warranted judgment. What, then, underlies the dissent on the part of non-epistemic theorist of truth? There is, at least one plausible account. According to this, the history of human cognition is littered with propositions justified in their time, but not any longer. If truth meant justified belief, it would follow that truth-value can change, which is impossible. Hence truth cannot mean justified belief.

This is a good objection against some epistemic theories of truth, but not against the present one. Truth does not just mean warranted assertibility or justified belief. The justification should be one that embodies the operative point of view or commitment of the speaker. Thus, one can remark now, in the twenty first century, that some thirteenth-century belief was justified in its time without implying that it was true in those days, since I might now not subscribe to it. Truth has, beyond justification, the element of contemporaneous commitment. This is why truth is not susceptible to any tensed transformations other than purely grammatical ones. The rationale for defining truth as warranted assertibility with the added condition of identity of point of view now emerges. In the imagined comment on (an unstated) thirteenth century belief, which was imagined to be warranted in its time but not in ours, there is an obvious disparity in point of view. And the point is that the only determinative point of view in the matter of truth or, in this case, falsity, is that of the contemporary commentator. Viewed holistically Dewey’s discussions of truth are sensitive to the identity condition, but there is a lack of explicit statement, and this has facilitated misunderstanding.

Having taken the opportunity of the objection just considered to clarify our particular kind of epistemic conception of truth, we will proceed to illustrate the impossibility of defining truth in terms of any concepts tran-
scending the resources of human inquiry. We will take an extremely simple example. Suppose someone, let us call him Albert, becomes curious about the color of the table in a certain room. He goes to the room, takes a look and finds that it is brown. Another person Kofi comes along, smitten with the same curiosity. By this time I myself have gone to the room and checked. Knowing this, he asks me, and I tell him that the color is brown. But he is not sure whether he should believe me, because somebody has just whispered to him that I was drunk when I did the checking. So he is now wondering whether the statement that I made to him viz. “The table is brown” is true.

Now, what can the present quest for truth consist in? Note, first, that it cannot consist in his looking for a property of a belief or judgment or statement, of his own, for he does not yet have a belief of his own regarding the color of the table. What he has at this stage is a doubt, a question or a problem. He does, indeed, have access to my belief that the table is brown, but that constitutes a problem for him, not a belief. He may also possibly have a tentative notion or hypothesis that the table might be black from a hint thrown up by his informant. His question, then, in full, becomes, “Is the table in the room brown or is it, perhaps, black?” Our friend Kofi now enters the room and finds that the table is indeed brown. So he comes back and announces that my statement that the table is brown is true. The notion, idea, hypothesis, that the table is brown is the one that has proved successful.

Compare now the cognitive situations of the two men. Albert started with a curiosity of his own regarding the color of the table in the room. When he went there and made an inspection he had a result which was described as finding that the table is brown, not as finding out that the statement that the table is brown is true. When you make a finding in an inquiry sparked off by your own curiosity it is unidiomatic to present your result in the form of “‘P’ is true.” You just say (or think to yourself) “P.” But, of course, if the need for truth-value commentary should arise, you would be in a position to oblige. At work here is the principle, “If P then ‘P’ is true.” Nevertheless, the fact that “is true” need not figure in the original report of your result suggests that the noble sentiment that truth is the object of inquiry should not be taken with an unimaginative literalness. In literal prose, the object of his inquiry was to find out what the color of the table was.

By contrast, truth was, equally literally, the aim of Kofi’s inquiry. His inquiry was motivated by the desire to find out whether Albert’s statement
was true. But he could only do this by finding out whether the table is brown. In other words there is no way of finding out whether the statement that the table is brown is true without finding out whether the table is brown. This he did, in fact, do. That is, he marshaled evidence, logic and related resources to construct the appropriate judgment, in this case, that the table is brown. In doing this he showed that establishing that “The table is brown” is true implies establishing that the table is brown and vice versa.

This is not a circuitous rehashing of Tarski’s equivalence. I am calling attention to the epistemic significance of the equivalence, and I am, by the above examples, making the strong claim that there is no other way of showing that a proposition is true than showing that it can be rationally established, and that, once it is established, nothing else is needed to make out its truth. But since Tarski has been mentioned, it might be of some interest to point out here that the philosophical problem of truth, or at least one such problem, concerns the status of the second component of the Tarski equivalence “‘P’ is true if and only if P”. My contention is that the second “P” has the status of a warrantably assertible proposition, given a uniformity of point of view.

It would not be advisable to try to escape the last suggestion by seeking to identify this “P” with the state of affairs itself that is supposed to make the proposition “P” true. In other words, if we take the following particular case of the equivalence: “‘The table is brown’ is true if and only if the table is brown,” we should resist the temptation to identify the second occurrence of “The table is brown” with the state of affairs of the table being brown. The state of affairs itself cannot be a component of a proposition.

Merely to attend to one of the implications of the equivalence is to see that the second component is as much in the realm of the conceptual as the first. We refer here to the fact that the equivalence implies “P if and only if ‘P’ is true” If one needs more persuasion that this “P,” which was originally the second component and is now the first, is still a conceptual construct, she might consider the following special case: “The world came into existence five minutes ago if and only if ‘The world came into existence five minutes ago’ is true.”

Identifying the second “P” in the Tarski equivalence with reality is an effort in the fallacy of hypostasis. A more homely characterization of the mistake would be to say that the theorists concerned tend to confuse truth with what truth is about. An allied effort in hypostasis is to suggest that the component in question is identical with fact. Let us return to the table. When Kofi goes into the room and finds that the table is brown, this repre-
sents a judgment on his part. Our using the word “finds” in the remark merely indicates that we are endorsing his conclusion. So, we are all still in the domain of judgment.

But then, it begins to look like epistemic theories of truth lose connection with fact or reality. A correspondence theory, for example, is supposed to connect linguistic material with extra-linguistic reality. But a pragmatic theory, or, worse, a coherentist theory, seems to be caught up in the interrelations of its own verbalizations.

This is incorrect. When, let us say, a Deweyan pragmatist says that the statement “The table brown” is true if and only if it is warrantably assertible that the table is brown he is talking of the reference of our discourse to reality.¹ The warranted assertibility here is about the applicability of a given concept, here “brown,” to an object, here a table, existing independently of the mind.

A brief comparison with a correspondence theory might be instructive. Take the following version of correspondence: A statement is true if and only if it corresponds to reality. We immediately encounter a difficulty. The finite verb that transforms an arrangement of words into a declarative sentence cannot itself correspond to anything, for it is that part of the sentence that makes the claim of correspondence. To illustrate: The idea that the table might be brown could be one of the hypotheses considered during the stage of inquiry. If the evidence accumulates decisively in its favor, then we would be in a position to affirm that the concept brown corresponds or applies to the table, a piece of reality. This is what, more economically, the declarative sentence “The table is brown” says. The correspondence or application of the idea is a matter of instantiation. Now, it is a concept or an idea that can be instantiated, not a sentence. And the finite verb, here “is,” is what declares the instantiation; so the message of the sentence may also be said to be that the concept of brown is instantiated by the color of table. This is also just another way of saying that the concept of brownness corresponds or applies to the (color of the) table. We can now see that the correspondence theory amounts, in terms to our particular example, to saying that the claim that the concept of brownness corresponds to the table corresponds to the table, which is short of meaning. The claim of correspondence intrinsic to a declarative sentence cannot itself be coherently claimed to correspond to anything. Nothing drives pragmatism to such incoherence.

¹ See, for example Dewey 1910, chap. 6. Dewey does not here employ the term “warranted assertibility,” but he makes the point about reference to reality sharply.
Another difference between pragmatism and the correspondence theory is this. The pragmatic theory is fallibilistic while the correspondence counterpart is absolutist. Absolutism does not necessarily deny human fallibility; but it affirms the infallibility of truth itself, as it allegedly exists independently of human inquiry (whatever this might mean). Let us note too that fallibilism does not mean just that we humans are fallible, but, more, that truth is not something that has its own reality independently of inquiry.

A pragmatist can note that the implied distinction between the fallibility of human belief and the infallibility of “objective” truth leads straight to absolute skepticism. The argument is that “objective” truth is unknowable, since our best cognitive efforts are still fallible and cannot, therefore, by definition, be endowed with objective truth. Absolutism, moreover, does not discourage dogmatism, for by a twist of psychology, the notion that truth is too sublime for the human intellect can make people prone to an intense belief in desired propositions by faith, to the peril of dialogue.

So far, I have spoken somewhat freely of propositions, statements, beliefs, and so on, as the items susceptible of truth-value assignment. In our brown table example, we found that neither Albert nor Kofi had a belief or a judgment about the color of the table to start with. And this is as it should be, for we don’t start an inquiry with its conclusion already in hand. Note, incidentally, that the correspondence theorists, who talk unqualifiedly of the truth or falsity of beliefs, seem to proceed as if we can start our inquiry with our belief and then investigate whether it is true or false, which would be a perfect example of leaping before looking. In fact, it is only after the inquiry that, if we are lucky, we may come into possession of the belief that settles the question investigated, and it is only then that we can talk of truth or falsity.

Asking what is susceptible of truth assignment, then, is the same as asking what it is that we start inquiry with. We can have a lot of help from truth-functional logic in this; but not until we have clarified some things that remain confused in that discipline. The P’s and Q’s of truth functional logic have been called propositional variables and have been said to be instantiated by specific propositions. Thus we are allowed to put something like “All carpenters like brown tables” for “P.” We can, then, go on to construct truth functions. For example, “¬P” is the negation function, and, in our chosen example, will stand for “It is not the case that all carpenters like brown tables.” If we introduce another variable “Q” and put for it a specific proposition, say “The table is brown,” then we can construct a compound function, say, the conditional function ‘P → Q’. And this would
generally be read as “If all carpenters like brown tables, then the table is brown.”

But now, hasn’t something gone very wrong? A function is something incomplete or, in Frege’s terminology, unsaturated. But a statement like “It is not the case that all carpenters like brown tables” is a complete thought, and cannot therefore be an accurate rendition for “-P.” Neither, for the same reason, can “If all carpenters like brown tables, then the table is brown” be a rendition for “P → Q” As a function, “-P” is simply the expression that takes the value F when T is assigned to its sole variable and takes the value T when F is assigned to that lone variable. Of itself, it claims nothing.

Similarly, the function “P → Q” cannot be read (under our interpretations of the symbols) as “If all carpenters like brown tables, then the table is brown.” By its form, this is a complete thought, claiming that it does not happen that all carpenters like brown tables, while the table is not brown. On the other hand, all that “P → Q” indicates is that we have a relationship between P and Q which holds in all assignments of truth values to the variables except when truth is assigned to the antecedent and falsity to the consequent.

Yet text books regularly offer the wrong reading of these and related formulas. The most striking case is that of the simple function “P.” This is simply the function which takes the value T when T is assigned to the variable and takes the value F when F is assigned to the same variable. So you cannot put for it the declarative sentence “The table is brown.” It can only be rendered in some such manner as “The idea of the table being brown,” which wears its incompleteness on its face. The statement that the table is brown can only result from the assignment of the value truth to the variable “P.”

This is exactly how Frege saw these matters in the *Begriffsschrift*,\(^2\) and that is the reason why he needed an assertion sign. For a simple function such as we are representing with “P” Frege provided, as a possible rendition, the participial phrase “The circumstance that unlike magnetic poles attract one another.” The declarative sentence “Unlike poles attract one another” was obtained only on the assignment of the value truth to the propositional variable. This assignment is what the assertion sign effected.

Notice now that we have a concept of truth which is involved in the construction of judgment or belief or assertion. That is the concept of truth that emerges in the successful prosecution of inquiry. That is what enables

\(^2\) In Geach and Black 1960.
you to say after investigating, for example, the question of the table being brown that it is brown. This assignment of truth value, then, is an act of construction not just of predication; it constructs a judgment, it does not comment on it. The process is one in which we work on a participial phrase to produce a declarative sentence. That signifies the solving of a problem, the attainment of a warranted conclusion. Let us call it primary truth-value assignment, and the concept involved the primary concept of truth.

It is obvious that there must be also another kind of truth value, though closely related. When, as in one of the scenarios involving the table, an inquiry has been motivated by the desire to find out whether a statement made by somebody (or by oneself at an earlier time) is true, there is need for a comparison of judgments. But, as we saw previously, one has first to construct a judgment, and the process is exactly the same as in a primary case where I initiate inquiry based on my own curiosity. Once I have obtained a conclusion, I am in a position to compare my result with the pre-existing judgment and comment upon it. I might say, for example, “The statement that the table is brown is true.” Let us call this a comparative truth-value assignment, and the truth-value involved a comparative truth value. It is obvious that a comparative truth-value assignment presupposes a primary one, but not vice versa. In other words, the statement “If ‘P’ is true then P” is always correct, but “If P, then ‘P’ is true” is not always appropriate, for there may not be a preexisting ‘P’ from a previous point of view to comment on. This is not taken to be contrary to Tarski’s equivalence that “‘P’ is true if and only if P” in general. What it means is that in the actual practice of inquiry the correctness of the equivalence is contextual. It is appropriate therein only on the assumption of an encounter with a preexisting affirmation (or denial) of ‘P.’ But it holds in all such cases.

Return now to the question of what it is that is susceptible of truth-value assignment. The question is ambiguous. If we are talking of primary truth assignment, the recipient of truth-value assignment is something in the nature of a question or a participial phrase or an idea, not a statement or assertion or sentence, and the process is one of judgment construction.

On the other hand, if we are talking of a comparative truth assignment, then the immediate object of our attention is a sentence or statement or belief or assertion proposed from a pre-existing point of view, and we are making a truth predication of it. It does not matter for our purposes here which of these names you bestow upon it; what is important is to note that under any of them, it is different from the object of primary truth-value as-
signment, and that the difference is syntactical: In the primary case it is participial, “unsaturated” while in the comparative case it is declarative, saturated.

The concept of truth, as it generally features in ordinary discourse, is of the comparative kind. Many philosophers have followed ordinary discourse in this matter not only in their ordinary conversations but also in their theoretical lucubrations. Yet, the primary concept is the more fundamental. Moreover, it is easier to see, in connection with it, that truth is essentially a matter of judgment construction, which, in turn, is, ideally, the rational pursuit of correspondence between ideas (not beliefs) and reality. It seems, then, on reflection that, after all, a unification of the correspondence and pragmatic theories may not be totally impossible. The coherence theory too may possibly cohere with both, for the coherence demanded by the theory may be nothing other than the accordance of belief formation with the canons of rational inquiry.

Whether or not such a unification is possible, it would be good if one could be confident that philosophical theories of truth will not become impediments to dialogue. But, to say the least, it is difficult to have such confidence in any theory of truth that places truth somewhere beyond human inquiry, and therefore beyond human communication.

I might mention that my approach to the theory of truth has been conditioned by my understanding of the workings of that concept in my vernacular, which is called Akan, a language spoken in parts of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, and my acquaintance with Western theories on the matter. I have written about this in a number of places.3 Today what has been explicit is the Western side. Thank you.

REFERENCES


Three Fallacies about Action

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1.

The main purpose of this article is to criticize three closely related fallacies, which have shaped philosophical ideas about action throughout the modern period: first, the idea that all action is human action, so that human beings are sometimes active and sometimes passive, but everything else in the world is always passive; second, the assumption that the distinction between active and passive coincides with the distinction between voluntary and not voluntary; and third, the thought that action is a kind of motion, for example, motion in a special context or with a special cause. However, before I get to the main business, I shall say something about what action is.

2.

What is action? We distinguish action from thought, when we contrast an active life and a contemplative life; we compare it with speech and writing, when we say that actions speak louder than words; and we contrast it with passion, by which we do not mean intense feeling, but rather enduring, undergoing—or, in an antiquated use of the word, suffering—change. All of these comparisons point to the same idea. To act is to intervene, to make a difference, to bring about or cause some kind of change.¹ The change may be momentous or trivial. It may be a kind of motion, as when one opens or closes a door or throws a ball. Or another kind of change may be involved, as when one melts a knob of butter in a pan or burns some toast. What runs like a thread through our thought and talk about action is the idea of making a difference, or causing change.

The concept of action is correlative with the concept of agency: for actions are by agents, and agents act. Furthermore, just as action is contrasted with passion, agents are contrasted with patients, and active powers are contrasted with passive powers. Agents bring about or cause change, whereas patients undergo or suffer change; active powers are abilities to cause change, whereas passive powers are liabilities to undergo change.

¹ One can also make a difference by preventing change. See below, section (3).
For example, when Paul melts a knob of butter in a pan, Paul is the agent and the knob of butter is the patient. Paul exercises his ability to bring about the change the butter undergoes, and the butter realizes its liability to undergo the change Paul brings about. If we use the verb in the active voice to report the action—‘Paul melted the butter’—the subject of the verb refers to the agent and the object of the verb refers to patient. If we use the verb in the passive voice—‘The butter was melted by Paul’—the subject of the verb refers to the patient and the agent is referred to in the complement ‘by Paul’.

However, we cannot simply divide the world into agents and patients—for example, we cannot say that human beings are agents whereas knobs of butter are patients—because one is an agent or a patient only in relation to a particular action. For example, a boxer is an agent in relation to a punch he lands on his opponent, but he is a patient in relation to a punch his opponent lands on him. Equally, if A causes B to perform a certain action—for example, if A frogmarches B—B is a patient in relation to A’s action and an agent in relation to his own. It is even possible to be both agent and patient in relation to a single action. For example, a man who commits suicide is both agent and patient: as the one who kills, he is an agent; as the one who dies, he is a patient. One way of making this point is to say that ‘agent’ and ‘patient’ do not refer to kinds of beings, but to rôles.

The range of verbs used to report actions is vast and varied, because agents cause a vast range of different kinds of change, and because many verbs used to report actions do more than merely identify the kind of change the agent caused. For example, to kill something is to cause its death. (A few writers have denied this, but their reasons for doing so are very weak. I shall return to this point in section (4).) So the sentence ‘Cain killed Abel’ simply means that Cain caused Abel’s death. The verb does not tell us whether he did it knowingly or unknowingly, quickly or slowly, with a stone or with a knife. By contrast, ‘Cain murdered Abel’ means that Cain killed Abel wickedly or unlawfully, and ‘Cain assassinated Abel’ means that Cain killed Abel with treacherous violence.

However, even these last two examples are straightforward illustrations of the idea that to act is cause some kind of change, because we can paraphrase the sentences ‘Cain murdered Abel’ and ‘Cain assassinated Abel’ in the form ‘Cain caused Abel’s death {adverb/adverbial phrase}’. English is not always so cooperative. For example, ‘Cain kicked Abel’ evidently re-

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2 As this example indicates acting includes causing action as well as directly causing change.
ports an action. But although it is easy enough to explain what kicking something is, the simplest explanation—e.g. kicking something is striking it with one’s foot—does not combine the verb ‘cause’ with a phrase describing the change that someone who kicks something causes.

We use a vast range of verbs to report actions. Some refer implicitly to legal, moral or psychological dimensions of the action, while other do not, and some are easy to paraphrase in a form which says explicitly that the agent caused a certain kind of change, while others take more lexical knowledge and more verbal dexterity to unpack. Furthermore, there is no simple or single formula for doing the unpacking, applicable in every case. Obviously, the simplest kind of case is one in which no inessential features of the action are referred to, and we can say immediately what the change the agent causes is. Happily, there is no shortage of such verbs.3 We have, for example, ‘open’, ‘close’, ‘melt’, ‘burn’, ‘twist’, ‘tear’, ‘raise’, ‘lower’, ‘turn’ and ‘move’. (Readers will not find it difficult to extend this list.)

In each case we find the same pattern. To open a door is to cause it to open; to close a door is to cause it to close; to melt some butter is to cause it to melt; to burn some toast is to cause it to burn; and so on. In each case the verb can occur transitively or intransitively, i.e. with a grammatical object or without one. When it occurs transitively, it is described as causative, because it refers to a kind of action; when it occurs intransitively, it is described as mutative, because it refers to the corresponding kind of change. The existence of the two forms is known as causative/mutative alternation.4 It is fortunate that ‘move’, together with many verbs that refer to specific ways of moving something—e.g. ‘raise’, ‘lower’ and ‘turn’—conform to this pattern, because actions that consist in an agent’s moving part of his or her own body—e.g. raising or lowering one’s arm or turning one’s head—have traditionally played a central rôle in the philosophy of action, as we shall see.

3. So we can define an action as the bringing about or causing of some kind of change, the agent being the one that brings about the change and the patient being the one that undergoes it. This is not a reductive definition. There is no suggestion that the concepts of causation and change are sim-

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3 On this topic see Anscombe 1981; Strawson 1992, ch.9.
4 ‘Inchoative’ is sometimes used instead of ‘mutative’, e.g. in Levin 1993; but ‘inchoative’ is normally used by grammarians in another sense.
pler than the concept of action itself, or that the concept of action is composed out of these other concepts in the way that a complex molecule is composed out of elements in the periodic table. On the contrary, the aim of defining an action in this way is to show part of how a number of equally abstract ideas are related to each other—notably, the ideas of substance (in the traditional sense of persisting object), power, action, cause and event. It is, to use a term introduced by P.F. Strawson, a connective rather than a reductive definition of action.

So the definition is connective. It is also conservative, by which I mean that it counts a relatively restricted range of phenomena as actions. For example, when I hold my breath, I prevent a certain kind of motion in my body. This performance (to use a neutral term) can be voluntary, intentional, planned, etc., and it might well be described as an action, in the right context. But to prevent motion is to cause it not to occur, so I do not count it as action.5 Again, we distinguish between thought and action. But thought is not invariably idle or inactive, even if it is not best thought of as causing change. Is running through a tune in one’s head an action? Is remembering a date, or listening attentively to a lecture? Or does thought acquire the status of activity from the larger project it is part of, as when we do the mental arithmetic involved in filling out our tax returns? The definition proposed here does not budget for these kinds of subtleties, and I propose to set them aside.

Defining an action as the bringing about or causing of some kind of change therefore presents a simple, indeed a simplifying, model of our thought—one that distinguishes between causing and preventing change, and between thinking and acting, with unnatural sharpness. It is, in effect, the result obtained by using the concepts of substance, power, action, cause and event to define in abstract terms the common thread that runs through the thought of something raising, lowering, carrying, dragging, throwing, or in general moving something; or making, breaking, heating, cooling, twisting, tearing, or in general creating, destroying or changing something. To return to an example mentioned earlier, Paul and a knob of butter are both substances; Paul is able to melt butter, and butter is liable to melt; the event that has to occur if Paul melts the butter is the butter’s melting; and Paul’s action is the causing of this event. So a change in one substance (the

5 However, it is possible to prevent \( x \) by causing \( y \), e.g. to prevent a bath from overflowing by closing the tap. And it is possible to cause \( x \) by preventing \( y \), e.g. to kill a man by suffocating him.
patient) is caused by another substance (the agent) and the action is the causing of this change.

The model is simple, and its value lies in its simplicity. It is not an exact record of our fluid and undisciplined thought and talk: it regiments it to some degree. But it makes our thought and talk more tractable, and fallacies easier to expose.

4.

It has been objected that this definition of action relies on a false account of the meaning of causative verbs. To open or close something, I said, is to cause it to open or close, to move something is to cause it to move, to kill something is to cause it to die, and so on—whether the thing opened or closed is a door or one’s fist, whether the thing moved is one’s hand or one’s car, and by whatever means the action is performed. But this is disputed. Someone who moves her hand (it is said) does not cause her hand to move, if she moves it directly, that is, without doing so by moving something else. If she moves her hand with a Heath-Robinsonian contraption of some kind, and perhaps if she moves it with her other hand, she causes it to move. But not if she moves it directly. Equally, a man who causes another man’s death by hiring an assassin does not kill the man himself. I shall reply to the objection by commenting on these two examples in turn.

Concerning the first example, there is no controversy about whether someone moves her hand both when she does so directly and when she does so indirectly. It is clear, and uncontroversial, that she does. It is also uncontroversial that when she moves her hand with a Heath-Robinsonian contraption, she causes her hand to move. The question is whether she causes her hand to move when she moves it directly. If we equate moving with causing to move, we are bound to say that she does. But this has sometimes been denied, on the grounds that we would not normally say ‘She caused her hand to move’ in this case, and it would be misleading if we did say it.

The standard reply to this kind of argument is due to Grice. Grice pointed out that we cannot infer from the fact that we would not normally say something, or that it would be misleading to say it, that it is not true. For example, if we knew that someone had finished his dinner we would not normally say that he had begun it. But it would not be untrue to say this. For if someone has finished his dinner, then he must have begun it.

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Again, the remark ‘Scooter is a lawyer, but for all that he’s an honest man’ is misleading if in fact most lawyers are honest men. But if Scooter is both a lawyer and an honest man, describing the remark as untrue is not the right way to capture what is wrong with it. Thus, if we grant that we would not normally say of someone who raised her arm directly that she caused it to rise, and that it would be misleading if one did say this, it does not follow that it would be untrue to say it.

This is a defensive reply to the argument. But the main reason for insisting that to open or close something is to cause it to open or close, to move something is to cause it to move, and so on, is simply that there is no other plausible way of explaining what these causative verbs mean, and how their meaning when they occur transitively is related to their meaning when they occur intransitively. For example, to move is to change one’s posture, position or location; to move something is to change its posture, position or location; and to change something is to cause it to change: as the OED puts it, it is to make something—i.e. cause it to become—other than it was. Every dictionary says this, or something very like it, and it is hard to think of a plausible definition which is substantially different from this one.

We should therefore insist that to move something simply is to cause it to move, regardless of what is moved or how it is moved, while acknowledging that we tend to reserve the phrase ‘cause … to move’ (‘… to open, close, etc.’) for the case where something is moved (opened, closed, etc.) indirectly, e.g. with a lever or a machine. This is preferable to denying (as some philosophers have done) that it is possible to explain what verbs such as ‘move’ mean.7 Alternatively, we can assign the role of expressing the broader causal concept to the phrase ‘bring about’, and say instead that to move something simply is to bring it about that it moves—regardless of what is moved or how it is moved—while allowing that to cause something to move is to bring it about indirectly that it moves. This concession only requires a terminological adjustment to the position defended here, but I do not believe it is necessary.

What about the contract killing? If to kill something simply is to cause it to die, and if the man who hires an assassin causes his victim to die, then the man kills his victim. But surely (it is said) we would normally say that the assassin is the one who kills him.

My reply to this objection is that we certainly must distinguish between the case where A kills B himself, and the case where A employs or induces

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7 Fodor 1976, 130n.
C to kill B on his behalf; but we are not obliged to do this by confining the use of the causative verb to the first case, and as a matter of fact our use of causative verbs is less disciplined than this. We are comfortable saying that Louis XIV built Versailles, that Hitler bombed London and that Stalin killed millions, while acknowledging that they did not do these things personally or with their own bare hands. We can if we wish say—with deliberate emphasis—‘But the man who hires an assassin doesn’t actually (or, as philosophers sometimes say, strictly speaking) kill his victim’, and perhaps this will be agreed. But if so, it will be agreed because it is understood that by ‘actually kill’ or ‘strictly speaking kill’, what is meant is kill personally or with his own bare hands.

I conclude that the definition of action proposed here—viz. that to act is to bring about or cause some kind of change—is consistent with the way in which we use causative verbs. The contrary view depends on an artificially disciplined account of how these verbs are used, coupled with a tendency to misunderstand the significance of this pattern of use. Furthermore, it makes causative/mutative alternation and the meaning of verbs such as ‘move’ seem baffling, when in fact these things could scarcely be simpler to explain.

I shall now turn to the main business of this article, which is to examine the three fallacies about action introduced in section (1).

5. Most philosophers who write about action write exclusively about human action. Indeed many philosophers either claim or assume that human beings are the only real agents that exist, and that human actions are the only real actions there are. According to this view, when a man pumps water from a well or melts some butter in a pan, these really are actions; but when a man’s heart pumps blood around his body or the sun melts some butter on the kitchen table, these are not really actions. This has been the predominant view ever since the nature of action became a lively and controversial topic in twentieth-century philosophy, more than forty years ago. As we shall see, it stems originally from seventeenth-century ideas.

Our innocent, untutored conception of agency and activity is more liberal. We extend it without hesitation to bodily organs, non-human animals, plants and inanimate substances, whether natural or artificial. For exam-

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8 That this view retains the status of an orthodoxy today is due especially to Davidson. See especially ‘Agency’, in Davidson 1980, ch.3.
ple, we say that beavers build dams and that wasps make nests, and we think of these activities as just that—activities—no less than building houses or making cars. We say that a tree sucks up moisture from the ground and that the wind bends the branches of the tree, and again we think of sucking and bending as making things happen, as bringing about or causing change. Indeed, we often describe inanimate substances as agents of one sort or another, with their own distinctive active powers. For example, soap is a detergent, that is, a cleansing agent, cortisone is an anti-inflammatory agent, and so on.

Our untutored conception of agency and activity is therefore at odds with the view held by most philosophers today. This is not merely a difference in the use of words. Philosophers do not think of themselves as having introduced a special, technical sense of the words ‘agent’ and ‘action’, with a narrower scope than they have in their usual, non-technical sense; and non-philosophers do not think of themselves as using these words metaphorically. So why does the difference exist? Is it because our innocent, untutored ways of speaking and thinking are careless or informed by a false conception of the way non-human beings behave? For example, it is sometimes said that an animistic or anthropomorphic tendency, deeply rooted in our nature, makes us inclined to endow animals, plants and even mountains, rivers and the wind with thoughts, intentions, plans and purposes. Is this the right explanation?

I do not believe it is. If action necessarily involved thought or intention, a verb used to report an action would include the idea of thought or intention in its meaning. For example, the verb ‘build’ would attribute thought or intention to the one that builds, and the verb ‘cook’ would attribute thought or intention to the one that cooks. Hence, these verbs could not be used unambiguously to refer to action, on the one hand, and to the behaviour of animals incapable of thought, or to bodily organs, on the other. But no such ambiguity exists. ‘Grind’ has exactly the same meaning, whether it refers to a cook grinding meat or a bird’s gizzard grinding seeds; ‘bend’ has the same meaning whether it describes a blacksmith or the wind; and ‘build’ has the same meaning in the sentences ‘Paul built a shed’ and ‘The wasps built a nest’.

“But if we were told that Paul had built a shed, we would normally assume that he knew what he was doing; whereas if we were told that a swarm of wasps had built a nest, we would not—or at least should not—make the same assumption.” True. But this is not because the verb ‘build’ is ambiguous, involving the idea of thought or intention in one meaning
and not the other. It is because we know that a human being is generally aware of what he is doing when he builds a shed. In the same way, if we were told that the Pope walked across St. Peter’s Square, we would normally assume that he was wearing clothes, whereas we would not make this assumption if we were told that a cat walked across the garden. But this is not because ‘walked’ is ambiguous, involving the idea of clothing in one meaning and not the other.

I do not mean to deny that we think carelessly or anthropomorphically about many things: no doubt we do. P.F. Strawson mentions an example. If we see a great boulder roll down a mountainside and flatten a wooden hut in its path, he writes, we may, ‘in some barely coherent way, identify with the hut (if we are one kind of person) or with the boulder (if we are another): putting ourselves imaginatively in the place of one or the other.’ But, he adds, our tendency to do this, if we have such a tendency, has no bearing whatever on our rationale for thinking of the boulder’s flattening the hut as an action on a par with vastly many other actions and interactions, which, ‘whether entered into by animate or inanimate beings … supply wholly satisfactory explanations of their outcomes, of the states of affairs in which they terminate.’

Some kinds of action necessarily involve thought or intention, and some verbs of action therefore include the idea of thought or intention in their meaning. For example, to murder is to kill wickedly or unlawfully. So if we think of a shark as murderous, either we are thinking metaphorically or analogically, or we are confused. But reflecting on this kind of case should help us to see that there is nothing either metaphorical or confused in the thought that sharks kill, rather than murder, that wasps build nests, that a tree sucks up moisture, or that the wind bends the tree’s branches. These thoughts do not involve the idea that sharks, wasps, trees or the wind have intentions, purposes or plans. They do of course involve the idea that these things do not merely undergo change, but actually cause or bring about change. But causing change is not intentional or purposeful as such.

Our willingness to think of non-human beings as agents is neither careless nor anthropomorphic. On the contrary, confining agency to human beings is absurdly provincial. Anthony Kenny has emphasized this point: ‘wherever we can talk of substances in nature,’ he writes, ‘wherever we can talk of natural kinds, we can talk also of natural agency and natural powers.’ But even this remark underplays the extent of agency, since syn-

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9 Strawson 1992, 118.
10 Kenny 1975, 46.
thetic substances are agents, no less than naturally occurring substances. For example, soap is a natural detergent whereas Persil is a synthetic one (or so I was taught). Of course, philosophers are free to confine the terms ‘agency’ and ‘action’ to naturally occurring agents, or to agents that have intentions, if they wish. Indeed, they can confine them to adults and exclude children, or confine them to men and exclude women. But there is no evidence that any intellectual advantage can be gained by doing so.

6.

I shall turn now to the assumption that the distinction between active and passive coincides with the distinction between voluntary and not voluntary.

I begin with a terminological preliminary. The word ‘involuntary’ is often defined in dictionaries as the contradictory of ‘voluntary’, but the actual use of the word is commonly confined to thoughts or changes in the body which a person is unable to control, such as ‘an involuntary concurrence of ideas’, ‘the involuntarie running of vrine’ or ‘the involuntary closing of the eyelids when the surface of the eye is touched’. (All of these examples are taken from the OED’s entry for ‘involuntary’.) Thus, in the actual use of these words, ‘involuntary’ and ‘not voluntary’ are not equivalent, and if something is not voluntary, we cannot assume that it must therefore be involuntary. For example, a man who is conscripted into the army is not a volunteer, but he does not join the army involuntarily, in this limited sense. We are now principally concerned with what is and what is not voluntary.

In reality, the voluntary/not voluntary distinction and the active/passive distinction cut across each other. For activity can be either voluntary or not voluntary, and the same is true of passivity. But philosophers have commonly ignored or failed to notice two of these possibilities. On the one hand, they have tended to think about the will exclusively in relation to action. They have not thought about it in relation to feelings we experience or conditions in which we place or find ourselves, or in relation to occasions when we are acted upon. They have thought about voluntary activity, but they have ignored voluntary passivity. On the other hand, activity and vol-

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11 The distinction between ‘involuntary’ and ‘not voluntary’ derives from Aristotle’s distinction between actions that are performed unknowingly which we do not regret (ouk hekousia) and ones which we do regret (akousia), but this is not the way in which philosophers now use these terms. (Nicomachean Ethics III.1, 1110b18-12; see Broadie 1991, 126.)
untary activity have commonly been equated, as if activity were always voluntary. So they have ignored activity that is not voluntary. The result is that the active/passive distinction and the voluntary/not voluntary distinction have appeared to coincide, and have commonly been confused. I shall discuss voluntary passivity and non-voluntary activity in turn.

It is a mistake to suppose that only activity can be voluntary. As it happens, the OED’s entry for ‘voluntary’ begins with voluntary feelings and then proceeds to voluntary action; and if we turn to the entry for ‘voluntarily’, we find several quotations in which the word qualifies something passive, including the very first. Here are the first and the eighth:

*c1374 CHAUCER Boeth. III. pr. xii. (1868) 103 Ther may no man douten, that thei ne ben gouerned uolu ntariely. … 1663 BP. PATRICK Parab. Pilgr. xiii. (1687) 87 At last he voluntarily, and without any compulsion but that of his Love, died upon a Cross.

The truth is that the distinction between what is and what is not voluntary applies to passivity and to inactivity in exactly the same way as it applies to activity. Children are sometimes picked up and carried voluntarily, they are sometimes kissed and tucked up in bed voluntarily, and they sometimes eat their green vegetables voluntarily. For their part, adults are sometimes voluntarily unemployed, sometimes voluntarily undergo surgical procedures, and sometimes die voluntarily, as Bishop Patrick says Christ did, and as the Italian poet and advocate of euthanasia Piergiorgio Welby did last year. There is no reason to deny that voluntariness can be attributed equally to all of these things; and there is no reason to think that it is a different attribute, depending on which of them we have in mind.

The idea that only actions can be voluntary—or only the things we do, as opposed to the things that happen to us or are done to us—is pure dogma. In fact, conditions such as exile and poverty can be voluntary, despite not being things we do, because they may be the result of a choice and not of force or compulsion, or undue influence by others, and the same is true of the kisses we give and also of the kisses we receive. Roughly, voluntariness is about choice versus compulsion, and a child can sometimes choose whether to be kissed or carried, just as it can sometimes choose what to eat. Equally, a man may allow himself to fall in love with a woman, in the knowledge that he could avoid falling in love with her if he chose to, or allow himself to fall asleep in the knowledge that he could avoid falling asleep if he chose to; or he may fall in love willy nilly, or fall asleep despite trying to remain awake. In the first case, he falls in love or
falls asleep voluntarily, in the second case not. But falling in love and falling asleep are not actions, any more than falling down the stairs.

Why has voluntary passivity been ignored? One reason is that many philosophers are interested in the concept of voluntariness because of its importance in ethics and the philosophy of law. In fact, the concept of voluntary passivity plays an important rôle in moral and legal reasoning, notably where consent is involved, e.g. in connection with the law of rape. Nevertheless, voluntary passivity has proved to be less salient than voluntary activity in this context, perhaps in the case of law because of what is called the ‘act requirement’, the doctrine that criminal liability requires an act. However, the main reason is that the distinction between what is and what is not voluntary was regarded for three centuries as part of a story about the interaction between mind and body. The questions that exercised philosophers were not: what can the concept of voluntariness be applied to?, and how should it be defined? They were: what causes the kind of motion in our bodies that we regard as subject to our own direction and control?, and how does this kind of motion differ from blinking, sneezing, or the beating of the heart?

As is well known, the orthodox answer to these questions was that voluntary motion or voluntary action—motion and action were commonly equated—is caused by a special kind of conscious thought, which was sometimes called a volition or act of will. There is no need for us to examine this theory here. The point that concerns us is that it reinforced the tendency to neglect voluntary passivity. For if a man falls asleep voluntarily or dies voluntarily on a cross, the cause is unlikely to be a conscious thought. In fact it will probably be the same—tiredness in one case and asphyxiation in the other—whether he falls asleep or dies voluntarily or not. It was therefore hard to see that activity and passivity are equally capable of being voluntary, as long the theory of volitions prevailed. However, it must be acknowledged that some of the theory’s most trenchant critics have also ignored voluntary passivity, or actually denied that it exists.

The other mistake that has contributed to the fallacy that the active/passive distinction and the voluntary/not voluntary distinction coincide is the

12 On this topic, see Duff 2004, 69-103.
13 Ryle 1949, 74; Geach 1960, 221-225; White 1985, 50; Geach, but cf. Anscombe 1957, 49.
thought or assumption that action is always voluntary. Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Mill made this assumption, and it remained dominant in philosophy during the first half of the twentieth century. It was also made by many nineteenth- and twentieth-century jurists. By the nineteenth century, it commonly took the form of a definition. For example, Mill defines action as follows: ‘What is an action? Not one thing, but a series of two things; the state of mind called a volition, followed by an effect.’ And Austin (the nineteenth-century jurist, not the twentieth-century philosopher) offers the following definition: ‘A voluntary movement of my body, or a movement which follows a volition, is an act.’

If we recall that action is not limited to animals capable of acting voluntarily, it is obvious that these definitions cannot be right. But even if we confine ourselves to human action, they remain unconvincing. Some human action is voluntary; some is not. It is debatable how much choice voluntariness requires. But if we are compelled to perform a certain action, and cannot choose whether to do so or not, then we do not perform this action voluntarily—whether the compulsion is physical, psychological, moral, or of some other kind. Do we pay our taxes voluntarily? Does a man who hands over his wallet do so voluntarily, if he is threatened with a gun? Does a prisoner reveal the names of his associates voluntarily, if he does so under torture? Perhaps we cannot answer these questions in general terms, and need to know more about each particular case. But is should be beyond dispute that some actions are not voluntary.

Again, we are bound to ask why philosophers adhered to the mistake idea that action is always voluntary over such a long period. Part of the reason is that they concentrated exclusively on human action, and almost exclusively on actions that consist in a human being moving part of his own body—again because action was regarded as one aspect of the nexus between mind and body. The reason this matters is that although many of our actions are not voluntary, most of our actions that consist in moving parts of our own bodies are voluntary. For example, when we move our lips or our legs—e.g. when we are speaking or walking—these actions are mostly, although not invariably, voluntary. Sleep is the main exception to this rule. For example, if I pull the blanket across me in my sleep, or call

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14 See for example Williams 1978, ch.2, §2; Dias 1970, 252. See White 1985, 28ff for further references.
15 Mill, 1973, 1.3.5.
16 Quoted in White 1968, 5.
out a name, this is an action of mine; but it is not a voluntary action, if I do it unconsciously.

Why are most actions of this kind voluntary? The reason is that one of the principal factors that cancels voluntariness is ignorance, as Aristotle pointed out; and it is unusual for us to be unaware of the motion of our limbs. Again, sleep is the main exception. Other kinds of action are quite different. For example, when I walk across the garden I may sometimes kill an ant by treading on it, although I have not done so voluntarily since I was a child. I take the step voluntarily, but I do not kill the ant voluntarily, because I am unaware of killing it. Since my step-takings and my arm-raisings are mostly voluntary, whereas my ant-killings are not, it is much easier to equate action and voluntary action if our attention is exclusively directed towards actions of this kind.\(^\text{17}\)

This is part of the reason why action and voluntary action have been equated. But an equally important part of the reason is that the doctrine that matter is inert was accepted by several influential philosophers in the seventeenth century—including Descartes, Malebranche and Hobbes—and exerted an important influence on the way in which the relationship between action and voluntariness was understood. This comes out especially clearly in Locke’s discussion about the source of our idea of active power—in other words, the observations or experiences that enable us to form this concept in our minds.

8.

According to Locke, the idea of power is indispensible in science, because it is, he says, ‘a principal ingredient in our complex ideas of substances.’\(^\text{18}\) For example, the liability of gold to be melted in a fire and to be dissolved in \textit{aqua regia} are no less essential to our idea of gold than its colour and weight. And even colour and weight, Locke claims, will also turn out to be powers, if we consider their nature carefully. But if all the materials of reasoning and knowledge—all of our ideas—are ultimately derived from experience, as Locke insists they are, what are the sources in experience of the idea of power?

\(^\text{17}\) I ignore the doctrine, defended by Anscombe and Davidson, that if someone performs one action by performing another action, for example, crushes an ant by taking a step, these are one and the same action. This doctrine is criticized in Alvarez & Hyman 1998, 234f.

\(^\text{18}\) Locke 1997, 2.21.3.
Locke’s answer depends on distinguishing between two complementary kinds of power: *active* powers are abilities to produce various kinds of change, whereas *passive* powers are liabilities to undergo various kinds of change. Action, which is the exercise of an active power, is the production of some kind of change; passion, which is the exercise of a passive power, is the undergoing of some kind of change. The origin of our idea of passive power is, Locke thinks, quite clear. The idea is produced in us by bodies, because we cannot avoid perceiving the changes that they undergo: ‘and therefore with reason we look on them as liable to the same change’. But Locke claims that we cannot observe the *production* of a change in the same way. For example, when we see one ball strike another ball, and set it in motion, Locke says,

[the first ball] only communicates the motion it had received from another, and loses in itself so much, as the other received; which gives us but a very obscure idea of an active power of moving in body, whilst we observe it only to transfer, but not produce any motion.\(^\text{19}\)

Observing interactions between bodies cannot therefore be the source of our idea of active power. Rather, Locke claims,

we have [this idea] only from reflection on what passes in ourselves, where we find by experience, that barely by willing it, barely by a thought of the mind, we can move the parts of our bodies, which were before at rest.\(^\text{20}\)

Thus, according to Locke, our idea of active power is drawn from the experience of producing motion voluntarily ourselves. Moreover, although Locke wanted to retain the idea that natural kinds of substance have characteristic active powers, it follows from these considerations that strictly speaking voluntary action is the only action there is. For when bodies interact, motion is communicated, but it is not produced; and action, Locke insists, is the production of motion, or some other kind of change. The mere transfer of motion does not amount to action. All real action must therefore be voluntary action, consciously effected by the mind.

Locke’s argument is unconvincing, because the distinction between transferring and producing motion is specious. There is certainly a difference between producing and transferring people or goods. For example, manufacturers produce goods whereas exporters transport goods from one

\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*, 2.21.4.

place to another; and parents produce children whereas bus-drivers transfer them from one place to another. Now if a bus-driver transfers children from a school to a playing-field, the same children who embark at the school disembark at the playing-field. Not just the same number of children, but the very same children. (That generally matters quite a lot to their parents.) But suppose one ball strikes another similar ball, sets it in motion, and decelerates appreciably itself. Has motion been transferred or produced? How are we to decide? We cannot ask whether the second ball acquires the very same motion—not merely the same quantity of motion but, as it were, the very same package of motion—that the first ball loses, because motion is not a substance that can be packaged and then either handed over or withheld.

But if, as Locke says, the first ball loses the same quantity of motion as the second ball gains, is this not a reason for denying that motion has been produced? It is not; but we need to be clear about why not. It is tempting to point out that when a cannon is fired, motion is not transferred from the powder to the ball. But it would be easy to reply on Locke’s behalf that although he should have based his argument on the conservation of energy instead of motion, his basic point is sound. So this objection would not take us far. The real reason why the fact that the first ball loses approximately the same quantity of motion as the second ball gains should not encourage us to say that motion has been transferred rather than produced is that there is no reason why the production of motion—i.e. action—should be in breach of whatever conservation laws are enshrined in physics.21

This is the crux of the matter. Locke denies that the first ball produces motion in the second ball because it ‘loses in itself so much, as the other received’, in other words, because the interaction between the balls conserves the total quantity of motion. But it follows that he can only acknowledge that the production of motion—in other words, action—has occurred if the total quantity of motion is not conserved, but increased. An action must therefore be a breach of or an exception to the laws of nature. In other words, it must be a miracle, an interference in the natural course of

21 Interestingly, we distinguish between producing and transferring wealth in the way Locke wants to distinguish between producing and transferring motion. The rich man who leaves his money to his son merely transfers wealth from one person to another, but the entrepreneur (we say) actually creates wealth. The reason why we are able to think about wealth in this way is that there are no conservation laws in economics—something we all have reason to be grateful for.
events by a being with the strictly supernatural ability to inject motion into 
the natural world, rather than merely transferring it to something else.

Locke’s conclusion, that we are acquainted with action by ‘reflection 
on what passes in ourselves’, is therefore unsustainable, since human be-
ings do not have supernatural powers. If his argument were sound, it would 
really establish that miracles aside, action does not exist at all. Reflecting 
on Locke’s argument from our present vantage-point, it is not difficult for 
us to see this, in particular, because we understand that the conversation of 
energy—one of great discoveries of nineteenth century physics—applies to 
our voluntary behaviour no less than to the behaviour of billiard balls. 
Since we understand this, we can see that Locke’s argument is really 
eliminativist in tendency. It does not confine action to the mind: it excludes 
it from the natural world altogether.

I suggest we can draw three conclusions from this analysis of Locke’s 
argument.

First, in Locke’s thought, and in the empiricist tradition stemming from 
Locke, the idea that all action is voluntary did not arise out of a theory of 
the will. It arose from a combination of two things: first, the idea that mat-
ter is inert, never a source of motion or change in its own right; and sec-
ond, a not yet fully naturalized conception of human beings. The first idea 
encouraged philosophers to eliminate action, while the second held them 
back. The point of equilibrium was the confused idea that all action is vol-
untary, consciously executed by the mind.

Second, if we accept this conception of matter, we must dispense with 
the idea of a body as a substance with the active power to produce 
change—that is to say, we must dispense with the idea altogether, and not 
merely in our conception of non-human beings. However, if we do not ac-
cept this picture, we remain free to acknowledge that action occurs con-
stantly, some of it voluntary and some of it not, some of it by human be-
ings and some of it not, some of it by living beings and some of it not.

Finally, there is no reason to think that we are acquainted with action by 
‘reflection on what passes in ourselves’ when we move ‘the parts of our 
odies which were before at rest’. For we observe action constantly (unless 
matter is inert). We observe action whenever we observe the ‘beginning’ as 
Locke calls it, the bringing about or causing, of motion or of any other kind 
of change. And we observe this whenever we see someone walking or 
speaking; when we see birds building their nests or ants carrying fragments
of food in their mandibles; when we feel the sun warming our skin or ice cooling our tongue; and when we see one ball set another ball in motion.  

9.

The third fallacy I want to discuss is the idea that action is a kind of motion, for example, motion in a special context, or with a special cause.

Suppose a student in a class raises her arm. How is her action, her raising of her arm, related to the upward motion of her arm? Many philosophers either claim explicitly or assume that they are identical. For example, when Donald Davidson considers the question of how actions should be located in space and time, he writes:

if a man’s arm goes up, the event takes place in the space-time zone occupied by the arm; but if a man raises his arm, doesn’t the event fill the zone occupied by the whole man? Yet the events may be identical.  

Again, David Armstrong writes:

The rising of my arm is the raising of my arm provided that it is part or the whole of a pattern of behaviour that has an objective …

We are not concerned now with the idea that the raising of my arm must be part of a pattern of behaviour with an objective. All that concerns us is the idea that when a person raises her arm, her raising of her arm and the motion of her arm are one and the same event. This cannot be right. For to raise one’s arm is to cause one’s arm to rise. The action is the causing of the motion; and the causing of the motion cannot be identical with the motion itself. It makes no difference what is raised. If I raise my hand, my glass and the nail on my little finger in a single gesture, my raising of my hand and of the nail are just as certainly distinct from the motion of my hand and the nail as my raising of my glass is from the motion of the glass, despite the fact that the hand and the nail are parts of my body whereas the glass is not.

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23 Davidson 1980, 124.
24 Armstrong 1968, 170.
This was pointed out by several philosophers in the twentieth century. For example, Prichard (whose theory of action was confused on practically every other point) writes:

When I move my hand, the movement of my hand, though an effect of my action, is not itself an action, and noone who considers the matter carefully would say it was, any more than he would say that the death of Caesar, as distinct from his murder, was an action or even part of an action.\(^\text{25}\)

Prichard may not be right in saying that the movement—that is, the motion—of my hand is an effect of my action. We shall consider this idea shortly. But he is surely right in saying that it is not itself an action. And of course it follows from this that it is not identical with my action of raising my hand, which self-evidently is an action.

A more abstract remark by Von Wright also implies that we cannot identify action and motion:

It would not be right, I think, to call acts a kind or species of events. An act is not a change in the world. But many acts may quite appropriately be described as the bringing about or effecting … of a change.\(^\text{26}\)

(Von Wright calls particular instances of action acts, rather than actions. I shall not follow him in this.) We can set aside for the moment the question of whether actions are or are not a kind or species of events. The immediate importance of this passage is that Von Wright saw—as Prichard had seen—that the student’s raising of her arm and the motion of her arm cannot be the same event, any more than the murder of Caesar can be identical with his death. For the motion of her arm is a change in the world: it is a change in the position of her arm. But her raising of her arm—her ‘act’—is not a change in the world. It is ‘the bringing about or effecting … of a change.’

Prichard and Von Wright both reject the idea that Davidson and Armstrong both endorse, namely, that when the student raises her arm, her action is identical with the motion of her arm. On this point, on which they are agreed, Prichard and Von Wright are surely right. And Prichard is right to point out that the relationship between the action and the motion is the same as the relation between the murder and the death. For the action in both cases is (as Von Wright puts it) the bringing about or effecting—i.e.

\(^{25}\) Prichard 1968, 63.

\(^{26}\) von Wright 1963, 35f.
the causing—of a change, whereas the motion of the student’s arm and Caesar’s death are the changes effected or brought about. And these cannot be the same. The causing of a change cannot be identical with the changed caused, because causation is a genuine relation, which holds between distinct particular objects or events, just as spatial and temporal relations do.

Compare causing a change with taking a bath or meeting one’s death. The phrases, ‘take a bath’ and ‘meet one’s death’ are examples of a fairly common construction in English. One can take a bath and have a chat; one can make a choice or a promise; and so on. Often the verb is ‘have’, ‘do’, ‘give’, ‘make’ or ‘take’. But it is sometimes cognate with the noun-phrase. For example, if Socrates lived well and died peacefully, then he lived a good life and died a peaceful death. The construction is common because it is often convenient to qualify a noun with an adjective instead of qualifying a verb with an adverb, but it is merely a syntactic expedient, in the sense that the verb does not express a genuine relation. On the contrary it refers to one of the very things that it appears, syntactically, to relate. For example, if one takes a bath, the taking of it is the bath one takes; and when Socrates met his death, their meeting was his death. Thus, in such cases, the taking or the meeting can be identified with what is taken or met. But an action—the causing of a change—cannot be identified with the change caused, because causation is a genuine relation. In this respect, it is like the taking that occurs if one takes a chocolate rather than a bath, or the meeting that occurs if one meets a friend rather than one’s death.27

So the student’s raising of her arm cannot be identified with the motion of her arm. Why then did philosophers confuse them? One reason is the tendency, mentioned earlier, to focus on actions that consist in a human being moving part of his own body. For the distinction between action and motion is less salient in this kind of case. For example, it is much easier to confuse someone’s raising of her arm and the motion of her arm than it is to confuse someone’s raising of a flag and the motion of the flag, because in the latter case we can imagine the motion without the action. We can cut the agent out of the picture, so to speak. But if the thing that moves is part of the agent’s body, we cannot do this; and if we imagine ourselves pointing to the action and pointing to the motion, we shall imagine ourselves pointing to roughly the same place.

But there is also a deeper reason for the confusion, namely, the assumption that actions are events.

27 I discuss this issue in more detail in Hyman 2001, 298-317.
‘It would not be right …’ Von Wright says, ‘to call acts a kind or species of events.’ If this were merely a terminological remark, we could bat it away. Whether actions should be called events, we could say, depends on how inclusive a category of events one has in mind. But in fact the remark is not merely about what actions should be called: it is about what actions are. We have already seen that the action of raising an arm cannot be identified with the motion of the arm, any more than the action of killing Caesar can be identified with the death of Caesar. The causing of a change, we said, is not that change itself. Von Wright’s remark implies that the action is not an event that causes the motion of the arm or Caesar’s death either, and this claim is not merely about words. I believe it is right, for two reasons, one grammatical and the other epistemological.

The grammatical reason concerns the fact that the word ‘causing’ in the phrase ‘a causing of a change’ is what grammarians call a nominalization, that is, a noun or noun phrase derived from another part of speech. The nouns ‘kiss’ in the phrase ‘the kiss Mark gave Sharon’ and ‘love’ in the phrase ‘Tom’s love for Lucy’ are other examples. Now we can use the phrase ‘the kiss Mark gave Sharon’ to refer to the action reported in the sentence ‘Mark gave Sharon a kiss’—the giving of the kiss and the kiss given being identical, just as the taking of a bath and the bath taken are; and we can use the phrase ‘Tom’s love for Lucy’ to refer to the relation (strictly speaking, the relation-instance) reported in the sentence ‘Tom loves Lucy’. Clearly the phrase ‘the kiss Mark gave Sharon’ does not refer to an object or event that kissed Sharon, and the phrase ‘Tom’s love for Lucy’ does not refer to an object or event that loves Lucy. The kiss is not the one that kisses and the love is not the one that loves. It is the action or relation itself, and not the agent or one of the relata.

The same applies in the case of ‘killing’, ‘turning’, ‘causing’, and so on. ‘Brutus’s killing of Caesar’ refers to the action reported in the sentences ‘Brutus killed Caesar’, and ‘Paul’s turning of his head’ refers to the action reported in the sentence ‘Paul turned his head’. But again, these phrases do not refer to objects or events that killed Caesar and turned Paul’s head. In fact we can state a general principle, that where ‘a’ and ‘b’ are names of particulars (of whatever categories or kinds) and ‘{verb}’ stands for a verb or verb phrase, ‘a’s {verb}ing of b’ does not refer to an object or event that {verb}s b. In every case, it refers to the action or the relation and not to the
agent or one of the relata. This principle is not merely about words. The phrase ‘a’s causing of b’ refers to a’s causing of b. Hence if ‘a’s causing of b’ does not refer to an object or event that causes b, then a’s causing of b is not an object or event that causes b. In short, a causing is not a cause.

Furthermore, many of the verbs we use to refer to actions can also be used, without any change of meaning, to refer to relations between events. For example, the verb ‘rock’ has exactly the same meaning in the sentences ‘Mary rocked the cradle’ and ‘The explosion rocked the building’: in both cases, it means ‘cause to rock’, in conformity with the pattern described in section (2). Hence, if the phrase ‘Mary’s rocking of the cradle’ refers to an event that causes the motion of the cradle, the phrase ‘the explosion’s rocking of the building’ must refer to an event that causes the motion of the building—a third event, in addition to the explosion and the motion of the building. And if this third event causes the rocking of the building, that is, if it rocks it, the phrase ‘the third event’s rocking of the building’ must refer to a fourth event, which also causes the motion of the building. And so on ad infinitum. An infinity of such events may not be a logical or physical impossibility; but the idea that these mundane statements imply that infinities of such events occur is surely absurd.

Thus, we only need to consider the grammar of nominalizations to see that Prichard was mistaken in thinking that when I move my hand, the motion of my hand is an effect of my action. Now some philosophers are inclined to dismiss arguments that appeal to grammar with a vague mention of differences between ‘superficial’ grammatical form and ‘deep’ logical form. The reply is simple. The distinction between grammatical form and logical form is real, but it cannot be used in this way. For if a philosophical doctrine implies something false then it must be false, and if it is implied by something true then it must be true, regardless of the subject-matter of the truth or falsehood concerned. If a philosopher proves the existence of God from the premise that ginger is hot, we cannot object that this is merely a fact about root vegetables. Equally, if a philosophical doctrine implies that nominalizations of verbs such as ‘love’, ‘kiss’, ‘kill’ or ‘cause’ refer to things that love, kiss, kill or cause, it cannot be defended on the grounds that the behaviour of these parts of speech is mere grammar.

The epistemological reason why the causing of a change cannot be an event that causes the change is this. If a student’s raising of her arm were an event that causes the motion of her arm, it would be an event that occurs inside her body: a contraction of a muscle or a release of a neurotransmitter, or some other kind of event in the agent’s nervous system. For these
are the events that cause the motion of a person’s arm, when she raises it. But if the student’s action were an event that occurs inside her body, we would not be able to see it. The action, as opposed to its effect, would be hidden from view. One might think that this would not present a serious practical difficulty, since we would still be able to see her arm go up. But that is not to the point. For the point is that we do witness actions of this kind, and not merely their effects. If I say that I saw someone raise her arm, wave her hand or turn her head, my statement may be true, without being an elliptical or inaccurate way of saying that I saw an event that was caused by one of these actions.

Despite this formidable difficulty, the view that actions occur inside the agent’s body has been seriously advanced. Jennifer Hornsby, who advances it, replies to the objection as follows:

... the objector thinks that we see actions themselves, and I am inclined to agree. But he says ‘If actions are inside the body, then we cannot see them.’ Some doubt is cast on his conditional when we remember that to say that actions take place inside the body is not to deny that they take place in larger portions of space ... Perhaps then we see actions in virtue of seeing some place where they occur when they occur; perhaps we see actions in virtue simply of seeing the people whose actions they are at the time of their happening. Or again, perhaps we see actions in seeing their effects.28

Hornsby does not say which of these alternatives she prefers; but none of them can be right. For we do not see events in a person’s nervous system ‘in virtue of seeing’ some place where they occur when they occur, any more than we see a man walking in Hyde Park in virtue of seeing Hyde Park while he is walking there. We do not see an event in someone’s nervous system ‘in virtue simply of seeing’ him when the event occurs, any more than we see a door open inside a house in virtue simply of seeing the house when the door opens. And we do not see events in a person’s nervous system ‘in seeing their effects’, any more than we see the pistons of an engine move in seeing the car accelerate along a highway. Hence, no doubt is cast on the objector’s conditional by the alternatives canvassed here, and the objection stands.29

28 Hornsby 1980, 103.
For these reasons, it is not only a mistake to identify the causing of a change with that change itself; it is also a mistake to identify it with another event that causes it. The action of raising one’s arm is not an event that causes the motion of one’s arm, the action of killing Caesar is not an event that causes Caesar’s death, and so on. However, philosophers during the last three centuries have mostly failed to distinguish between my raising of my arm, which is an action, and the motion of my arm, which is an event. And when the action and the motion are not simply identified—as they are by Austin, Davidson and Armstrong—the action is either identified with the cause of the motion, as it is by Prichard and Hornsby, or with a combination of the motion and its cause, as it is by Mill.30 Staring myopically at a sequence of events—like Edwin Abbot’s Flatlanders—all of these philosophers felt compelled to locate the action somewhere along its length.31

Hence, let us suppose—to take another well-known example—that a queen kills a king by pouring poison into his ear. We can imagine tracing our way back from the king’s death along the chain of causally related events that led up to it—events that occurred inside the king’s body as the poison took effect, earlier events that occurred in the space between his body and the queen’s body, such as the motion of the phial beside his ear, and yet earlier events that occurred inside the queen’s body, such as the contraction of a muscle and the release of a neurotransmitter. But it follows from these arguments that we shall not find either the queen’s killing of the king or her pouring of the poison into his ear anywhere along this chain of events. The queen’s killing of the king is (roughly speaking) the causal relation between her and one of these events, namely, the king’s death, and

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31 Davidson’s article ‘The logical form of action sentences’ (repr. in Davidson 1980) persuaded many philosophers that actions are events. However, the most effective formalization of action sentences—i.e. the one that best preserves the inferences we independently recognize as due to form—quantifies over the changes agents cause, and not over their their actions. (See Alvarez 1999, passim.) Hence, Davidson’s dubious view that formal logic is a guide to metaphysics does not support the doctrine that actions are events.
not one of the events themselves; and her pouring of poison into his ear is the causal relation between her and an earlier event in the same chain, namely, the poison’s entering his ear.

This, as I see it, is the point of insisting, with Von Wright, that it would not be right to call acts a kind or species of events. We remain free, of course, to state the same point in another way, e.g. by denying that actions are changes, while including both actions and changes in a broader category of events. But this is merely a terminological choice. The choice can perhaps be supported or opposed by evidence about our habitual use of words. But a debate of this sort is likely to be inconclusive. For although Von Wright’s distinction between a change in the world and the bringing about or effecting of a change—or between an event and the causing of an event—is of real importance for philosophical purposes, it can safely be ignored for most other purposes. And besides, our choice of terminology cannot affect the substantial point, that the action of moving or changing something in some way is neither this motion or change itself, nor an event that causes it to occur.

As simple as it may appear, this point has proved remarkably elusive. For example, having distinguished between transitive and intransitive occurrences of verbs such as ‘move’, ‘break’, ‘burn’, ‘melt’, etc., and using the subscripts ‘T’ and ‘I’ to indicate which kind of occurrence she has in mind, Hornsby writes:

Where ‘a’ designates something in the category of a continuant (rather than event), it is a necessary condition of the truth of ‘a ϕ T-s b’ that a cause b to ϕ I. In that case movements T of the body are events that cause bodily movements I.

The italics in this passage are original, but it is really the phrase ‘in that case’ that should be italicized, because the non sequitur is startling. As we have seen, Hornsby is right not to identify bodily movements T with bodily movements I—e.g., Paul’s turning of his head with the motion of Paul’s head. Her mistake is to assume that Paul’s action belongs to the sequence of causally related events which includes the motion of his head. It is this assumption that makes it seem that if bodily movements T are not identical with bodily movements I then they must be among their causes. For they are evidently not among their effects.32

32 Notice that Hornsby’s first claim, that ‘it is a necessary condition of the truth of “a ϕ T-s b” that a cause b to ϕ I’, is confined to the case where ‘a’ designates a continuant. Why are events excluded? If ‘Matthew rocked the cradle’ implies that Matthew caused the cradle to rock, why does ‘The explosion rocked the building’ not imply that the
There is nothing especially puzzling about the concept of action, as long we understand that it is a broad causal concept which applies across the natural world, and as long as we keep the active/passive distinction and the voluntary/not voluntary distinction firmly apart, and avoid confusing actions and events. An action is simply the exercise of an active power, an ability to produce some kind of change. The answer to Wittgenstein’s famous question, What is left over if I subtract the fact that arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm? is not willing, intending, trying, or any other kind of mental cause; but it is not nothing either, or (as Wittgenstein intimates) the absence of surprise. What is left over is the fact that I made it happen, the fact that I caused the motion of my arm to occur. Nothing could be simpler. But the three fallacies I have discussed prevented philosophers from understanding action for three centuries, and they continue to exercise an extraordinary grip on the philosophy of action to this day. Furthermore, they not only prevent us from understanding action, they also lead inevitably to misunderstandings about willing, intending and trying. I shall leave the task of demonstrating this for another occasion.

explosion caused the building to rock? I would say that it does imply this. But when we move on to the second quoted sentence, we can see Hornsby’s reason for excluding events. For if the first claim applied to events, the second would too—i.e. Hornsby would be bound to hold that movements, by events are also events that cause movements. For example, when an explosion rocks a building the rocking of the building is caused by the explosion; but on this view it is also caused by the explosion’s rocking of the building. This raises the question: if this event causes the rocking of the building, does it rock the building? If so, an infinite regress is in train; if not, how is the distinction between rocking and causing to rock to be explained? This quandary provides Hornsby with a motive for confining the claim that ‘it is a necessary condition of the truth of “a φT-s b” that a cause b to φ1’ to the case where ‘a’ designates a continuant; but it does not provide a justification for doing so.

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At the 4th International Wittgenstein Symposium, I presented an account designed to encode what philosophers of action of the 1970s were driving at when they spoke of basic acts (Hornsby 1980). I formulated the account in two different ways—once in terms of belief, again in terms of knowledge. It seemed to me that something important was omitted from a formulation confined to belief, and that it was helpful to convey the relevant idea of what is basic also using the notion of knowledge. Looking back now, I find it unsurprising that I should have wanted to introduce knowledge. I have come to think, quite generally, that accounts of human agency which restrict themselves, on the cognitive side, to belief are inadequate (Hornsby forthcoming).

In the present paper, I want to bring the topic of basic action into relation with a question about the notion of knowing how to. The question is whether someone who is said to know how to do something always has propositional knowledge imputed to them. I think that in order to gain an interesting perspective on this question, we have to get past the standard story of actions as events explained by “belief-desire pairs”: we need to pay attention to the role of knowledge and of abilities in rational agency generally. And then, I think, we are led to answer No to the question whether knowledge how to is always propositional.

I start by arguing that people’s abilities can be as relevant as their beliefs in explanatory accounts of what they do (§1). That takes me to questions about how knowledge and abilities are connected in action, and thus to the idea of knowledge how to (§2) and to the particular question about the character of such knowledge (§3).

1. Explanations Of Acting, And Having the Ability To

Human agents act for reasons. It is understandable that accounts of action-explanation should be based in the idea of doing something for a reason. According to the standard story, A has a reason to act in a certain way if A has a desire towards something and believes that acting in that way will help secure it. When this conception of a reason for acting is combined with the idea that explanation in terms of reasons is explanation that identi-
fies causes, one may reach a particular view of the causal antecedents of action (Davidson 1963). Suppose that Ann flipped the switch because she wanted the light on and believed that the switch operated the light. Those who tell the standard story will say that Ann’s flipping of the switch was an event of her moving her finger which was caused by her desire and her belief.

Whatever we think of the standard story, if we are interested in any sort of causal story of action,\(^1\) then we cannot stop with an agent’s beliefs and desires. To learn what an agent believed and wanted is not to learn everything that was causally relevant to her action. We appreciate this if we recognize that where ‘X acts because p’ conveys that \(p\) was a reason X had for acting, then X knew that \(p\) (Hyman 1999), (Hornsby forthcoming). And we recognize it again when we see that causal accounts of action can speak of abilities—of what agents are able to do. Let us turn to abilities now.

The fact that Ann was able to flip the light switch was surely relevant to her doing so. She would not have flipped the switch if she had not been able to, and would not have been able to if, for instance, her fingers had been glued together, or she had found herself suddenly paralysed. Of course, in most everyday contexts, an explanation of someone’s flipping a switch won’t mention their ability to do so. But then in most everyday contexts, any explanation that we actually gave of someone’s flipping a switch (should one ever be sought) would hardly need to mention both what the person wanted and what they believed. We leave out the obvious. And, among the most obvious things, which there is ordinarily no need to mention, are what we think of as background conditions. An example from another area would be this. We explain why there was a fire by saying that there was a short-circuit, and we don’t mention the presence of oxygen; yet the presence of oxygen—a background condition—was surely relevant causally to the fire’s starting. If the fire had started in the absence of oxygen, there would have been a sort of magic. Equally it would be a sort of magic if someone’s intentionally doing something were consequential merely on their having a desire and a belief. See further (Gibbons 2001).

But why mention abilities? It might be thought that, from the fact that someone did something, it simply follows that she was able to do it. If so, a

\[^1\] Elsewhere I have distinguished the claim that reason-explanations are causal from a central contention of the standard story—that reasons are causes; and I have argued that Davidson’s causalist arguments support only the former claim. It is only this claim upon which I rely here. One might say that my concern with causality in what follows is a concern with causal explanation. See e.g. Hornsby 1995.
person’s ability could hardly belong in a properly causal account of their doing the thing. But actually to say that someone is able to do something is not to speak merely of the possibility of their doing it. Where ‘a can Φ’ attributes an ability to a, it tells us more than that it can be true that a Φs. This is shown in the fact, for instance, that we are reluctant to attribute an ability to do something to someone who does it only by sheer fluke. A person who scores a bullseye with the first dart she ever throws probably lacked the ability to score bullseyes. Arguably there is a sense of ‘is able to’ according to which, so long as ‘Φ’ is instantiated by a verb of action, one is able to Φ only if one’s Φ-ing can be one’s intentionally Φ-ing.

Philosophers who are keen to tell a story of agency in terms of beliefs might say that even though the introduction of abilities seems to bring new explanatory material onto the scene, talk of abilities can actually be reduced to talk of beliefs. They may think that we can record all of the facts about what Ann was able to do which were relevant to her acting as she did by mentioning further beliefs she had. There are three problems about this, however. Looking at these problems will start to show how abilities fit in.

The first problem stems from the fact that beliefs may be false. Ann’s belief that she could turn on the light by flipping the switch belongs in an account of Ann’s turning on the light only if it is true. Certainly it might be that Ann would have tried to turn on the light even if she had falsely believed that the light switch she flipped was the one she needed to flip. But the light’s going on will ensue from Ann’s flipping the switch, so that Ann will actually have turned on the light, only if she was right about how to turn it on. If attributing beliefs to agents is to do such work in a causal story as might be done by attributing abilities, then accounts of acting would need to include, for each belief, a matter of particular fact—to the effect that the belief was true. Ann turned on the light because of a desire she had, and because she believed that she could do so by flipping the switch and believed that she could flip the switch by moving her finger and so on, and actually she could turn on the light by flipping that switch and actually she could flip that switch by moving her finger. The explanation we should usually give, which speaks directly to Ann’s success and not merely to her attempt, omits these matters of actual fact. And surely the usual explanation, which has no need to mention Ann’s various beliefs, can be at least as illuminating.

A second problem about giving beliefs a general role of the sort that abilities might play in action-explanation is familiar. It is what leads to the idea that there must be something basic that the agent does on the occasion
of any action. A whole series of things may need to be believed to get something done—that one can do THIS by doing THAT, that one can do THAT by doing THE OTHER, and that one can do THE OTHER by doing .. , and .. . The links in the ‘by’-chain here are more and more basic things the agent does, so that, for instance, if one intentionally does THIS by doing THAT, then THAT is more basic than THIS. (If Ann turned on the light inten-tionally by flipping the switch intentionally, then flipping the switch is more basic than turning on the light, for instance.2) But there is a potential regress here, which it must be possible to halt. Unless these ‘by’-chains come to an end, an agent will require indefinitely many beliefs about means in order to do anything whatever. Thus there must be some things—at the end of these ‘by’-chains, as it were—which are done without beliefs to the effect that they are done by doing such and such. These are things which we may be inclined to say that agents are simply able to do. They are the teleologically basic things in the terminology of (Hornsby 1980).

Now for the third problem about supposing that beliefs could do the same explanatory work as abilities. Consider once again the simple example of turning on the light. It is natural to think that Ann lacks the ability to do this unless she is able to take the necessary steps to get the light on. Perhaps, before she flips the light switch, Ann has to get up from her seat, walk across the room, and raise her arm so that her finger can be in touch with the switch. And if she is not able to do these things—to take the steps—, then she is not able to turn the light on. These steps are kept out of the picture when the belief-desire theorist treats Ann’s turning on the light as a punctuate occurrence, and attributes beliefs in explanation of Ann’s turning on the light by saying, for instance ‘She believes that she can flip the switch by moving her finger’. But they do belong in an everyday account. For if Ann was in the process of taking the steps needed for her to get the light on and was asked what she was now doing, her answer could perfectly well be ‘Turning on the light’.

This last point might be thought to show only that further beliefs need to be brought in. An explanation would have no need to advert to Ann’s abilities in the present example if it mentioned (a) her beliefs about what steps she needed to take to turn on the light, and (b) her beliefs about how to carry out each of the needed steps. But however that may be, the exam-

2 When the belief-desire theorists’ conception of reasons informs a definition of what is more basic than what, the definition needs to be relativized to occasions of action: see (Hornsby 1980) for some details.
ple draws attention to an unnoticed complexity in the idea of doing one thing by doing another. There are two different sorts of case in which a conjunction of things constitutes an intended means of doing something else—two sorts of case in which an agent whose intended means of Φing are to Ψ and to Χ. In one sort of case, the agent intentionally (Φ-s by Ψ-ing) and intentionally (Ψ-s by Χ-ing). In the other sort of case, the agent intentionally Φs by (Ψ-ing and Χ-ing). We have a case of the first sort when Ann’s turning on the light is thought of as a simple, punctuate occurrence. Then a single action is taken to have a series of effects (her finger’s movement, the switch’s flipping, the light’s going on). We have a case of the second sort when Ann’s turning on the light is thought of as encompassing the various steps which put her in a position to flip the light switch. Then there is no single ‘by’-chain corresponding to it. For in respect of each of the components of her turning on the light, which now include the steps she takes, we can ask ‘What beliefs of Ann explain her doing that?’.

Here we are asking about things that are compositionally more basic.

The simple account of basic action is suited to the sort of examples that recur in action theory (like punctuately turning on a light); and it is not immediately fitted to cases where a compositional notion of basicness has application even before the simple account can be put to work. When we think realistically about actual human agents, cases of the latter sort are rife. It isn’t merely that agents’ achieving things can sometimes be thought of as encompassing the steps they take to achieve them: many of the things that agents do are obviously composite. Consider making an omelette. We know that one cannot do this without breaking eggs. But there are a whole series of other things that one must also do intentionally—find the eggs and a bowl, whisk, etc. etc.. If we are to have an idea of the basic things someone did when she made an omelette, then we should need to decompose: we should need to isolate the various steps that were taken intentionally, so that we could attend to the ‘by’-chains in respect of each. Insofar as a persons’s beliefs are explanatory of her Φ-ing, her beliefs in respect of each of the things that she believes make up her Φ-ing must belong in an explanatory account.

Examples could obviously be multiplied. Think of a narrative which tells one in a natural way about what some person did over the course of, say, a few hours. Among the things in the narrative, there will be activities in which the person engaged—travelling to work, conversing with someone, composing a piece of writing, as it might be. Many of the things the person is said to have done (whether or not they are naturally brought un-
der the head of activities) will be composite, and composite not merely in having sub-components, but in having among the sub-components things in respect of which the agent had beliefs and which she intentionally did.

The beliefs of an agent which we shall now think of as explanatory of acting include beliefs about things in the immediate environment upon which they act and with which they interact—beliefs acquired perceptually, which may be very short-lived. One believes, for instance, that the ’bus is there—at a place which one now moves towards in order to step onto the bus. Here we see an explanatory role for abilities which beliefs alone could never play. The ability someone has, to get home from work, for instance, ensures that they acquire and deploy appropriate beliefs en route. Someone who has this ability is eo ipso able to keep track, and stay in control: without perceptual and cognitive capacities, she couldn’t do the various things she needs to do in the course of making her way home.

Human agents participate not only in once-off actions, but also in activities. And they are able so to do.

2. Knowledge, Abilities and Knowing How to

When abilities are allowed a place in the explanation of action, it becomes clear how narrowly focused are the explanations from agents’ reasons given in the standard story. I said that it would be a sort of magic if someone’s intentionally doing something were consequential merely on their having a desire and a belief. And of course we know that reason-explanations succeed only on the assumption that agents are possessed of various capacities. Some such capacities, such as that which human agents arguably have for self-determining choice, are extremely generic in their scope, and might be exercised on a wide range of occasions. By contrast, the beliefs introduced when an agent’s reasons for doing something on a particular occasion are stated may be quite specific. Abilities are explanatory states which operate at an intermediate level of generality as it were. So too, as we shall see now, do some states of knowledge.

We saw that only true beliefs will be mentioned in an account of action if it tells one what the agent actually, successfully did. And it can then seem plausible that when an agent’s believing that they can Φ by Ψ-ing is taken to explain their acting, their knowing that they can Φ by Ψ-ing explains it at least as well. At any rate, let us assume that an account of what is basic could be framed in terms of the need to halt a regress not of belief but of knowledge. Thus: whenever someone Φs intentionally, there must be
some thing or things they do for which no piece of knowledge on the pattern of ‘I Φ by — -ing’ is needed—some thing or things which they are simply able to do.³ We can now raise a question about how explanations from abilities relate to explanations in terms of knowledge.

Start with the simple case. Ann’s knowing the location of the relevant light switch had no bearing on whether Ann was able to flip the switch, but it did ensure that she was able to turn on the light that she wanted to. In knowing the whereabouts of the switch, Ann knew of a way to turn it on. Ann’s knowledge enabled her intentionally to turn on that light. More generally: knowing a way to do something may enable one to do the thing. Insofar as knowing a way to do something is knowing how to do it, we find here a connection between ability and knowing how to.⁴

Some philosophers say that knowing how to do something is ‘in one sense’ having the ability to do it: e.g. (Rosefeldt 2004).) Others have wanted quite generally to equate knowing-how-to with having-the-ability-to; e.g. (Noe 2005). But there are counterexamples to such an equation, for instance in (Stanley and Williamson 2001) and (Snowdon 2004). The matter is complicated and controversial, in part because of the enormous context-sensitivity of ascriptions of ability and inability, which makes stable intuitions about cases hard to come by.⁵ Still, it seems very plausible that someone’s knowing how to Φ is not explained by saying that they have the

³ Relativization to occasions of action (mentioned in the previous footnote) is no longer apt. We are concerned now not with a particular action and the question what beliefs/knowledge were exercised on its occasion, but rather with a question about agents’ standing knowledge, which might be exercised on one occasion or another.

⁴ In confining attention to knowledge how to, I set to one side the view of (Hyman 1999) according to which knowledge quite generally is a kind of ability. Hyman bases his view on the claim (H): ‘A knows that p if and only if the fact that p can be a’s reason for doing something.’ (H) is a fundamental claim about the connection between knowledge and reason, which has application beyond the topic of agency. It seems to me to be true and important. But I have a doubt about the view to which Hyman himself is drawn in consequence of endorsing (H): see next footnote.

⁵ Another factor which can prevent a clear view of cases is that we most readily make judgments about what agents ‘are able’ to do, rather than about what they ‘have the ability’ to do, and the judgement that an agent at t has the ability to Φ seems less demanding than a judgment that the agent at t is able to Φ. It may be that we need to distinguish between (on the one hand) truths about what an agent ‘is able to’ do which correspond to their possessing abilities, and (on the other) truths about what an agent ‘is able to’ do which derive from what is possible. With such a distinction in place, we might be in a position to accept Hyman’s important claim (claim (H) of the previous note) without taking Hyman’s view that knowledge (generally) just is a kind of ability.
ability to \(\Phi\), but that their having an ability to \(\Phi\) might be explained by saying that they know how to. And it is plausible too that an ability to \(\Phi\) requires the ability to do all the things needed for one to \(\Phi\), whereas knowledge how to \(\Phi\) can be possessed in the absence of an ability to do all the things. So we should expect to find counterexamples to the equation. We should expect, for instance, that someone who lacks such bodily capacities as are needed for them to \(\Phi\)—and who thus lacks the ability to \(\Phi\)—could nonetheless possess, or retain, their knowledge how to \(\Phi\). And indeed many of the examples in the literature are of agents who lose certain abilities needed to do something but who nonetheless retain knowledge of how to do the thing. A different sort of example, which also tells against the equation, is got from the case of a person who knows how to perform fifty press-ups in sequence (she knows how to do one, and then another, and how to count to fifty), but who, for want of sufficient strength and stamina, is always unable to, and lacks the ability to, perform fifty press-ups in sequence. Knowledge how to \(\Phi\) does not suffice for the ability to \(\Phi\).

One might attempt to use the language of basicness to record a connection that is emerging here between ability to and knowledge how to. Knowledge of how to do things explains one’s having such abilities as it may equip one with. And knowledge of how to do something may equip one with the ability to do something provided that one is able to do the needed more basic things. The basic things, we saw, are things which we are apt to say that the agent is simply able to do. And we noticed that in a realistic account, we should sometimes have to decompose the things that agents do into components to uncover basic things. So the proposal might be that what renders one able to do all the various things that one is able to do are, on the one hand, abilities to do basic things, and, on the other hand, knowledge of how do to other things—on the basis of the basic, as it were. The latter sort of knowledge will then take both the form of ‘I can \(\Phi\) by \(\Psi\)-ing’, ‘I can \(\Psi\) by \(X\)-ing’, .. , and also, in order to allow for the sort of compositional basicness we encountered, the form sometimes of ‘I can \(\Phi\) by (\(\Psi\)-ing and \(X\)-ing and ..).

This proposal might seem to be congenial to those theorists who wish to identify actions always with bodily movements. They may want to say that all that we can basically do is move our bodies, and that our states of mind confer on us abilities to do all the other things we do. In fact, however, nothing in the line of thought which leads to the idea of basicness suggests that the basic thing an agent does is always to move their body in some way. And we have only to think about bodily activities to appreciate that
making simple bodily movements is not always basic. Consider walking. No doubt when someone walks they must lift up one leg one moment, drop it the next, then lift up the other leg and drop it, and so on. But presumably it is not as a result of knowing that they must now lift up their right leg that they lift it up now. Insofar as there are things that an agent is simply able to do, walking itself is surely one of them. (Notice that the things one is simply able to do are not to be equated with the simple things one is able to do. Walking is susceptible of decomposition; but knowing how to walk is not a matter of knowing how walking is composed.) Again, someone may know how to carry out complicated dance routines. They may have had to learn exactly what motions one must make to carry out a particular routine, but be able now to carry it out without having retained any detailed knowledge about which sequence of motions one must make in order to do so. And even if they have retained the detailed knowledge, they may not exercise it as they dance. The question whether their dancing is basic for them is not a question about how much they happen to know about what exactly they do, but a question about what knowledge they exercise as they dance, what knowledge actually relevant to their doing what actually they do.

In other examples, the body and its movements appear to have no place in an account. Consider speaking. Most of us have next to no idea of how we move the various bits of our vocal apparatus when we produce the linguistic sounds we do. We can learn something out about this; but if we do, we acquire new knowledge, not just an ability to say something that we had known all along. The example of speech shows not only that the body (the mouth etc. as it would be in the present case) does not come into what is basic. It shows also that decomposition of what is done doesn’t always take one to more basic things. Consider that nearly every speaker of English knows how to produce the sentences ‘Dogs run’ and ‘Cats run’; but that very few English speakers are aware that the sounds they make corresponding to the letter ‘s’ are different in each of these strings. So although we can allow that speakers know how to pronounce each of the two sounds (those which complete the words ‘dogs’ and ‘cats’), the knowledge which they exercise when they speak is not exhausted by their knowing how to make each sound. Those who know how to speak follow the rules of phonology; but very few people can state those rules. Perhaps the ordinary speaker knows only this: how to produce such series of sounds as one needs to produce in order to say the things one wants to say. In that case, producing the actual series of sounds one does will be basic.
There is, then, a conception of the *basic* that can be elicited by reference to the lack of a certain sort of knowledge: a point is reached at which knowledge of the form ‘I can Φ by Ψ-ing’ is not attributable to the agent. The agent is simply able to Φ. But still, basic things would seem to be things that agents *do* know how to do.⁶

The lack of a certain sort of propositional knowledge in respect of basic things may encourage the conclusion that some *knowledge how to* is of a special, non-propositional sort. But we are not yet forced to that conclusion. For it might be that there is knowledge how to Φ which, although it is propositional, is not conveyed with something reportable on the pattern of ‘I can Φ by — -ing’. If allowance could be made for, as it were, inarticulable knowledge how to Φ—for knowledge *how to* which is not expressible with instances of the ‘by — -ing’ scheme—, then we could accommodate the basic without appealing to non-propositional knowledge. Well, inarticulable knowledge in this sense is something introduced in a recent account of ‘knowing how to’—as I shall now explain. I shall argue that although the account appears to make room for the idea of things an agent is simply able to do, it is not ultimately satisfactory.

### 3. Knowing How to

The account is due to Stanley and Williamson. They say that *knowing how* should be subsumed within a general account of knowledge constructions, which deals also with *knowing whether*, *knowing when*, *where*, *what*, and so on. Knowing whether, or knowing when, or where, or what, would seem always to be a matter of knowing the answer to a question—a question concerning whether or when, or where, or what. If you know where Bob lives, you know the answer to the question ‘Where does Bob live?’; if you know what Lynne ate for dinner, you know the answer to the question ‘What did Lynne eat for dinner?’ But then again, if you know how the conference is organized, you know the answer to the question ‘How is the conference organized?’. 

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⁶ Some may reject not only the sufficiency of knowledge how to — for the ability to —, but also the necessity. They may claim that the agent does not know how to do some basic things. (They may even hold that the force of the claim that we are *simply able* [say] to raise our arms is that this raising our arms is something we do not know how to do.) Intuitions vary. But most people will agree that there are plenty of things (even if these don’t include the making of simple bodily movements) which we *do* know how to do, but for which we lack knowledge of propositions that fit the ‘by — -ing’ scheme.
ference organized?’ The point is that the English word ‘how’, although it doesn’t begin with ‘wh’, still introduces a question. Thus in all of these examples, there appears to be knowledge which is propositional but which is not ascribed using the construction ‘know that’.

The present concern of course is ‘know how’ followed by an infinitive (‘knowing how to ..’). But again the construction is found with the interrogatives ‘whether’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘what’, etc. You may know where to go to find Bill, or what to give Lucy for her Birthday. In Stanley and Williamson’s view, the infinitival constructions can always be assimilated to constructions of the previous sort. When an infinitive follows the interrogative particle, there is an empty pronominal element, written ‘PRO’, in the subject position of the verb; and it is obligatorily linked to the subject of the whole sentence. So ‘A knows how to Φ’ is written ‘a knows how PRO to Φ’ and may be thought to say (roughly) that A knows how A Φs.

Granted that knowing how to Φ is knowing a way to Φ, we reach:

A knows how to Φ if and only if there is some (contextually relevant) way w such that A knows that w is a way for A to Φ.

At this point, we see how the inarticulability of some knowledge how to might be accommodated. According to Stanley and Williamson, ways are properties of token events. And it is possible to make reference to such properties without providing a specification of them: one can exploit the presence of samples. So just as you can tell someone what shade of colour your curtains are by pointing to something of the same shade as them and using a demonstrative, saying ‘THAT is their colour’, so you could tell someone how A Φ-s, by pointing to a token event which is someone’s Φ-ing and saying ‘THAT is a way for A to Φ’. There is no need then to resort to an instance of such a locution as ‘The way to Φ is by Ψ-ing’ in order to say how someone Φ-s. One can make use of the device of deferred ostension, and say ‘That is a way’.

This does not yet account for ‘A knows how to Φ’. If it were enough for A to know how to ride a bicycle (say) that A should know about some way of riding a bicycle employed by B that it’s a way to ride a bicycle, then one

7 In order to keep things relatively simple, I shall let ‘contextually relevant’ take care of itself. Also I shall ride over two distinctions which Stanley and Williamson make which are essential to a complete account: (a) between cases where knowing how to do something is knowing a way to do it and cases where it is knowing the way to do it, (b) between cases where knowing a way to do it is knowing how it can be done and cases where it is knowing how it should be done.
could learn how to ride a bicycle oneself simply by looking at someone else doing so. But of course one couldn’t. In order to account for ‘A knows how to Φ’, where this attributes the distinctive knowledge possessed by someone who can herself ride a bicycle, Stanley and Williamson introduce an idea of propositions being known under *practical modes of presentation*. Their claim is that ‘There’s a conventional connection between constructions that embed instances of the “how to Φ” schema and practical modes of presentations of ways’. So when A is said to know how to ride a bicycle, the proposition knowledge of which is ascribed to A and which contains a way of riding a bicycle, is ascribed, not under a demonstrative mode of presentation, but under a *practical* one. Stating the account generally, we reach (KHT):

\[
X \text{ knows how to } \Phi \text{ if and only if for some (contextually relevant) way } w \text{ which is a way for } X \text{ to } \Phi, \text{ there is a practical mode of presentation } m, \text{ such that } X \text{ knows under } m \text{ that } w \text{ is a way for her to } \Phi. 
\]

Those who are doubtful about the assumption that ‘know how to V’ is always a case of ‘know + how PRO V’ may be suspicious of these practical modes of presentation. Suspicions on this score are voiced in (Rosefeldt 2004) and (Koethe 2002). But my own suspicions are about the *ways* that come into Stanley and Williamson’s account. And my objection takes off even before the practical modes are introduced. In order to reach the objection, we need now to think about these putative ways, the things supposedly denoted with demonstratives.

To start with we need to be clear that the fact that someone Φs in some way doesn’t suffice to show that she knows how to Φ. We can see this with an example. A portion of Beth’s website is security protected, so that a password is needed to get into it. Marina thinks that she knows the password, and accordingly types some eight-letter string at the relevant prompt. Actually, however, Marina was lucky enough to have entered the website during the very brief period when *any* 8 letter string would have succeeded in getting her in. During that period, Beth was altering her security settings, and had had to switch them off. If you ask Marina how to get into Beth’s website, then she will give you a wrong answer: she doesn’t know how to do this. But of course Marina *thinks* she knows how to get into the website. She might say “There’s a way I used, and I know that it was a way for me to get in, because I actually did get in that way.” Marina’s thinking that she knows how to get in is based upon her apparently, temporarily, satisfying the right-hand-side of (KHT). But Marina is wrong, so that she doesn’t satisfy the left-hand-side. What the example shows is that in order
to have knowledge how to do something, it is not enough that you should at some time do the thing by luck or by accident. If you know how to do something, then you are equipped not just with any old way of doing it, but with some reliable way, so that you might do the thing in that way on a variety of occasions and on each occasion as a result of knowing how to do it. The ways that belong in an account of knowing how to, then, are only those ways such that their being known by A to be a way for A to do something can constitute A’s knowledge of how to do the thing.

I shall now present two examples which suggest that the device of deferred ostension cannot serve to identify such ways. In each example, there is a pair of cases.

Suppose that Kim exercises her knowledge how to type when she types the word ‘Afghanistan’, which, let us suppose, she has never typed before. You can point at Kim as she types the word, and say ‘That’s a way for Kim to type’. Inasmuch as she has never typed the word before, one naturally thinks that you are demonstrating a way of typing that Kim has never before deployed. (Not that it isn’t a fine way to type the word ‘Afghanistan’; it would serve well in the future.) It might be said that deferred ostension can somehow ensure that your ‘that’ latches onto a more generic way than one we think about when we focus on the fact that Kim has typed only the particular word on this occasion. Perhaps your ‘that’ refers to a way for Kim to type that has served her often in the past. But now imagine Jo who has not learnt to type, but who has been told that ‘Afghanistan’ is a good word to start by practising. Jo has typed ‘Afghanistan’ a few hundred times, and he does it impeccably using all the right fingers, even though he has not yet learnt where most of the letters on the keyboard are located. There may then be no discriminable difference between Jo’s typing and Kim’s. That means that if it were allowed that your demonstrative could, by deferred ostension, make reference to the way of typing such that Kim knows how to type in virtue of her typing in that way, then we should have to say that Jo too knows how to type. But he doesn’t. He knows only how to type ‘Afghanistan’, and he has a lot to learn.

The other example is Clare, who is pruning the roses. Clare is an excellent gardener who knows how to do this. As she cuts with the secateurs, you say ‘That’s a way for Clare to prune roses’. Then as she is examining a bit of a plant in order to determine where next to cut, you say again ‘That’s a way for Clare to prune roses’. If you pick out token events with each of your successive ‘that’s, then the events you demonstrate have extraordinarily little in common. Clare’s hand is in motion when you first say ‘that’, as
she cuts; when you say ‘that’ a second time, her brow is furrowed as she contemplates the next step. But each of these samples of rose pruning ought to serve equally well in displaying the way that Clare, who knows how to prune roses, knows.

If the demonstratives in these examples are to work as the account of knowing how to requires, then each must denote a way of Φ-ing such that its being known by the relevant agent to be a way to Φ is a case of the agent’s knowing how to Φ. But in the first example, of typing ‘Afghanistan’, we have two different pieces of knowing how (Kim’s knowing how to type, and Jo’s knowing how to type ‘Afghanistan’) and only one such way (the way they both typed). In the second example, we have only one piece of knowing how to (Clare’s knowing how to prune roses) but two evidently different ways (a way of moving her hand, a way of determining what to do next). Deferred ostension evidently cannot do the work required of it here. It could only work if wherever a person knew how to do something, some single event of their doing it was a manifestation of their knowing how to. But the things we know how to do aren’t like that.

4. Conclusion: Knowing How To and Philosophy of Action

In criticizing Stanley and Williamson as I have, I do not take the side of the many philosophers who have followed Gilbert Ryle (1949, Ch.2) and assumed that knowledge how to is a species of knowledge distinct from knowledge that. They have had an eye on a question that can crop up in philosophy of action without taking any account of questions in semantics. Their assumption is cast in doubt, however, as soon as one notices that a person who knows how to do something may know the answer to the question ‘How do you do it?’; she may be able to give an answer to this question in words, and, in so doing, articulate a proposition she knows. If a case is really to be made for some distinctive species of know-how, then it cannot depend simply on the presence of the two constructions ‘know how to’ and ‘know that’. If a case is to be made, it would be the one that we uncover when we think about basic action. The case then is a strong one: there are plenty of examples in which a person has knowledge how to Φ

8 Sometimes it is said, and/or said that Ryle said, that knowledge how is a species distinct from knowledge that. But I take it that any such claim intended by Ryle concerned knowledge how to. Or it may have concerned know-how (where no sentence follows the ‘how’ of ‘know-how’: one has know-how in respect of some subject).
but appears not to know how she ϕs—not to know anything which, if it were said, would be an answer to the question how she ϕ-s.

The specifically practical modes of presentation invoked by Stanley and Williamson might have provided a distinctive species of know-how, albeit that this would have been a sub-species of propositional knowledge. But I have argued that Stanley and Williamson’s account faces a problem. The problem is that the account requires identities between demonstrable ways of ϕ-ing (on the one hand) and such ways of ϕ-ing as go hand in hand with knowing how to Φ (on the other hand); and there are not such identities. The examples that I have used to illustrate this might be thought to show that quantification over ways is non-objectual; and then my objection to Stanley and Williamson will be ontological au fond. But however that may be, one would need a positive account of knowing how in order to sustain any view of how talk of ways is rightly understood. Perhaps ways have no place in an account of such knowledge how to as is not propositional knowledge. Perhaps ‘how’ following ‘know’ does not always introduce ways. Then we might understand the claim that someone is simply able to do something as conveying that (although they do know how to do it) there is nothing which is their way of doing it. But whatever the answers are to the questions in semantics, I doubt that we can answer them without having an eye to the metaphysical questions to which philosophy of action leads.

When ways are denoted by such demonstratives as Stanley and Williamson introduce, ways are properties of token events. The problem then arises because a person’s knowledge of how to do things informs more than token actions. The problem might go away if all of human agency could be recounted by speaking of series of token events. But the examples of things people do which lead to the introduction of a compositional notion of basicness make it plain that the abilities with which knowledge how to may provide an agent are not confined to abilities to produce token-events. As we saw, much human agency is made possible by people’s possession of capacities which ensure that they have standing abilities to engage in one or another activity. It might be claimed that activities, such as typing or pruning roses, simply consist, on occasion, in series of token events. The claim seems implausible. But even if this could be made plausible, no-one would think that activities consisted always of homogeneous

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9 For criticisms of Stanley and Williamson, presenting challenges to their views about the syntax and semantics of the relevant sentences, see (Rumfitt 2003).
series of such events. And it is the *variety* in the ways for someone to act which can display her knowledge of how to participate in some one activity which gives rise to the problem for Stanley and Williamson’s account.

It can hardly be an accident that, when Ryle made his case for thinking of knowledge-how-to differently from knowledge-that, he concentrated on activities—activities which included playing an instrument, pruning trees, tying a reef-knot, cooking a meal, swimming. The same sort of considerations that lead to seeing the inadequacies of an account of actions as belief-desire caused bodily movements (the “standard story”) would seem to serve to show that there is knowledge how to which is not propositional.

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Social Action, Collective Responsibility, and the Difficulties of Social Decision Making

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1. Social Action

Singing a duet together, dancing together, playing tennis or football together are paradigm cases of social or joint action. From one’s own point of view, social action involves being a member of a team, a company, a community, or a state, and it requires from us, as from all partaking individuals, not to act in a merely individually focused or egocentric manner, but to act like one team, one company, one community, or one state. The discussion of social action during the past 20 years has shown that social action cannot be described by or reduced to a sum of individually isolated acts, since social action consists of at least the following features essentially: (i) the single contributing acts need to be coordinated or mutually attuned to one another, (ii) the participants need to act cooperatively, i.e. they are required to mutually support one another, (iii) the single contributing acts need to be connectable, i.e. each contribution or move that is part of a joint action needs to be so brought forward that the other participants are able to react to that move in an appropriate manner, e.g. by taking up the relevant issue and proceeding from it, by merely agreeing to it, by modifying it, or by more or less explicitly rejecting it, (iv) there must be an interdependency of goals among the participants, and (v) there is an interdependency or meshing of motives and/or plans among the participants.

Two philosophically unhappy suggestions concerning social action, however, need to be avoided: firstly, the ontological postulation of a collective mind that somehow intends and directs group action (cf. Durkheim 1895, ch. 1, and Gilbert 1989), and secondly, the postulation of an infinitely layered common knowledge of the form "You know that I know that you know that ... I intend to do act A" that is supposed to be as-

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2 The term "connectable" originates from "anschlussfähig" in Luhmann 1984.
cribable to all partaking individuals such that it warrants the existence of a kind of "collective intention" (as initially suggested by Lewis 1969 and Schiffer 1972). To my mind, both postulations are not necessary and philosophically mistaken. To begin with, as regards the intentional aspect of social action, we simply do not need to establish a "collective mind" in order to explain joint action. Rather we merely need to introduce what Searle has called "collective intentions", i.e. mental states of each actively partaking participant that have the form:

I intend: We are doing a certain social action \( SA \) together, by means of me doing my part (i.e. action) \( A \) and by means of the others doing their parts \( A_n \).

Such an account meets the intuitively plausible requirements of methodo-
logical individualism, i.e. the presupposition that social action can be explained as the result of the action and interaction of individuals (cf. Elster 1989, 13).

The generation of an infinitely layered "common knowledge" appears to me to be a philosopher's invention that has been invoked to guarantee the success of any specific joint action. But, as a matter of fact, there is no such warrant: Social action is always in danger to fail just because, among other things being hindrances, some of its participants may always discontinue to do his or her share, for whatever good or bad reasons. Participants of a specific joint action can only hope that this will not happen because, firstly, each participant is interested to achieve his or her goal that is part of the set of interdependent goals, and secondly, each participant considers him- or herself obliged to do his or her share until the joint action will be finished. In other words, the participants of any social action need to mutually trust in one another so that (i) they all are indeed interested in actually achieving the interdependent goals and that (ii) they consider themselves to be committed to do their share until the joint action will come to a successful end, unless the group decides to quit the joint action.

Accounts of social action typically concentrate on joint action of socially equivalent participants. Yet, there are many cases in our social life that involve a social hierarchy, e.g. within the military forces, within a company, or even when a family acts together where the parents still need to care for the younger children. Moreover, social action often involves competition such that the social action's participants are acting as opponents, e.g. in playing tennis, or in business action at the market. To my mind, these cases can easily be accounted for by the introduction of the no-
tion of a role (I owe the concept of a role to Mead 1934, Goffman 1959, and Popitz 1980). I think that Wittgenstein, when he is describing language-games and practices, taught us to look at the roles that can be played according to some rules: being a speaker or a hearer, being a builder or an assistant, being a mother, a son, a commander, a teacher, a student, a master, an apprentice, a tennis player etc. In general, a role is a certain position or function in a network of other roles within a certain practice, and the roles may be defined or shaped by the constitutive rules of the relevant practice (the term "practice" is defined in Kober 2005a, 76f). Some roles, like being the president of a certain state or company, are often explicitly codified in detail in the constitution or some other kind of regulation of the respective practice or organization.

However, a definition or codification of a role may leave many things open: not all possible cases are regulated in advance. Additionally, it also depends on the very person how exactly he or she plays his or her role in the respective contexts. Nevertheless, a role or a function often comes with certain rights and obligations, that is, the description of roles of a specific practice includes an explanation of how normativity enters the respective parts of social life. A role enables the person who is playing it to act in ways that are not available to others (e.g. the role of being a president who is able to make decisions that concern the entire organization), but it also imposes commitments or obligations on the role-player (a president has to make decisions for the group's benefit). The rights and obligations of the respective roles may also be codified in the respective regulations.

The fact that there are groups like big cities or nations that are so large that its members are not acquainted to one another also needs to be accounted for. Nations may act as a unit and may, for example, establish public transport or require tax payments, they may be organizing world soccer tournaments, or they may declare war. All these cases come along with some rights for and some duties of the citizens of a nation. Usually, however, there also happen to be some free riders who do not fulfil the commitments of their role (like being a citizen), and there always happen to be some ignorant who miss or lack understanding of what is currently going on. The following account of necessary conditions of social action will therefore contain the phrase "(almost) all members," instead of the simplified expression "all members":


Necessary conditions of successful social action:
Members $M_i$ of a group $G$ are carrying out a social action $SA$ in context $C$ only if the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) **Contextual Conditions:**
(a) Due to their own understanding of context $C$ and their own acting competency, (almost) all members $M_i$ of $G$ agree on being more or less voluntarily\(^3\) involved in $C$ and in a common practice $P$; this understanding includes that (almost) all $M_i$ believe that they are members of $G$.
(b) The competency of $P$ includes, firstly, that (almost) all $M_i$ know that a specific social action $SA$ can be carried out in $P$, and secondly, that (almost) all $M_i$ know about (almost) all roles $R$ that are constituted by the rules of $P$, including the rights and obligations that belong to the respective $R$s.
(c) (Almost) all $M_i$ know which role $R_{Mi}$ they are taking charge of, and (almost) all $M_i$ know (almost) all the other roles that are adopted by the other $M_i$ of $G$ within $P$.
(d) (Almost) all $M_i$ of $G$ are voluntarily carrying out those acts $A_{Mi}$ that are specific to their roles $R_{Mi}$ within $C$, trusting that (almost) all other members $M_i$ of $G$ will also carry out their acts $A_{Mi}$ within $C$.

(2) **Collective Intention:**
On the basis of their own plans or motives $MOT_i$ in $C$, (almost) all $M_i$ of $G$ voluntarily intend:
We are carrying out social action $SA$ by means of (almost) all $M_i$ carrying out their own respective acts $A_{Mi}$ that are possible for or required by the respective roles $R_{Mi}$ in a mutually attuned, cooperative, and connectable way, such that the interdependent goals $IG_{Mi}$ are likely to be achieved.

(3) **Overall stance of the participants:**
(Almost) all $M_i$ of $G$ are acting on the assumption that *de facto* (almost) all $M_i$ believe the conditions (1) and (2) to be satisfied. Yet, they assume *de jure* and *de more* that these conditions are indeed satisfied by all members $M_i$ of $G$.

\(^3\) The "voluntary"-condition is meant to exclude coerced cases of group action, e.g. if someone obeys the orders of a bank-robber who carries a loaded gun in his hands.
2. Collective Responsibility

Condition (3) is so designed that it can account for collective responsibility. Of course, it might be possible that a certain group is organized by strict leadership, such that one person can meaningfully hold: "Whatever happens, I will be responsible for anything that concerns our group." But this is rarely the case, for it amounts to political dictatorship or to a family patriarchy. Intuitively speaking, responsibility concerning group action rather seems to be somehow distributed over all group members.

Condition (3) assumes a distinction between causal, legal and moral responsibility (cf. Rescher 2003, ch. 11). An example may help to illustrate this point: Imagine a group of teenagers playing soccer in a courtyard, and then, of course, a window gets broken. Causally responsible for the broken window is the player who actually kicked the ball. But the whole group is morally responsible, for there were no window-breaking kick if no match were played by the group. It is a case of collective guilt. That is to say that one can be morally entangled with guilt although one did not do anything wrong on one's own, i.e. although one is not causally responsible. But one can nevertheless be guilty just because one is a member of a certain group within which something wrong or evil has been committed, or whose activity resulted in a guilty state of affairs. Yet, it depends on the legal regulations that are in force in the respective context and that regulate who is required to pay for a new window. It might be the case that merely the kicker and the owner of the ball were legally found guilty, such that the other members of the group are set free. In other words: Causal, legal, and moral guilt need not be co-extensive. – In what follows, I will only account for moral responsibility, since this is the most interesting case from a philosophical point of view.

Crudely speaking, responsibility means from the first-person-point of view that a person can be proud of his or her deed or feel ashamed of it, and from the third-person-point of view, it means that someone may be praised or blamed for a deed. Praise may result in some forms of appreciation that may come along with preferential treatment of the praised person, blame may result in severe sanctions. My claim is:

*Moral responsibility* with respect to social action $SA$ of group $G$ is distributed among the members of $G$ according to the roles they are taking charge of within context $C$ and practice $P$.

That is to say: If a company (like the pharma producer *Bayer*, Germany) had sold medicine (*Lipobay*) that, as it turned out years later, may cause
fatal side-effects, the main part of the moral guilt is (i) on the side of the Director or Chief Executive Officer of the whole company who was in charge when the decision to sell the product was made, and (ii) on the side of the person who was the head of the research team at that time. But even the present Chief Executive Officer, the gate-keeper of the company's parking-lot, or the members of the cleaning-group, if they somehow identify themselves with their working for that company, may feel entangled with guilt. They are, of course, not causally or legally guilty, but collective guilt is a moral phenomenon that spreads out through the whole group. (That is why Germans of my age - I was born 1959 - even today, i.e. 2006, may still feel somehow guilty for what happened in Nazi Germany. Even though I am not causally guilty, I feel entangled with guilt, because I grew up in a social context that was shaped by people who themselves grew up and were educated in Nazi Germany: my grandparents, my parents, my teachers, politicians, journalists, judges, etc. And, of course, Germany today is, in one way or another, still historically, culturally, and legally connected to Nazi Germany – though the affects, it should be admitted, are getting weaker and weaker in the course of time.)

3. Decision-Making

Decision theories that originate from some economically shaped background usually rest on a highly restricted context: They assume that the objectives are clear, that the means to achieve them are known, and that we are able to exactly calculate the costs of each goal that can be achieved by its specific means at its particular costs. Taking these issues for granted, the accounts of the decision theories of the mentioned kind advise us to make our calculations and then develop lists of preferences. To be sure, these theories are not false, but human life is usually more complicated or less clear than these decision theoretic accounts presuppose. Even individuals often do not know at which goals they could or should aim, they hardly know all the possible ways and means to achieve them, and least of all they are unable to calculate all the (e.g. moral) costs.

Prima facie, one may be inclined to think that collective decision making is similarly distributed among members of a group as collective responsibility is. For one may think that those who are considered responsible for some specific deeds also make the decisions. If at all, this may be true concerning legal responsibility, since legal responsibility may be tied to those who are the legally responsible decision-makers. The co-exten-
siveness of collective responsibility and collective decision-making may also be true as regards groups that are ruled by a strong dictator or patriarch. For if a single person feels responsible for everything good or bad that concerns a group, this may be due to the fact that this very person makes all the relevant decisions. But again, such cases are rare.

To show some differences, I will now take a look on how a well structured, hierarchical group like the German Army organizes decision making. It is both a description of how decisions are indeed made, and a prescription of how decisions should be made – under standard circumstances. It will become obvious that decisions will be made at almost all levels of the hierarchy (cf. Diepenhorst 2006). (1) There are the political decisions made by the political government. Of course, the political government cannot freely decide whatever it wants, for it is embedded in and controlled by several other institutions according to the German constitution, and by international laws and treaties. (2) Following up the political decisions, there are the general strategic decisions made by the Minister of Defence together with the highest military command, often in conjunction with the NATO-commander. Already on this level, the decision-makers need to think about how the several aspects of the group acting need to be coordinated. (3) There are the overall tactical and operational decisions made by the general operational command. On this level, the very mission gets planned and designed, tactical orders are formulated and transmitted to the military forces that are actually engaged within the operational area. (4) There are the operational units that are actually required to carry out the orders on the operational area (e.g., in 2006, in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Lebanon, or Congo). These units are confronted with the peculiarities of the very operational area, e.g. with the specific natural environment (mountains, swamps, deserts), with the specific military situation and the current availability of weapons, with the actual political situation as well as the cultural views and values of the civilians, etc. The actual decisions made by the commanders of the operational units need to take all these aspects into account.

The success of a mission requires all decision-makers on all levels to reflect on the necessities and possibilities of the respective situation, and there is no strict manual, i.e. there are no rigid operational rules that can be followed blindly: The Heeresdienstvorschrift, i.e. the Regulation for the German Army, even declares: "Military leadership is an art. It is a creative activity that depends on character, competency, and mental powers. The doctrines of military leadership cannot be spelled out exhaustively. They
cannot be reduced to rigid formulas or strict regulations [...]" ("Truppenführer ist eine Kunst, eine auf Charakter, Können und geistiger Kraft beruhende schöpferische Tätigkeit. Ihre Lehren lassen sich nicht erschöpfend darstellen. Sie verträgt weder starre Formeln noch starre Regelungen [...]"; HDV 100/100, quoted from Diepenhorst 2006; italics by M.K.). The German Army, however, has a meta-rule of thumb: The more tactical or operational a task is, the more you can find your way along some given and spelled out tactical advices. Yet, the more strategic or even political a decision is, the lesser you can guide your decision along some rules. In this sense, military leadership remains an art, not a rule-governed technique.

Why is that so? To begin with, I will first concentrate on our individual acting and individual decision-making. I already mentioned that decision making usually does not consist in listing the obvious options, calculating their costs, and then encountering the correct decision. As a matter of fact, we are usually lacking a bird's eye view of the context we are in. That is to say: (1) We are often lacking relevant information and therefore feel required to make decisions on probabilities only (admittedly, there are models in decision-theory that can handle this). (2) We often do not merely have to decide among a list of preferences, we often rather need to acknowledge that there are, no matter which preferences we have, conventional, legal, religious, or moral obligations, that is, there are desire-independent reasons for action, as Searle (2001) calls them. (3) Tragedy may evolve if there are compelling, often desire-independent reasons demanding logically incompatible actions from you, that is, there might be situations where an agent is required to act, but each single option demands unbearable costs for the agent. (4) It is often not entirely clear what is involved in the natural as well as in the social or cultural context, that is, it is not apriorily clear what the boundaries of our decision-realms are; they are not simply given. (5) From this follows that we do not know any criterion that warrants our awareness of the complete list of all our options. (6) As already mentioned, it is difficult or even impossible to estimate the exact costs of all the options we have. (7) It is not the case that decisions are made at a specific point of time, and then the respective action will proceed in an unstoppable way; quite often, we make a decision (e.g. we aim at writing a dissertation), and then, in the course of time, we are assessing and reassessing how the project's progress is and what its costs are, sometimes by rearranging our values or developing new ones, and we may come to the rational decision to quit the whole project.
Keeping these considerations in mind, I am going to focus on social action and collective decision-making again. This time the example shall be the *management-decisions* that need to be made in order to reorganize a large company, that is, for example, reorganizing the company's administrative structure or designing new products and thereby changing the company's profile on the market (cf. Hanisch 2006). It is usually not the case that in a specific sudden moment, all participants within a company gain the insight that some things need to be changed. Such an insight rather develops gradually, i.e. it gradually evolves, for whatever reasons, on the side of a very few decision-makers, and it then also gradually evolves within the whole company by means of more or less informal communication. Therefore, more and more of the company's decision-makers develop a bias that some things should be changed. Some few of these decision-makers, not necessarily the highest ranks, will then explicitly refer to the situation in a meeting and will make one or two proposals of how to change the company's administrative structure or its orientation on the market. Some other co-workers will then make objections, while still others will agree in general, but they will nevertheless suggest to modify the initial proposals. Because of that, a long-lasting process of communication may start, and this may cause some changes.

Like in the military forces, decision-competency in a company depends on leadership on all levels and parts of the company: One needs to make the urgency of the changes clear, one needs to convince or at least persuade more than a *critical mass* within the top management, one needs to present a convincing vision and a realistic strategy to achieve it, one needs to communicate the convincing vision and the realistic strategy to many others in the company, then several people need to be officially empowered to start the changes, short-term goals need to be defined and must be achieved relatively quickly (so that critics will become silent and undecided work-fellows become motivated), new short-term goals need to be set up, long-term goals perhaps need to be readjusted, and so on. As already mentioned, one has to convince the colleagues or work-fellows on all these steps, and additionally, one needs to form coalitions that support the process. In order to form coalitions, one must be open for revising one's initial plans, and at the end of such a long-term process, the actual outcome may substantially deviate from the original vision. In retrospect, one usually cannot point to a specific single decision-maker that started the whole process because of a specific decision, and one certainly cannot point to a specific (sub-)set of work-fellows that are responsible for the outcome.
In sum, the considerations of this chapter illustrate that decision-making in a group may easily become *overcomplex* – and that is in particular: the development of the decision-processes that result in certain (social) actions are neither predictable nor can they be planned in every detail. Similar to a physical chaos that occurs if a physical system functions in so volatile a way that a minute difference in its initial conditions can make for a vast difference for the state that ensues, the process of decision-making within larger groups usually shows a *cognitive chaos* (as Rescher 2003, 85f calls it). A cognitive chaos "occurs whenever a minute variation in input information can produce great differences in its inferential consequences" (Rescher 2003, 86), and this is especially true if the process expands in time and therefore depends on every new decision-making.

Thus, from a philosophical point of view, there is *no descriptive theory possible* that accounts for how different groups actually develop decisions. In other words, we seem to be at the limits of our cognitive capacity when we are reflecting the decision-processes of larger groups. One may rather develop a *historical approach*: we wait and see what happens on each single occasion and then try to reconstruct the process that was happening in retrospect. Perhaps we then may even point out who was a more and who was a less influential decision-maker in that very process (for whatever reasons: competency, charisma, rank, etc.). From this, however, also follows that there is *no normative theory possible* that tells us how groups should develop decisions. Any such suggestion would narrow down the possibility of creativity that may be developed in such a process (in perhaps hitherto unknown contexts). That is, as long as decision-making may be connected to the need of coming up with new, unknown, innovative suggestions, there should not be any strict manual of (collective) decision-making.

From an existential point of view – and this is, of course, a truism – our social life and our social acting is uncontrollable and always has its risks. There is no warrant of rationality, creativity, and success. On the other hand, decision-processes might always open the chance for seeing or creating something novel. And this is just the way how human (social) life is.

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Folk Psychology and Proverb Knowledge as Common Knowledge in Decision-Making

MARION LEDWIG, LAS VEGAS

According to Horgan and Graham (1993, 293) folk psychology (FP) "includes notions like belief, desire, intention, action, and closely cognate notions; and the most fundamental principles or generalizations which common sense takes to be true of the ways such states interact with one another." Yet this statement still leaves unclear whether folk psychology is about common sense knowledge, namely what everyone knows and therefore what everyone has, or whether it is about common sense reasoning, namely the human ability to use common sense knowledge and therefore what everyone does (Elio 2002, 8, 14). Probably it is both, for according to folk psychology the folk (= everyone) seems to know how everyone reasons. If it were otherwise, how could one then explain the fact that people in fact explain and predict the behavior of their fellow humans. Moreover, Horgan and Graham (1993, 293) distinguish folk psychology from folksy psychology which "includes lots of Grandma's wisdom and poetry's delight that is not presupposed by our practice of attributing propositional attitudes and proffering FP explanations; perhaps includes much of what we commonly say and believe about, e. g., passions and character traits; and perhaps also includes much that is positively contradictory or incoherent (e. g., 'Out of sight, out of mind,' 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder')."

Thus if folk psychology includes notions like belief and desire and fundamental principles which common sense takes to be true of the ways they interact with each other, then one can expect folk psychology to be common knowledge.

This is even relevant for game and decision theory, for if I have certain beliefs and desires, then according to folk psychology certain kinds of decisions should ensue according to the fundamental principles which one takes to be common sense of how beliefs and desires interact with each other. For example, if I very much desire chocolate chip ice cream now
and I believe that there is the best ice cream shop around the corner, then I should decide to buy a chocolate chip ice cream now given that nothing else speaks against me making this kind of decision now. In this respect it might be helpful to distinguish between common sense psychology (CSP) or folk psychology and scientific psychology (SP), for according to Wilkes (1993, 171) SP attempts to explain and predict generally, while CSP tries to explain and predict the particular. Hence in my opinion certain ceteris paribus clauses, like that nothing else speaks against me making this kind of decision now, are always implicit in the laws of common sense.

Wilkes (1993, 173) points out that these ceteris paribus clauses also explain the seeming contradictions in proverbs, like that "out of sight, out of mind" is true holding certain ceteris paribus clauses and that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" is true holding certain other ceteris paribus clauses. For example, the proverbs "gleich und gleich gesellt sich gern" (birds of a feather flock together) and "Gegensätze ziehen sich an" (opposites attract each other) can be explained as follows: if one’s own genetic material is already very good, it makes sense to stay as close to it as possible by mating with someone who is very similar, while if one’s own genetic material is not so good, it makes sense to get as far away from it as possible in order to improve the genetic makeup of one’s children. Hence in my opinion Horgan and Graham’s (1993) distinction between folk and folksy psychology is an artificial one, which has to be given up.

Against Wilkes’ distinction between common sense psychology and scientific psychology speaks that one could even advocate in the case of Freudian analysis that scientific psychology tries to explain the particular, too. One just has to look at Freud’s case studies like little Hans or the rat man. Of course, Freud tried to build his theories on these case studies and he therefore tried to explain and predict generally, yet there was also explanation in particular cases.

But can one expect proverbs to be common knowledge? According to Whiting (1932, 302) a proverb is "an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth - that is, a truism - in homely language, often adorned, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both a literal and a figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often
they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and, since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with very early literature, where the material at our disposal is incomplete." While this may still not attest so much to the common knowledge of a proverb, popular views of the proverb get summarized by Mieder (1985, 119) as follows: "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation" and "A proverb is a short sentence of wisdom". Although Taylor (1931, 3, note 1) has expressed quite clearly that it is impossible to define proverbs, at least the folk doesn't seem to have problems in defining proverbs, and in Mieder's first definition the folk even makes clear that proverbs are considered to be common knowledge. Furthermore, Briggs (1985, 795) points out that at least with regard to New Mexican Spanish it is the elders who teach the children proverbs, so that they become common knowledge. Moreover, one can learn a proverb by means of several learning mechanisms, so that it doesn’t seem to be such a problem to achieve proverb knowledge.

One could argue that as communication requires common concepts and common topics (Rescher 2000, 102), proverbs, which are used in communication and which indeed consist of common concepts and refer to common topics, are common knowledge because of that, too. Against this view may speak that communication is by nature a process of conveying information (Rescher 2000, 120), so that if one uses a proverb in communication, one communicates something new and not something common. Yet the words used in proverbs consist of common concepts and refer to common topics, so that something new is communicated by means of something common. If communication consisted completely of something new - not even using common concepts and referring to common topics - I don't see how anything could ever be successfully communicated. Hence proverbs and all kinds of common concepts and common topics can be considered to be common knowledge.

Yet as different cultures have different proverbs, this common knowledge is restricted to the culture one lives in. Honeck (1997, 73) reports that proverb use is disliked in speeches given at the United Nations, for their
translation might lead to many interpretation problems, like, for example, I
have not the slightest clue what the English-speaking American culture has
in mind with the proverb "All clocks are off" and therefore wouldn't have a
cue how to translate this into my native German. And it seems very rea-
sonable to assume that the Spanish-speaking American culture has other
proverbs than the English-speaking one due to its Mexican influence.
Hence although proverbs can be considered to be common knowledge, its
influence with regard to decision and game theory is limited because of the
cultural dependence of proverbs. That is, whereas one decision maker can
base his decision on certain proverbs, another decision maker who belongs
to another cultural group may not be able to use these same proverbs as
decision guiding. For example, the Japanese proverb "Where there is no
antagonist you cannot quarrel" might be used by a Japanese-speaking deci-
sion maker as a guide to deciding, but there is at least to my knowledge
nothing comparable to that in German. Furthermore, even if somebody told
me this proverb, I would have difficulties interpreting it. Does it mean that
one should kill one's opponents, because in that way there will not be an
antagonist anymore and therefore there will also not be any quarrel, or
does it mean that one should not behave in such a way as to be evaluated as
an antagonist, or does it even mean both of it? Or does it simply mean that
one should evade one’s antagonist? Zapf and Gross (2000, 31) for example
report that the highest ranking advice victims of mobbing give for mobbing
victims is to leave the situation. Yet whether this is the best advice for this
situation and for all kinds of interpersonal conflict is still unclear. Hence I
wouldn't even know how to use this proverb for making a decision.

If one wanted to figure out in a game what kind of decision the other
decision maker or the other decision makers make, one should take into
account what kind of proverbs the other decision maker or the other deci-
sion makers might use to base their decision on besides taking their other
beliefs and wants into account. Furthermore, one shouldn't take it for
granted, if the other decision maker or the other decision makers come
from a different culture, that their decision might be based on similar pro-
verb usage. Some people might object that we rarely use proverbs in deci-
sion-making processes, we rather use them for motivating ourselves or for
justifying our actions; even if this should be the case, this doesn't pertain to
the question whether we should use proverbs in decision-making and
whether it would be to our advantage to use proverbs for guiding us in our decisions. After all, why do we have this folk wisdom, if it is not good for anything? And why should it be just limited to motivating ourselves and justifying our actions?

Besides the fact that already Plato and Aristotle tried to define proverbs (Mieder 1993, 18) and besides the political abuse of proverbs in Nazi-Germany by Hitler and the whole regime (Mieder 1993, chapter 10) there are several famous people, like Bismarck, Lenin, Churchill, Roosevelt (Mieder 1993, 231), who used proverbs very often, or even propagated proverb use, like Benjamin Franklin (Mieder 1993, chapter 5). Also in the bible one finds many proverbs. So there must have been a reason why they did that. Besides the fact that using proverbs gives one authority - after all there are whole generations of proverb users behind oneself - there should be at least a grain of truth in these proverbs, too, and although over time some proverbs get out of fashion (Mieder 1993, 19), this might be mostly due to the fact that the circumstances have changed so much that the proverb cannot be used anymore. In the throwing away society of today the proverb "one stitch in time saves nine" where nobody stitches torn clothes anymore, but only buys new ones, it is understandable why people start having problems understanding this proverb. Yet one might argue that proverbs don’t express truths, but rather proverbs represent the tradition of the respective culture in which the proverb is ingrained. Nevertheless one might be able to check whether the empirical content of proverbs is truth conducive. For example, one could really try to find out whether "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is true.

One might object that not in all kinds of cultures proverbs might be of any use, for in fast changing cultures proverbs might very soon become out of date. But one might reply in such cultures proverbs wouldn't have evolved in the first place anyway. Furthermore, one might object with increasing globalization proverb usage might get extinct, too, for one would soon find out that other people have problems understanding the proverbs which one uses, besides the difficulty of translating them to the respective languages. Yet whether this really happens is an empirical question, which is not for me to decide. Moreover, nevertheless the decision maker himself might be able to use his proverbs for decision-making. One might object that one shouldn’t use proverbs for decision-making, because proverbs are
nothing but stereotypes. Nevertheless, while proverbs take on certain linguistic forms by means of rhymes, metaphors, and such, stereotypes usually get expressed in all kinds of ways, so there is a way of distinguishing proverbs from stereotypes. Hence different kinds of common knowledge, like folk psychology and proverb knowledge, could be used for decision-making even in 1-person games against nature, so that common knowledge could play quite a considerable role in decision and game theory. Moreover, proverbs and also rules of thumb could be considered as problem-solving heuristics that are fast and frugal, which seem particularly effective in environments that offer limited time and uncertain information for making decisions (Elio 2002, 28; Elster 1999). Furthermore, in decision situations which one encounters very often or repeatedly (like for example when to get up every morning), it seems to be efficient to use rules of thumb or proverb knowledge to make a fast decision (for example by means of the proverb "the early bird catches the worm"). Additionally, some rules of thumb are even proverbs like "never change a winning team" and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

Yet in games with several decision makers from different cultures it seems problematical to consider proverb knowledge to be common knowledge. And although folk psychology has been around for thousands of years (Gordon 1995, 71), it is not quite clear to me whether all laws of folk psychology really hold universally, so that even folk psychology couldn't be used in games with several decision makers from different cultures. Finally, as knowing doesn't entail predicting (Ledwig 2002/2003), common knowledge in the form of folk psychology and proverb knowledge is of no help in predicting the other's persons play in game theory (and also one's own decision in decision theory) and hence to make a rational decision in a game (or in a decision problem) oneself.

A more general objection is: to conceive folk psychology and also proverbs as forms of common knowledge seems to stretch our traditional concept of knowledge as true justified belief very much. Yet this also depends on what we consider to be a good justification. For not only evidential reasons, but also consistency and pragmatic reasons might offer a good justification (Ledwig 2006, chapters 1 and 2). Moreover, with regard to medical proverbs like "If you would live forever, you must wash milk from your liver", we are now in a better position to evaluate whether these prov-
erbs are true or not. Furthermore, whether folk psychology turns out to be true is still a debated issue. Tucker (2004, 25) mentions that one can define knowledge not only as justified true belief, but also as true belief that was got by a reliable process or like Dretske (1981, 86) as belief caused or sustained by information. And if one considers proverb knowledge to be knowledge which has proven itself to be true because it has worked many times and/or over many generations, then one can consider this to be a reliable process. Moreover, this knowledge could have sustained itself by more and more confirmation, which then might be considered as other pieces of information. So even if folk psychology and proverb knowledge don't qualify as true justified beliefs, they might be considered as true beliefs got by a reliable process and as beliefs caused or sustained by information.

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1. Introduction

According to a widely held impression, consensus in pluralistic societies is more the exception than the rule. Where agreement can be found and where public issues are decided unanimously, this seems to be due to favourable circumstances rather than to a society’s concord. However, hopes seem to prevail that the often intractable conflicts which beset modern societies often result from zeal and passion, so that, where conflicts are the disease, reason and rational discourse are the appropriate cure. Recent results in social choice theory indicate, however, that this hope may be overly naive.

Consider a group of individuals in a situation where a collective decision has to be made. For example, the agents might be jointly responsible for a welfare policy and its appropriate resource allocation or for the choice of an environmental action plan. Suppose, the individuals are rational in the following sense: the preferences of each person over the set of feasible outcomes of the joint decision are coherent and can be represented by a von Neumann-Morgenstern utility function (or some equivalent device), and the individuals’ factual beliefs concerning the relevant states of nature are represented by individual probability functions $p_i$ for each person $i$, so that each person is able to calculate her individual expected utility for each of the alternatives under consideration. If conditions are imposed to the effect that the collective decision is the ‘product’ of the individual assessments of the likelihood and desirability of the possible outcomes and at the same time respects unanimity and hence Pareto optimality then examples can be constructed which demonstrate that the straightforward method of aggregating the individuals’ assessments by taking the average utilities and probabilities will not yield the desired result. The following illustration is a modification of Raiffa’s original example, which seems to be the classical exposition of the problem of Bayesian aggregation (see Raiffa 1968, 228-230):
Alice and Bob are faced with a decision between two alternatives x and y. Two possible states of nature have to be considered, s_1 and s_2. The four possible outcomes will be denoted x(s_1), y(s_1), x(s_2) and y(s_2) respectively. Alice’s probabilities for s_1 and s_2 are 0.2 and 0.8 respectively, while Bob’s are 0.7 and 0.3. Their utilities for the four possible outcomes are given in the following tables:

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This yields the following expected utilities for the options x and y: EU_{Alice}(x) = 4.4, EU_{Alice}(y) = 5.0, EU_{Bob}(x) = 4.1, and EU_{Bob}(y) = 6.9. So, Alice and Bob both consider y as better than x, although their reasons for doing so are clearly different. If unanimous choice is to be respected, society should choose y over x. However, this choice cannot be justified on the basis of aggregated probabilities and utilities when aggregation consists in taking the average values. For the average probabilities are 0.45 for s_1 and 0.55 for s_2, and the average utilities are 6 for x(s_1) and for x(s_2), 5 for y(s_1) and 4 for y(s_2). Thus, the expected utility for x, based on the average utility-probability values, is higher than the expected utility for y. The aggregation of the individual values stands in tension with the individuals’ unanimous choice.

2. Unanimity and Pareto conditions

The fact, that a simple though seemingly plausible rule of aggregation fails to meet certain requirements, does not imply that the aggregation of (possibly divergent) preferences in situations of uncertainty is impossible. However, a number of results do exist which indicate that, given a suitably rigorous framework, preference aggregation for Bayesian agents is indeed impossible when the aggregation procedure is based exclusively on the individuals’ assessments of the probability and desirability of the possible outcomes and is required to respect unanimous choice. These results can be summarized by the following statement (essentially due to Seidenfeld/Kadane/Shervish 1989, see also Mongin 1995).
Any function $f$ mapping a vector $(p_1, \ldots, p_n, u_1, \ldots, u_n)$ made up of individual probability-utility pairs $(p_i, u_i)$ to a collective probability-utility pair $(p_G, u_G)$, such that $f$ respects at least a weak Pareto condition, will be dictatorial in the following sense: if the individual probability functions are independent so that no $p_i$ is a weighted average of other individual probability functions then there is a utility dictator, and if the utility functions are independent (no utility function is a mixture of other persons’ utilities) then there is a probability dictator. Here, a dictator is a person whose probability (utility) function determines society’s probability (utility) function, no matter what the other individuals’ beliefs and preferences may be. As a dictatorial rule stands in a striking contrast to the idea of consensual decision making, the result amounts to the claim that no trivial aggregation rule for preferences exists when uncertainty (in a form that leads to diverging individual opinions) interferes.

The weak Pareto condition that is crucial in this context states that no option $y$ can be chosen collectively that is dominated by some option $x$ whose expected utility, according to all individual probability-utility pairs, is higher than the one for $y$, i.e. if $EU_i(x) > EU_i(y)$ for all individuals $i = 1, \ldots, n$, then: $EU_G(x) > EU_G(y)$. No improvement is reached when instead of the weak Pareto condition a strong Pareto is used: $EU_G(x) > EU_G(y)$ if there is no individual $i$ such that $EU_i(y) > EU_i(x)$ and for at least one individual $j$ $EU_j(x) > EU_j(y)$.

What these results in effect say is that unless the individuals in a group are highly homogenous in their probability judgments or their preferences no consensus will be found that is faithful to those choices on which the agents, though for different reasons, agree. The example given above highlights this point. If the choice of Alice and Bob is respected in the collective decision then it is unclear on what probability-utility judgment the collective decision can be justified, unless it is either Alice’s or Bob’s (making one of them a ‘dictator’). If, on the other hand, their individual assessments are aggregated by taking the average values then the choice based on the aggregation will stand in conflict with what Alice and Bob would choose unanimously.

The situation is troubling for the following reasons. Social choice theory began with a negative result. Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem (Arrow 1951, see also Sen 1970, chap. 3) demonstrated that no non-dictatorial rule exists that allows the aggregation of arbitrary preferences such that the weak Pareto condition is obeyed and the social ranking of any two alternatives depends exclusively on the individual rankings of these alternatives and not on the availability of (or comparison with) other alternatives (Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives). An important assumption in Ar-
row’s framework was, however, that the individual as well as the social preferences are represented in purely ordinal form and are not interpersonally comparable, an assumption that can be defended for the purposes of economics by the success of the Arrow-Debreu results on general equilibria (Fleurbaey and Hammond 2004). By abandoning this restriction, it became possible to mitigate Arrow’s result. Harsanyi’s Aggregation Theorem states that when the individual as well as the social preferences are represented by von Neumann-Morgenstern (vNM) utility functions the Pareto indifference implies that the collective utility function is a linear combination, i.e. a weighted sum of the individual utility functions. Therefore, social preferences can be ranked according to a utilitarian rule. A social alternative \( x \) is preferred over alternative \( y \) if and only if the sum of individual utilities for \( x \) is higher than for \( y \), that is:

\[
x \text{ R}_G y \text{ iff } \sum u_i (x) \geq \sum u_i (y)
\]

Pareto indifference says that when all individuals are indifferent between two alternatives \( x, y \), then so should society be. Pareto Indifference: if \( x \text{ I}_i y \) for all individuals \( i \) then \( x \text{ I}_G y \)

Society, this is to say, should not impose preferences where these are not based on the judgments of its members. But although vNM utility functions represent preferences over lotteries, uncertainty in a genuine sense is beyond Harsanyi’s approach. The probabilities for the chancy prospects of the lotteries are, in the von Neumann-Morgenstern setting, objective (statistical) probabilities; the lotteries are, in terms of the Anscombe-Aumann framework, roulette lotteries, in contrast to horse lotteries (which formally are defined as functions from states of nature to roulette lotteries and which can be associated with subjective probabilities). Thus, no disagreement between equally legitimate assessments of the facts pertinent to the problem of choice under consideration will arise, because rational agents are bound in their judgments by the objective probabilities.

Note, that Harsanyi even may feel justified in ignoring subjective probabilities and their effect of divergent beliefs. For Harsanyi maintains explicitly that differences in beliefs, where beliefs are represented by probability assignments, must be explained in terms of differences in information, in the sense that rational agents, when given the same items of information, will come to hold identical beliefs. This claim, known as the Harsanyi doctrine, is supported by Aumann’s result that Bayesian agents with the same prior probabilities and whose posterior probabilities are common

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1 Strictly speaking, Harsanyi’s utilitarianism must attach weights to individual utilities when unanimity is expressed by Pareto indifference. However, stronger versions of the Pareto requirement allow to consider sums of utilities without weights, see Weymark 1993.
knowledge (i.e. everybody knows them and everybody knows that everybody knows them and everybody knows that … that everybody knows them), must agree in their posterior probabilities, irrespective of how these were gained. In combination with what is known as ‘washing out of priors’ (or ‘merging of opinions’) by Bayesian up-dating, this means that any differences in subjective beliefs will disappear in the due course of time when existing information is exchanged freely among the agents and new information is processed according to the Bayesian recommending.

However, not always can a decision be delayed until all disagreement concerning the relevant situations is removed. Often enough, the information that would be needed for considered judgment is not available, and differences in belief will persist.

Situations of choice under uncertainty thus seem to point to a serious limitation of Harsanyi’s axiomatic defence of utilitarianism, in particular when it is presented as a rational method for establishing welfare decisions. But the impossibility of preference aggregation under uncertainty is not only a challenge to Harsanyi’s specific position in the theory of social choice. It throws doubt on our understanding of the norms that regulate collective and in particular public decision making in general, norms which Harsanyi’s version of neo-utilitarianism tried to capture in the tradition of welfare economics. Given that ignorance and uncertainty in matters of public concern is our everyday situation, how should consensual decisions, conforming to minimal requirements for democratic and liberal societies, be possible when even purely rational agents cannot expect to specify an acceptable aggregation rule?

However, closer scrutiny reveals that the predicament of the impossibility of finding a consensus reflects the specific constraints that were imposed on the aggregation procedure. Although these constraints may seem to express only minimal requirements, their actual content depends to some extent on the particular context of their application. This is true in particular for the unanimity requirement and the corresponding Pareto condition.

Raiffa’s example of a panel of Bayesian experts whose judgments are to inform a neutral decision maker illustrates the central dilemma for preference aggregation under uncertainty (Raiffa 1968, 228). If the experts agree in their preferences concerning two risky options x, y, although they disagree in their probabilities and their utilities for the prospects of x and y, then the decision maker whose judgment is the result of the aggregation of the individual judgments (with separate aggregation of probabilities and utilities) can respect the experts’ unanimous choice of x over y only if the decision maker’s probability-utility pair coincides with that of one of the experts. However, where one of the expert opinions is dictatorial, the idea
of a consensus is thwarted and the disagreement in the individual assessments is left unresolved. Unless there are independent reasons for ignoring all the other experts, the decision maker’s choice to accept one of the experts’ opinions seems arbitrary and, at any rate, leaves the issue of finding a compromise unaddressed. If, on the other hand, the decision maker sets for a compromise by aggregating the individual probability and utility judgments, then no non-trivial aggregation rule will respect unanimous choice under all situations. Respecting unanimity in all cases therefore amounts to a neglect of the potential disagreement in individual judgments. But to ignore disagreement falls short of the aim of consensual decision making.

3. Considered unanimity

As Amartya Sen once aptly remarked, “the rejection of the Pareto principle cannot be a source of great joy” (Sen 1970, 85). The problem of preference aggregation under uncertainty, however, can be seen as evidence that the unanimity condition is a substantial and possibly controversial requirement. As a constraint on pure preference aggregation the Pareto principle may still be persuasive. After all, unanimity in preferences (as expression of ‘values’ or ‘tastes’2) is unanimity along one dimension, and we may therefore presume that it does not conceal any conflict or disagreement.3 But where the evaluation of options is based simultaneously on value judgments and on judgments concerning facts, unanimity may indeed be the result of sheer coincidence, thereby concealing profound differences in the assessments on which unanimous choice is based.

Reservations concerning Pareto unanimity have led several authors to attempt improvements in the formulation of principles of preference aggregation under uncertainty. Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler are among those who argue for a rejection of the unqualified Pareto requirement (Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler 2004). They claim that the Pareto condition is

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2 The question what it is that preferences are the expression of, is beyond the scope of the present paper. It should be kept in mind, however, that the precise nature of preferences is far from clear; for a thorough discussion of this point see Griffin 1986. Still instructive for the difference between values and tastes are Arrow’s remarks in 1951.

3 Even this is not quite true. It may happen, for example, that agents agree on the ranking of two options, because they believe that the preferred option serves best their individual interests, although their aims are clearly different. This phenomenon, known under the heading ‘politics makes strange bed fellows’, is nicely illustrated by Isaac Levi’s example of a catholic and a communist who agree that a national health insurance plan prohibiting abortion is better than no health insurance plan, see Levi 1990. The art of logrolling consists, of course, precisely in bringing enemies to bed.
implausible when subjective beliefs are involved. Their misgivings are illustrated by the following example of two gentlemen who agree to meet for a duel. Their common preference for duel over no duel is a result of the fact that each of them is pretty sure, i.e. believes with a probability of 0.9 that he will win the duel. Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler maintain that, despite the gentlemen’s agreement, it is not evident that society should respect their choice. The argument is not that society should opt against duel. All that is claimed is that the agents’ unanimous choice in this case, based on opposite utility and probability judgments, is no compelling reason for the society to respect that choice and prefer duel over no duel. In suspending judgement on this issue, society may point out that it is obvious that not both gentlemen can be right in their beliefs to win the duel. Hence, one of them will have his preference based on a false assumption.

Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler argue that the duel example corresponds to Raiffa’s example of the panel of experts. This is, to some extent, doubtful because society may come, in the case of the duel example, to a decision independent of the gentlemen’s choice, whereas in Raiffa’s example of the panel of experts the decision maker has, by assumption, no opinion of his own, independently of the aggregated opinions of the experts. But even if the Pareto condition were less objectionable in Raiffa’s example, the duel example does indicate that this condition cannot be applied uncritically. Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler suggest the following restriction: let x be an option on whose prospects the agents agree, i.e. x is an alternative with outcomes x(s₁), …, x(sₘ) for the possible states of nature s₁, …, sₘ such that for all individuals i, j, pᵢ(sₖ) = pⱼ(sₖ) (for 1 ≤ k ≤ m). Such an option will be called a lottery. The probabilities for the outcomes of an alternative x that is a lottery in the Gilboa/Samet/Schmeidler sense thus are the same for all individuals, and therefore their notion of a lottery corresponds roughly to a lottery in the von Neumann-Morgenstern sense (modulo the question whether the probabilities result from a chance mechanism or represent subjective ignorance). The restriction mentioned above can now be specified as follows:

Restricted Pareto Indifference: For all lotteries x, y: if x Iᵢ y for all individuals i then x ≤ᵢ y

The restricted Pareto condition crowds out unanimity considerations for all those options for which the agents hold different beliefs with regard to the outcomes. In fact, it may be said that it copies Harsanyi’s approach to preference aggregation in the wider context of preference aggregation under uncertainty. The result is remarkable:

Theorem (Gilboa/Samet/Schmeidler): The restricted Pareto condition is satisfied if and only if the collective probability function pᵢG is an affine
combination of the individual probability functions $p_i$ and the collective utility function $u_G$ is a linear combination of the individual utility functions $u_i$.

Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler seem to understand their result as salvage to Harsanyi’s Aggregation Theorem. Note, however, that the price is a radical treatment of unanimity in situations of uncertainty. Unanimity is resolutely ignored, unless it can be taken for granted that differences in subjective belief play no role. To some extent, this position may be defended by considerations that initially motivated Pareto requirements in the context of social choice theory. Collective (consensual) decisions in liberal, democratic societies should be sensitive to the aims and ambitions of its members and they should not impose collective judgments where these are not founded in the individuals’ judgments. Societies, that is to say, should pay respect to the individuals’ values, but it is less clear that the same should hold for the individuals’ beliefs. A social planner intending to make a welfare decision should be committed to the individuals’ interests, aims and values, but (s)he might well feel exempted from taking the individual judgments on the factual situation into account.

Nevertheless, in situations like those that are illustrated in Raiffa’s example of a panel of experts preferences over alternatives are intrinsically preferences over uncertain prospects and their evaluation may depend crucially on the combined assessment of their desirability and their likelihood. The rejection of the Pareto condition is a move that may result in an aggregation theorem in the tradition of Harsanyi’s. It does not answer the question under which circumstances a unanimous choice should be respected and Pareto requirements are appropriate.

Doubts concerning the unqualified Pareto condition motivate also Isaac Levi’s proposal of robust Pareto unanimity (Levi 1990). Robust Pareto unanimity demands that the options under consideration are compared independently from the probabilities in the following sense: for any outcome $x(s_j)$ individual $i$ is supposed to consider not only his or her weighted utility $p(s_i)u(x(s_i))$, but also the weighted utilities that would result from adopting another person’s probability function $p_j$. That is, each person is asked to make an evaluation of the options under consideration not only on the basis of his or her own beliefs but also from the perspective of the other agents. This leads to hypothetical assessments in which the agents keep their utilities for the outcomes fixed but hypothetically take into account other agents’ probabilities. A preference $xRy$ for $x$ over $y$ is then called robust if the expected utility of $x$ is at least as great as the expected utility for $y$, for all probability functions $p_i$ ($1 \leq i \leq n$), i.e. if $x$ has higher expected utility under all controversial probability assignments. To illustrate, in the
duel example above the preference of the gentlemen for duel is not robust, as none of the gentlemen would prefer a duel given the supposition that he would loose. Identifying the robust preferences makes sense from the perspective of a social decision maker, whereas the individuals might see no reason to adopt a perspective of whose falsehood they are convinced. Robust preferences, however, represent unanimity in a strong sense: agreement in robust preferences holds irrespective of individual probability judgments. Levi’s qualified Pareto condition therefore demands that not all unanimous preferences are respected for the social preference ordering but only those that are robust.

But of course it may happen that the set of robust preferences is empty. In that case a social utility function will be a linear combination of the individual utilities, just as it is under application of the restricted Pareto condition proposed by Gilboa, Samet and Schmeidler. Levi’s proposal may seem less drastic than the restricted Pareto condition, but it still implies a dismissal of unanimity as a value in itself. From the perspective of the individual agents, however, such a move may come untoward. They might insist on their unanimous choice, even when they are aware that their evaluations result from radically different beliefs and values. It is not clear to what extent a social planner may feel exempted from respecting unanimity by restricting the Pareto condition to robust preferences.

4. Concluding remarks

In the context of collective choice under uncertainty, the unqualified unanimity requirement is challenged by severe objections. In combination with the expected utility hypothesis the Pareto condition implies the impossibility of preference aggregation under uncertainty. Still, the deeper meaning of Pareto conditions, namely to found collective decisions in the individuals’ evaluations of the options under consideration, thereby making any ‘improvement’ by switching from social alternative x to social alternative y subject to the individual’s consent, is not confined to social choice problems free of uncertainty. The Pareto condition may not be plausible in all choice situations. But its rejection needs careful argumentation. In particular, a proper understanding of the norms that govern collective or even public decision-making requires a better understanding of the interaction of different conditions where each of them may claim initial plausibility but which jointly lead to difficulties. A closer analysis of unanimity conditions is only a first step in this endeavour.
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The paper is dealing with the philosophical implications of psychoanalytical work with and about groups. As a central psychoanalytical category, conflict emerges where the integration of dissident parts of the soul fails. In this general acceptation conflict is acting out or at least is conflict (or the oppressed part) tending to be acted out. As Freuds model for the topic was a socio-cultural one (Instanzen, Zensor, Es, Ich, Über-Ich, Idealich, Widerstand etc.) it can be revisited from a group analytical perspective in view of a reconceptualization of cultural and political conflict. In such a perspective the collective acting out of dissident parts is not the opposite of reasonable and deliberative action (Handeln), but part and parcel of such an action. It can even be seen as the motor for democratic participation not only as instituting power of movements but also as explicit figuration of the political “city” through deliberation of the citizens.

1. Das begriffliche Spannungsfeld

frönt, wird ihr Agieren als rationales Handeln im Sinne einer ohnehin sich selbst regulierenden neoliberalen Gesellschaft darstellen, ja verkaufen; der Politiker, der seinen narzisstischen Beherrschungs- und Kontrollgelüsten frönt, führt rationalisierend oder ideologisch gesprochen seine Schafe zu ihrem Besten in die beste aller Welten. So lange die AkteurInnen ihre Motive und das Ganze ihres Agierens sich selbst und den anderen verschleiern, muss die politische Kosmetik im Vordergrund stehen und das Handeln verschwindet tendenziell hinter dem Agieren; die politische Macht wird privat angeeignet, anstatt unter den Betroffenen verteilt zu werden. Umgekehrt, wenn etwa ein *demos* oder eine Bevölkerungsgruppe ihre delegierten bzw. gewählten AmtsträgerInnen gerade auch aufgrund ihrer narzisstischen Charakterzüge wählt, weil sie besonders gute Leistungen im Dienste der Gemeinschaft versprechen, dann wird das Agieren berechnet, eingeplant und damit explizit in den Dienst politischen Handelns gestellt.

Zwar hat sich bereits Leibniz in der *Monadologie* dem Problem der unermesslichen Gebiete diffuser, uns selbst unbekannter Bereiche der Vorstellung und Wahrnehmung gestellt, doch erst Freud hat dies mit dem Begriff des Unbewussten und mit seiner "Metapsychologie" systematisiert und empirisch/klinisch für die Behandlung im Einzelsetting wirksam gemacht. Auf der Ebene der Affekte als nicht oder nur schwer durch den Willen "lenkbare" Antriebe gibt es seit der Antike, insbesondere bei Aristoteles, handlungstheoretische Reflexionen, die sich mit den ästhetischen, ethischen und vor allem mit den politischen Implikationen der Affekt- und Triebgesteuertheit befassen.¹

Anknüpfend an zwei bereits vorliegende Publikationen (Pechriggl 2004 und 2006) möchte ich in der gebotenen Kürze die praxis- und politikphilosophischen Implikationen der Freudschen "Revolution" an der Schnittstelle zwischen der hauptsächlich individuell gefassten Dimension des Agierens und der kollektiv gefassten Dimension des Handelns skizzieren und weiter-


Nun behält Arendts Betonung der Pluralität als Bedingung für Handeln aber insofern ihre Gültigkeit, als das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Agieren und Handeln effektiv nur im Erscheinungsraum der Menge als sinnstiftendes bedeutsam ist. Denn das, was im Einzelnen unbewusst, weil verdrängt bzw. abgespalten ist, wird im Kollektiv kaum mit der nämlichen Schärfe und Ausschließlichkeit aus dem Feld des Bewusstseins gedrängt (irgend ein Mensch oder eine Gruppe bringt das "Vergessene" und von vielen oder den meisten Verdrängte mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit irgendwann
explizit und bewusst zum Ausdruck…)². Ich schreibe "kaum", denn es gibt nicht nur kulturelle Tabus sondern auch das, was Foucault l'impensé nennt, das Ungedachte aber auch das Unbedeutbare oder, was Castoriadi als Anlehnung an die bereits erwähnte Monadologie auf die Gesellschaft ausdehnt und mit dem Begriff der Abgeschlossenheit (clôture) bezeichnet. Dies betrifft aber vorerst nur die eidechse, also die Vorstellung- und Bedeutungsebene, ohne die wir allerdings kaum etwas über die unbewusste Dimension kollektiver Affekte sagen können. Meine These ist, dass diese Unmöglichkeit kollektiver „Verdrängung“ im starken Sinn ein Kollektiv anfälliger macht für die regressiveren Abwehrformen der projektiven Identifikation und der Abspaltung.


Ausgehend von der psychoanalytischen Arbeit mit Gruppen und der diesbezüglichen Theoriebildung (siehe vor allem deren Begründer Bion 1971 und Foulkes 1992) ist nun für den hier behandelten Zusammenhang das rhythmische Oszillieren zwischen antisozial-dissoziativer Tendenz (also dem Hervortreten der egotischen Einzelinteressen) einerseits, verbindend-sozialer Tendenz (Gruppenkohäsion) andererseits, hervorzuheben. Dabei setzt die Integration der Teile, analog zu jener der Partialobjekte, deren Differenzierung auf der Bedeutungsebene, also vermittelt einer minimal analysierenden, kategorisierenden und jedenfalls symbolisierenden Sprache voraus. Eine Gruppe oszilliert aber nicht nur zwischen zersetzender und kohäsiv-integrierender Tendenz, sie vermag sich im Zuge kollektiver Regressionen auch in dem einen oder anderen Zustand zu fixieren, also die Rhythmik weitgehend auszusetzen, was zu dauerhafter Abspaltung bzw. Ausgrenzung bestimmter Teile bzw. Anteile der Gruppe führen kann.

Auf der historisch-politischen Betrachtungsebene ist die *stasis* (Bürgerkrieg, von Zustand, Stillstand) eines der interessantesten Beispiele für eine solche Fixierung unter Beibehaltung der darin entgegen gesetzten Teile, das heißt der "Parteien" oder "Fraktionen". Die Polis im Zu-stand des Bürgerkriegs ist in zwei relativ symmetrische Teile aufgespalten, für die es aktuell keine Vermittlung mehr gibt. Der Kampf beider Teile um die absolute Vorherrschaft umfasst alle Einzelnen, die sich ihm nicht entziehen können (in der *stasis* nicht Partei zu ergreifen, ist ein Un ding, auch für Sklaven und
Frauen, die ansonsten aus dem Reich des Polemos und der Politik prinzipiell ausgegrenzt sind). Dabei ist die Polis sowohl ideell als auch affektiv gespalten zwischen oligarchischem bzw. tyrannischem Herrschaftsanspruch einerseits, demokratischem Anspruch der Menge auf die Machtausübung andererseits. Alle Affekte und Energien werden in das Austragen dieses Konflikts gelegt, differenzierte Besetzung oder Sublimierung sind nicht mehr möglich, das Regime, also die instituierten Grundformen der Verteilung und Ausübung der Macht stehen vollständig zur Disposition. Die zentrale Frage der Machtausübung bezieht sich vor diesem Hintergrund auf die Dauer bzw. auf die Abwechslung der Machtausübungs sowie auf die Quantität, das heißt darauf, ob die Macht monokratisch (von einem), oligarchisch (von wenigen) oder demokratisch (von der Menge, also dem de**mos***) ausgeübt wird und wie sie in der Zeit verteilt wird bzw. ob sie auf Lebzeiten oder sogar transgenerationell als Herrschaft fixiert ist (auf eine Partei oder ein hereditäres Herrschergeschlecht). Je kleiner und dauerhafter der Kreis der Herrschenden, desto größer muss die Energie, desto effizienter müssen die Dispositive sein, welche die von der Machtausübung Ausgeschlossenen ideologisch, affektiv-sittlich und physisch niederzuringen und auch zukünftig im politischen Abseits zu halten vermögen. Und je weniger ein Demos in einer „Demokratie“ tatsächlich an der institutionellen Machtausübung, also am kratein, beteiligt ist, desto eher werden sich die durch diese Verfehlung der Demokratie aufkommenden Affekte in Form von Aufständen oder anderen krisenhaften Ereignissen Ausdruck verschaffen.

Die Teile des Konflikts sind in der stasis jedoch nicht abgespalten, sondern sie sind als Paroxysmos politischer Opposition einander gegenübergestellt; auch werden die Teile, also die Parteien, nicht immer total, also in der Gesamtheit ihrer Mitglieder, zu vernichten getrachtet, wie dies etwa in ethnischen Bürgerkriegen oder im Zuge von Genoziden der Fall ist bzw. war. Ist die stasis durch den Sieg einer Partei beendet, dann wurde über die Regierungsform entschieden und nicht über die Existenz derer, die von der Macht ausgeschlossen bzw. (im Fall der Oligarchen) um das von ihnen beanspruchte Machtmonopol gekommen sind.

Da im Moment der stasis die rechtliche Formierung der Polis weitgehend außer Kraft gesetzt ist, das heißt, dass sie ohne politeia, ohne Verfassung existiert, wird das Agieren nur noch durch die totale Logik des Ent-
weder-Oder definiert. Das heißt allerdings nicht, dass die *nomoi* und die Bestimmungen (*graphai*) sowie der Ethos in den Menschen nicht irgendwie weiterleben würden oder, dass es überhaupt kein Handeln mehr gäbe. Doch diese Dimensionen des Tuns treten in den Hintergrund und die *stasis* setzt die Affekte in derart gewaltiger Weise frei, dass sogar die Erinnerung an sie ein Problem darstellt: Die historiographische und politisch-philosophische Analyse der *stasis* oder des Bürgerkriegs stößt regelmäßig auf das Phänomen der Ausblendung, der Tabuisierung und der Verleugnung (Loraux 1997).

2. **Acting out versus deliberation**

Wie Leibniz in der *Monadologie* hervorhob, ist der Großteil unserer *perceptions* (sinnliche und/oder intelligible Wahrnehmungen, Vorstellungen, Gedanken, etc.) uns nicht klar bewusst, sondern sie bleiben diffus miteinander vermengt. Dennoch sind diese "unbewussten" Vorstellungen massiv wirksam, also effektiv im aristotelischen Sinn. Erst die begrifflich geleitete Analyse der Details, also ihre Herauslösung aus der Amorphie des psychosomatischen Gemischs aus Sinnesreizen, -wahrnehmungen, -eindrücken, Grundannahmen etc. erlauben eine gewisse, immer durch unsere anthropologischen Bedingtheiten beschränkte, Klärung oder eine gewisse Selbstaufklärung der Psyche und der Gesellschaft als aus vielen Psychen zusammengesetzte.

Die Analyse ist aber vom ontischen Gesichtspunkt her betrachtet zugleich ein Verfahren, das zur Auflösung eines Zustands affektiver Aufgelöstheit führt. Politisches Handeln im Sinne expliziter Beratung und Entscheidung setzt voraus, dass die sich im Zustand der Auflösung (*alytos*) befindliche Gruppe (oder Gesellschaft) die affektive wie auch ideelle Diffusität zu unterteilen und aufzugliedern vermöge und, dass sie sich zugleich – nach Maßgabe der Möglichkeiten – auf solche Formen und Verfahrensweisen "einigt", die der damit einhergehenden Analyse, Beratung und Entscheidung förderlich sind, was ja einen Sinnkern des Nomos, dann des gesetzten Rechts ausmacht. Es kann aber, wie vornehmlich Kelsen dargelegt hat, nicht ohne das implizite oder explizite Postulat einer göttlichen Ordnungsinstanz eine allgemeingültige Grundform angenommen werden, die jenseits der gesetzten und instituierten Formen und Normen der Gliede-


größtmögliche Variationsbreite zwischen Analyse, Intuition, besonnenem Handeln und grenzgängerischem Agieren (gegen eine verleugnende Staatsräson etwa), welche die Matrix für weitere Auseinandersetzungen bilden. Im vermittelten Modus geht das Agieren in den Prozess der Normsetzung um einer "rechten" Normsetzung willen ein und wird somit nicht zum ausschließlichen Motor und Zweck der Selben.

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Die Rolle gemeinsamer Urteile für das freie Handeln

PIRMIN STEKELER-WEITHOFER, LEIPZIG

Wenn Wörter ihre Bedeutung verlieren, werden die Menschen ihre Freiheit verlieren.

F.A. von Hayek, frei nach Konfuzius¹

1. Von Theorien des Spracherwerbs zur Analyse von sozialen Normen

1.1 Behavioristische und regulistische Sprachlerntheorien


Es handelt sich bei dieser Verschiebung der Fragestellung, wie Chomsky klar sieht, um eine kognitionstheoretische Wende weg von einer vorher „bloß“ auf Sinnkritik angelegten Sprachphilosophie. Zwar war schon lange


Das Projekt der ‚Erklärung‘ der Sprachfähigkeit erhält nun verschiedene Ausprägungen. Quine ‚erklärt‘ die Sprachkompetenz durch Ausbildung gewisser *Regularitäten* und *Dispositionen* im sprachlichen und nicht-sprachlichen Verhalten im sozialen Kontext. Dieser *Regularismus* Quines ist am Ende *rein deskriptiv*. Das heißt, die von Quine präferierte Methode der Einheitswissenschaft ist *behavioristisch*. Dabei ist der Behaviorismus als diejenige Variante der Denkbewegung des Empirismus zu begreifen, welche in ihrer sinnkritischen Analyse dessen, was es wirklich gibt, nicht, wie der subjektive Idealismus Berkeleys und der methodische Solipismus Carnaps, bei individuellen Sinneswahrnehmungen oder sogenannten ‚Sinnesdaten‘ beginnt, sondern bei einem beobachtbaren Verhalten von präsentistischen Untersuchungsgegenständen ‚at arm’s length‘, wie man sagen könnte.

Chomsky behauptet dagegen, ein behavioristischer Ansatz könne keine ausreichende wissenschaftliche Erklärung dafür liefern, dass nur wir Menschen gewisse rekursive Regeln der Sprachproduktion und des Sprachverstehens und das dafür notwendige syntaktische Formerkennen des ‚Parsing‘ lernen (können). Vielmehr sei dazu eine besondere Sprach(lern)kompetenz anzunehmen. Diese stellt sich Chomsky nach dem Muster einer automatischen Sprachlernmaschine als eine Art inneres oder angeborenes System parametrisierbarer Regelschemata vor. Durch äußere Einflüsse, genauer: dadurch, dass wir einem gewissen Sprachverhalten anderer Menschen ausgesetzt werden, werden Parameter gesetzt, so dass aus universa-
len Regelschemata die grammatischen Regeln von Einzelsprachen entstehen.


Chomsky dagegen meint, dass die Tatsache der überwältigenden Übereinstimmungen in unseren Urteilen der Wohlgeformtheit sprachlicher Ausdrücke nur erklärbar sei, wenn wir annehmen, dass im Spracherwerb Regeln der Sprachproduktion und der Sprachformerkenntung (des Parsing) gelernt werden, welche für unendlich viele Fälle die (syntaktische) Wohlgeformtheit bestimmen und die es daher in einer kognitionstheoretischen Theorie darzustellen und in ihrer Genese zu erklären gilt.

Davidson, obwohl Schüler Quines, stellt sich im Grunde auf die Seite Chomskys. In seinem Projekt geht es nämlich gerade darum, theoretisch zu erklären, wie aufgrund endlich vieler Beispiele unendlich viele Ausdrücke und Sprechhandlungsformen gelernt werden können, und was es heißt, dass diese am Ende ‚korrekt‘ oder ‚richtig‘ verstanden werden. Dazu be-


Bei Davidson wird dabei dem gehörten Satz S eine Beschreibung einer logischen Tiefenstruktur S* zugeordnet, und zwar so, dass nach den logischen Kompositionsregeln diese Satzform S* den Wert das Wahre zugeordnet erhält genau dann, wenn man zusätzlich gewisse ‚kausale‘ Bezüge auf die Welt etwa für (implizit oder explizit) deiktische Wörter und Anaphora unterstellt (modulo notwendiger Disambiguierungen). Dies alles erhält bei Davidson die Form einer Tarski nachempfundenen formalen Wahrheitsbedingungsemantik. Tarski hatte nämlich (übrigens auf strukturell ähnliche Weise wie zuvor schon Gödel) die rekursiven Regeln der semanti-
schen Deutung parallel zur tiefensyntaktischen Analyse in gewissem Sinn zu kalküllisieren versucht. (Es sollte, genau, eine Erfüllungsrelation zwischen einem Modell und den Sätzen, also den geschlossenen Formeln, einer 'Objektsprache' in einer axiomatisch-deduktiven Rahmentheorie vollformalisiert werden.) Tarskis berühmt-berüchtigtes T-Prinzip oder Wahrheits(wert)prinzip „S* ist wahr genau dann, wenn S“ wird nun bei Davidson als eine Art Kriterium dafür benutzt, dass S* eine dem Satz S (bzw. der zugehörigen Äußerung) angemessene Tiefenstruktursbeschreibung ist (wobei wir wieder beachten müssen, dass die Oberflächensprache im allgemeinen quantorenlogisch ambig ist).

Mir geht es hier nicht um eine detaillierte Darstellung der Semantiktheorie Davidsons. Mir geht es darum zu zeigen, dass gerade auch sie dem Augustinischen Bild des individualistischen Spracherwerbs durch interpretative Rekonstruktion einer 'Bedeutung' verhaftet bleibt, auch wenn die Rede von der Bedeutung aufgelöst wird in einen deduktionslogischen oder formalinferentiellen Umgang mit Sätzen S und (Beschreibungen von) logischen Satzformen S*. Dabei wird einfach unterstellt, dass die Bedeutung bzw. formale Gebrauchsweise der logischen Formworte „und“, „nicht“ „N=M“ und „für alle x, so dass A(x)“ schon gelernt bzw. bekannt ist. Denn es bilden bei Davidson die deduktiven Schlussregeln der Prädikatenlogik der ersten Stufe (mit Gleichheit) ein nicht weiter analysiertes, sondern stillschweigend und a priori vorausgesetztes, Rückgrat der formalen Semantiktheorie.

1.2 Normen des Richtigen in der einspruchsfreien Anerkennung

Robert Brandoms sprachphilosophischer Ansatz versucht nun in gewissem Sinn, die Einsichten der Ansätze Quines und Davidsons mit der Empirismuskritik von Sellars und der Kritik Dummetts an Davidson abzugleichen. Dummett zufolge ist Davidsons Semantiktheorie deswegen 'allzu bescheiden', weil sie nur zeigt, wie man zu einer gegebenen Sprache einen formalen Wahrheitsbegriff konstruieren kann, wenn man den Umgang mit den Regeln der Tiefenstruktursprache (also mit den Strukturbeschreibungen S*) in Bezugnahme auf die Oberflächensprache (die gehörten Sätze S) schon beherrscht. Wie man das aber lernen können soll, wird von Davidson überhaupt nicht erläutert. Das aber müsste eine 'full blooded theory' der radikal en Interpretation bzw. eine entsprechende, erklärende 'Semantiktheorie zeigen, wenn sie denn das Ziel erfüllen sollte, das ihr von Davidson (und anderen Autoren) selbst gesetzt ist.


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2 Dabei spreche ich von einem empraktischen Können später auch von einer empraktischen Anerkennung oder einer empraktischen Norm, wenn auf ein Verhalten oder ein Knowing-how gerade auch im intentionalen Handeln Bezug genommen wird, das durch eine gemeinsame Praxis geformt ist. Manches daran kann über eine Formanalyse in ein explizites und reflektiertes Wissen über die Praxis, über ihre Formen und Normen, und damit in eine explizite Anerkennung dieser Formen und Normen überführt werden.

Was Verstehen ist, das muss also zunächst erläutert werden über die kompetente Teilnahme an einer entsprechend gestuften normativen Praxis. In gewissem Sinn geht es dabei darum, Wittgensteins spätere Einsicht, dass Verstehen kein Interpretieren ist, sondern in der Fähigkeit der rechten Teilnahme an einer menschlichen Lebensform besteht, explizit zu machen.3 Dabei erlaubt eine zunächst noch eher diffuse Praxis des richtigen gemeinsamen Verhaltens und empraktischen („impliziten“) Könnens gewissermaßen erst sekundär eine explizite Zuschreibung von inferentiellen Verpflichtungen und Erlaubnissen.

Robert Brandom verwandelt in seinen Überlegungen Davids sons Einsicht in die besondere Rolle des Wahren gewissermaßen in die folgende ‚hegelianische‘ Einsicht: Das Richtige ist immer nur als ein Ausbleiben von Unrichtigem bestimmt, also immer nur soweit, als kein Widerspruch auftritt. Ein solcher Widerspruch zeigt sich etwa in einem Sanktionsbe nehmen, später dann auch in einem bewussten und seinerseits auf Richtigkeit kontrollierten Sanktionshandeln. Der Widerspruch wird also manifest in einem Tadel oder Einwand. Er wird als solcher zunächst unmittelbar verstanden, nämlich als Zeichen dafür, dass etwas an der Gemeinsamkeit im Tun defizient ist. Damit wird, so würde ich den Gang der Überlegung grob skizzieren, wie bei Hegel die Anerkennung zur Grundlage jeder Bewertung des Richtigen und damit zum Grund der Existenz von Normen. Anerkennung selbst besteht dabei darin, dass die Gemeinsamkeit im Tun nicht infrage gestellt wird, etwa aktiv durch einen Widerspruch oder durch eine bloße Abkehr vom ‚gemeinsamen Spiel‘. Ganz grob könnte man daher, in gewissem Sinn mit Brandom, sagen, dass Anerkennung im Aus-

3 Dabei zeigen frühere Texte, in denen das Verstehen noch als Angabe verbaler Erklärungen und damit als ein Übersetzen gedeutet wird, wie schwer gerade auch Wittgenstein selbst diese Einsicht gefallen ist.
bleiben von einem möglichen negativen Sanktionsverhalten oder Sanktionshandeln besteht.4

Bewusste Anerkennungen, wie sie bei Axel Honneth diskutiert werden, sind längst schon als intentionale Handlungen bzw. als hochstufige Haltungen zu Personen aufzufassen. Hegels Einsicht in die Rolle empraktischer Anerkennungen von Normen und Formen des Richtigen für die Bildung intentionaler Autonomie liegt auf einer anderen, tieferen, Ebene: Es geht um die implizite Anerkennung von Richtigem, um die empraktische Kompetenz des Verstandes, das Richtige zu tun oder zu sagen. Dieses Können ist jeder Kompetenz der Vernunft vorgelagert, autonom darüber zu befin-
den, was richtig ist oder als richtig gelten soll. Im sogenannten Kampf um Anerkennung geht es bei Hegel, anders als bei Honneth, nicht um einen Kampf zwischen Personen. Es geht nicht um eine explizite, moralische, Anerkennung von Personen. Es geht um eine praktische Anerkennung impliziter Formen und Normen des Richtigen. Im Einzelfall geht es insbesondere um eine intrapersonale Auseinandersetzung zwischen unmittelbaren, rein subjektiven, Begierden auf der einen Seite, der Bestimmung des richtigen Tuns durch gemeinsame Normen auf der anderen, also um den Kampf zwischen dem 'Leib' als dem Knecht und dem 'Geist', der nur Herr bleibt, wenn die Person als ganze das Richtige tut.

In gewissem Sinn lässt sich im Anschluss daran auch die Idee von Wilfrid Sellars, dass sich im Geben von und Fragen nach Gründen Inhalte zeigen, auf eine interessante Weise weiter entwickeln. Denn das Fragen nach Gründen für ein Urteil oder eine Handlung, eine Aussage oder für sonst einen Sprechakt, ist immer ein Fragen nach normativen Berechtigungen. Damit wird eine Frage, jedenfalls in einem gewissen Sinn, als ein potentieller Einwand begriffen, den es in der Antwort, im Geben von Gründen, auszuräumen gilt.

Die zugrundeliegende Strukturidee des normativen Inferentialismus Brandoms ist also, grob skizziert, diese: Das semantisch Richtige manifestiert sich in der dialogischen Situation des Sprechens und Hörens, Handelns und Anerkennens empraktisch immer nur insoweit, als sich Sprecher und Hörer mit dem inferentiellen Benehmen des jeweils anderen zufrieden geben, dieses also faktisch nicht sanktionieren. Ich spreche hier, in meinem

etwas idiosynkratischen Differenzierungsversuch, von einem inferentiellen Benehmen, weil es noch nicht unbedingt ein bewusst kontrolliertes intentionales Handeln sein muss, dessen Form schon vom Handelnden explizit artikuliert werden könnte, aber auch nicht bloß ein dispositionelles Verhalten ist. Auch die Anerkennung, die sich implizit oder empraktisch darin zeigt, dass sich die Teilnehmer der teils sprachlichen, teils nichtsprachlichen Interaktion mit dem, was die anderen tun, zufrieden geben, ist im allgemeinen Fall ein Benehmen, also nicht immer schon ein bewusstes und intentionales Handeln.


Das Ausbleiben von Einsprüchen bestimmt also, so lese ich Brandom, was faktisch und praktisch im und durch das Sozialverhalten als richtig oder erlaubt bewertet oder eben anerkannt wird. Die Frage, was anerkennungswürdig und damit in einem entwickelteren Sinn richtig ist, das ist unbedingt als höherstufig und in der methodischen Ordnung ‚später‘ zu begreifen. Das kann man relativ schnell einsehen, wenn man bedenkt, dass auch diese Urteile über Anerkennungswürdigkeiten faktisch gefällt und faktisch anerkannt werden müssen.

1.3 Von Konventionen zu Intentionen

Selbstverständlich ließe sich zu diesem Ansatz noch viel mehr im Detail sagen. Im Folgenden interessiert mich das Problem, dass sich bei Brandom das Reich des Normativen, der Anerkennungen und Nichtanerkennungen, aus dem faktischen Sozialverhalten der einzelnen Individuen ergeben soll. Zentral ist dabei das Sanktionsverhalten gegenüber Personen, deren Tun

uns jeweils einzeln ‚irgendwie nicht gefällt‘ – bzw. das Ausbleiben eines derartigen Sanktionsverhaltnens.

Dabei scheint der methodische Individualismus und die evolutionistische Erklärungsstrategie, die Brandom verfolgt, zunächst ganz plausibel zu sein. Denn es muss sich doch das Phänomen der besonderen geistigen oder kognitiven Vermögen der Menschen, insbesondere aber des Sprachvermögens, damit auch das (lau{te oder leise) planende Denken, vor dem Hintergrund einer evolutionsbiologisch erklärbaren Entwicklung des Verhaltens der einzelnen Individuen ergeben. In der realen Wirklichkeit gibt es, so scheint es also, nur die Individuen und ihr Verhalten. Unsere Reden über den Geist, die Seele oder gar den freien Willen, zum Beispiel, sind doch bestenfalls als figurative façon de parler zu begreifen, die, wenn sie überhaupt sinnvoll sein sollen, ‚grundsätzlich‘ immer auf die eine oder andere Weise zurückführbar sein müssen auf das Verhalten der Individuen. Analoges gilt für Wittgensteins vage Rede über eine menschliche Lebensform, oder für unsere Reden über Institutionen, Praxisformen oder sonstigen Formen gemeinsamen oder dann auch individuellen Handelns. Es gilt schließlich auch für unsere Reden über Rollen und am Ende auch über personale Kompetenzen. Demnach sollten auch die Gegenstände reflektierender Rede, wie etwa der Verstand, die Vernunft oder der menschliche Geist nicht hypostasiert werden. Sie verweisen auf keinen Fall auf eigenständige Akteure hinter den Personen. Das wäre Animismus oder Mentalismus. Sie sind vielmehr als Aspekte personaler Kompetenz zu verstehen.

die Gesellschaft, über Institutionen und Praxisformen infrage gestellt würden.\textsuperscript{6}

Es geht dann aber auch um Anderes als bloß um das rechte Verständnis von sprachlichen Reflexions- und Ausdrucksformen. Es geht unter anderem um die folgende Frage: Wie lässt sich begreifen, dass gerade die Gemeinschaft und eine durch sie erzeugte Art eines ‚unbewusst-gemeinschaftlichen‘ Verhaltens es uns allererst ermöglicht, als \textit{individuelle Person irgendwie bewusst intentional zu handeln}? Wie werden also gemeinschaftliche Normen des Richtigens in Konventionen inferentiellen Benehmens zur Bedingung der Möglichkeit ‚autonomen‘ Urteils und Tuns? Und wie verhält sich diese Tatsache zur Möglichkeit des bewussten \textit{kooperativen} Handelns? Die Fragen unterstellen, dass das, was es zu begreifen gilt, real ist, also dass die folgenden Thesen richtig sind:

a) Gemeinschaftliches Verhalten ist die Grundlage für individuelles Bewusstsein, damit auch für die Möglichkeit intentionalen und zweckgerichteten Handelns, also für jede Form planender und handelnder Selbstbestimmung und Autonomie.

b) Wir müssen dazu zwischen einem schon subjektiv bewussten Anerkennen bzw. einem (ich-)intentionalen kooperativen Handeln und einer vorbewussten gemeinschaftlichen Anerkennen und Tun unterscheiden.

c) Das vorbewusste Anerkennen ist ein gemeinschaftliches Verhalten.

Ein zentraler Punkt in diesem Überlegungsrahmen betrifft die Rolle der Sprache als Möglichkeitsbedingung für das freie Handeln einerseits, für personale Autonomie andererseits. Es geht, genauer, darum, wie symbolische Repräsentationen von Handlungen und Handlungsergebnissen möglich werden und in welchem Sinn sie Bedingungen für bewusste Absichten sind.\textsuperscript{7}

Jedes Sinnverstehen scheint am Ende gerade gemäß einer Gebrauchstheorie der Bedeutung bzw. des Sinnes von Wörtern, Sätzen und

\textsuperscript{6} Im Grunde sieht das, nur um ein Beispiel zu nennen, auch Niklas Luhmann: Der methodische Individualismus würde jede Reflexion auf Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft unmöglich, weil sprachlos machen, jedenfalls wenn man ihn allzu ernst nähme. Eine Gesellschaftstheorie würde dann erst recht unmöglich.

\textsuperscript{7} Das eben besagt das unserer Überlegung vorangestellte Motto. Es lautet in der ebenfalls bei von Hayek zu findenden Langform des Konfuzius so: „Wenn die Bezeichnungen unrichtig sind, stimmt die Sprache nicht mit der Wahrheit der Dinge überein. ... Die Menschen werden keinen Halt für Hand und Fuß haben“. Es sagt in dieser Form mehr, als dass Sprachmissbrauch zu Orientierungsproblemen führt. Es sagt, positiv, dass Freiheit und Autonomie von einem richtigen Sinnverstehen abhängen.


Wie also sind individuelle Intentionen möglich, wenn sie auf allgemeine Normen des Richtigen im inferentiellen Verhalten aufruhen sollen? Wie funktiniert das 'boostrapping', der Münchhausentrick, sich am eigenen Schopf aus dem Morast der bloßen Gewohnheit zu befreien? Wie werden wir aus konventionellen Kollektiv- und Gemeinschaftswesen zu selbständigen Individuen? Wie verwandelten sich die Anpassung im Verhalten an Normen in ein freies Handeln? Wie ist freies Urteilen und autonomes Handeln überhaupt möglich? Wir brauchen offenbar eine angemessene, überzeugende, Geschichte, die zeigt, dass und wie eine Entwicklung zum freien Urteilen und autonomen Handeln im Ausgang von der Befolgung von inferentiellen Normen möglich wird. Wir brauchen ein Verständnis des Münchhausentricks oder des boostrappings, das zeigt, wie individuelle Int-

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8 Die Normen gibt es, man erinnere sich, ihrerseits nur in der Form eines entsprechenden Sanktionsverhaltens der anderen bei Normabweichungen.
tentionalität möglich wird. Die Frage ist, ob Brandom uns die Umrisse ei-
ner solchen Analyse skizziert oder ob seine Skizze in wesentlichen Punkten
mangelhaft ist. Die Frage ist nicht, ob das theoretische Bild vollständig
ausgemalt ist, ob man also der Skizze noch viele nette Details hinzufügen
cann. Es geht um die Gesamtform der Skizze, und um die Gesamt-
orientierung, die sie gibt. Ist diese im Wesentlichen anerkennenswert, also
in relevanten Bereichen richtig? Hier kann ich dazu nur eine möglichst
charitable Lesart entwickeln, die durch eigene Interpolationen und Zu-
rechtstelungen zeigt, warum an dem Ansatz vieles nachhaltig interessant
bleiben wird.

2. Lerntheoretische Voraussetzungen personaler Kompetenzen

2.1 Gemeinsame Weltbezüge

Zunächst ist dazu die Form eines Anerkennungsbenehmens in der Form ei-
nes noch nicht von allen Beteiligten bewusst bzw. explizit kontrollierten
gemeinsamen Tuns zu skizzieren. Wenn etwa eine Mutter einem Kind oder
dieses der Mutter etwas zeigt, so koordinieren beide, wenn das Zeigen
glücken soll, ihr Verhalten auf gewisse Weise. Falls etwa ein Beteiligter
unaufmerksam ist, protestiert der andere. Wenn es keinen derartigen Wi-
derspruch gibt, wird das Tun aller Beteiligten faktisch als richtig aner-
kannt. Falls das kooperative Benehmen überraschend gut klappt, kann es
zu einem besonderen Lob kommen.

Die Idee ist nun die, dass schon die Deixis eine gemeinsame Verhal-
tensform oder Wir-Handlungsform H ist, die über gewisse Rollenvertei-
lungen H1, H2, H3 etc. ... definiert und als solche kontrolliert wird. Sie und
nicht etwa der räumliche Ort der Person allein, definiert das, was wir die
Perspektiven der Akteure nennen könnten. Mit anderen Worten, in einem
sogenannten Perspektivenwechsel von mir zu dir fühle ich mich nicht etwa
hinein, wie es wäre, du zu sein, oder die Welt von dir aus wahrzunehmen.
Wir reden zwar so. Aber wir meinen damit, dass wir im gemeinsamen Le-
ben verschiedene Rollenspiele zu beherrschen gelernt haben. Das Zeigen
selbst ist ein solches Rollenspiel. Ohne die Ergänzung durch die Reaktio-
nen dessen, dem etwas gezeigt wird, bliebe es ganz unverstanden. Hinzu
kommt die Kontrolle, ob dieser grundsätzlich angemessen, wenn vielleicht
auch noch irgendwie falsch bzw. unrichtig, weil irgendwie noch auf zu
corrigerende Weise, oder schon ganz und gar richtig und damit zur vollen
Zufriedenheit des Zeigenden reagiert, Mit anderen Worten ein Zeigen H1
ist immer nur als Teilmoment einer gemeinsamen Handlung H mit H=(H₁,H₂,H₃...) zu verstehen. Zu H gehört also wesentlich auch die handelnde Reaktion H₂ der zweiten Person und das Anerkennungshandeln bzw. Anerkennungsbenehmen H₃ der ersten Person. Dabei kann die Reaktion H₂ in einer verbalen oder noch nicht verbalen Handlung oder einem entsprechenden Benehmen bestehen, aber auch in einer Art Nachfrage. Die Kontrollhandlung H₃ kann im Fall, wenn das Zeigehandeln offenbar gescheitert ist, seinerseits weitere Korrekturhandlungen auf Seiten der ersten Person und damit weitere Reaktionen auf Seiten der zweiten nötig machen.

Jeder von uns kennt diese Rollenspiele sowohl aus der Perspektive der ersten als auch der zweiten Person, so wie wir wissen, was es heißt, Sprecher oder Hörer zu sein. Das heißt wir können die Rollen abwechselweise so spielen, wie ich zum Beispiel Verkäufer oder Käufer sein kann. Empraktisch, also im Modus des know-how, wissen wir, was das heißt. In eben diesem Sinn weiß ich, was es heißt, dass mir jemand etwas von vorne zeigt, was er, aber nicht ich, von hinten sieht – und umgekehrt. Das heißt, diesen nichttrivialen Perspektivenwechsel beherrschen wir Menschen, wenn oder weil wir die entsprechenden gemeinsamen Zeigespiele beherrschen. Und wir beherrschen sie nicht etwa erst dann, wenn wir uns „mental vorstellen“ (können), wie es wäre, die anderen Rollen zu spielen, wenn wir also sprachliche oder symbolische Repräsentationen für die Personen und Rollen etwa in stillen Selbstgesprächen zur Verfügung haben, sondern schon dann, wenn wir die Rollen einfach wirklich spielen können.

Um zu sehen, dass dem so ist, könnte folgende Erinnerung weiterhelfen. Wir bemerken schon als sehr kleine Kinder, wenn jemand zunächst an einem gemeinsamen Spiel, gerade auch einem Zeigespiel, hinreichend mit spielt und dann vielleicht mehr und mehr solitär wird, also nur noch für sich spielt. Man könnte, wenn man wollte, im Detail testen, woran sich zeigt, dass Kinder das bemerken, und wie sie dabei reagieren.9

Die in den Beispielen angezeigte Unterscheidung zwischen gemeinsamen Spielen und Solitärspielen hängt eng zusammen mit Raimo Tuomelas Unterscheidung zwischen handlungstheoretischen Individualbegriffen oder i-Begriffen und Gemeinbegriffen oder g-Begriffen, bzw. zwischen einem Ich-Modus und einem Wir-Modus eines Tuns sowohl qua Verhalten als

9 In Wittgensteins Liste für Spiele treten entsprechende Beispiele für gemeinsame Spiele oder Nicht-Solitärspielen und Solitärspiele auf: Wir spielen zum Beispiel zunächst zusammen mit zwei Bällen und einer zieht sich mehr und mehr zurück, spielt nur noch mit seinem Ball, nicht mehr mit der 2. Person. Oder wir tanzen zunächst zusammen und am Ende tanzt jeder für sich.
auch qua Handeln. Der Unterschied liegt darin, dass sich die ersteren auf ein individuelles Tun und Handeln, die letzteren auf ein gemeinsames Handeln beziehen. Spreche ich etwa von meinem Wunsch und meiner Maxime, so sind dies i-Begriffe, spreche ich von unserer gemeinsamen Absicht und unserer Zusammenarbeit, so sind dies g-Begriffe.


Das diffuse Ich/Wir – als eine Art Teilmoment des Daseins Heideggers – ist allerdings ein tiefes Problem. Gemeint ist eine Haltung in einer präsentischen Interaktion, in der, wie z.B. bei Kindern, in gewissem Sinn noch keine bewusste und explizite Ich-Du oder gar Ich-Du-Er-Es-Wir-Differenzierung vorgenommen (oder gar beherrscht) ist, so dass also in gewissem Sinn das reflektierte Meta-Wissen um die Perspektivität noch fehlt oder noch partiell defizitär ist. Das kann sich etwa darin zeigen, dass noch partiell unklar bleibt, warum Andere gerade wegen ihrer differenten Perspektive etwas gar nicht tun können.

Im Detail gibt es hier noch vieles genauer zu artikulieren, um am Ende eine gewisse Übersicht zu erhalten darüber, was einer so alles verstehen muss, um im vollen Sinn „ich“ und „du“ und „wir“ sagen zu können, also nicht bloß die Wörter sagen kann, sondern deren „Grammatik“ beherrscht. Es geht dabei keineswegs nur um das implizite Wissen um seine eigenen leiblichen Grenzen, sondern gerade um den Perspektivenwechsel als Rollenwechsel. Es geht dann, genauer, auch um die Entwicklung eines empirtisch manifesten und dann auch expliziten (verbalen) Wissens um die

10 Man denke zum Beispiel daran, dass nicht alle rein logisch möglichen Wir-Spiele wirklich funktionieren, weil die anderen das einfach nicht tun können, was ich gern möchte, was also meine Spielidee verlangen würde. Kinder verlangen entsprechend von Eltern oft Unmögliches.
Probleme dieses ‚Wechseldes‘, dass nämlich der andere anders ist, etwa seine eigenen Grenzen hat.


lung eines Wesens als potentielle Person, schon bevor diese ihre personalen Kompetenzen voll entwickelt hat, nur beim Menschen, nicht bei Tieren, den bekannten durchschlagenden Erfolg. Nur Menschen lernen die zentralen gemeinsamen Spiele, samt der Kontrollspiele des Tadelns und des Lobes. Das ist in gewissem Sinn einfach eine Tatsache, die man, wenn man unbedingt will, eine biologische Tatsache nennen kann. Sie ist als solche nicht weiter zu erklären, sondern einfach anzuerkennen.

Ob es Tiere gibt, die unter sich hinreichend analoge Spiele spielen, wissen wir faktisch nicht. Es ist aber keineswegs so, dass wir das grundsätzlich nicht wissen können, so wie wir grundsätzlich nie wissen können, wie genau es sich anfühlt, eine Fledermaus zu sein, solange wir nicht geklärt haben, was wir hier „wissen“ und „sich anfühlen“ zu nennen belieben. Die gestellte Frage ist nämlich so gemeint, oder sollte so verstanden werden: Gibt es hinreichend Anhaltspunkte dafür, dass, sagen wir, Delfine einander etwas zeigen können? Oder wären entsprechende Aussagen als unsere Projektionen in ihr Verhalten zu deuten, bisher jedenfalls?

Dabei kann es höchst interessant sein, genauer zu untersuchen, was denn die lerntheoretischen und lernpraktischen Differenzen sind, die sich „empirisch“ bzw. faktisch in wiederholbaren Beobachtungen und beliebig wiederholbaren Experimenten dingfest machen lassen. Solche Untersuchungen könnten zum Beispiel die Frage betreffen, welche Folgen ein (oft auch bloß subjektiver) Mangel an Lob und eine allzu stark auf Tadel und Kritik abgestellte Erziehung für die Entwicklung autonomer Personen hat.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{2.2 Voraussetzungen intentionaler Handlungen}

Personale Grundkompetenzen hängen von einer Kultur-Tradition ab. Das ist keine empirische Aussage. Es ist vielmehr eine Art Grundtatsache, die zu einer materialbegrifflichen Erläuterung von personalen Kompetenzen im Unterschied zu rein natürlichen (angeborenen) Fähigkeiten gehört. Diese Tatsache bedeutet nicht, dass wir Traditionen nie verändern, Rollenspiele nicht auch verweigern könnten. Wir können neue Institutionen vorschlagen und entwickeln, und zwar als schon gebildete Personen. Aber alle diese Fortentwicklungen finden längst schon im Rahmen einer Gemeinschaft und Tradition statt, in welcher bestimmt ist, was es heißt, als Person zu

\textsuperscript{11} Es könnten zum Beispiel Personen, die eher durch Tadel als durch Lob das Richtige zu tun lernen oder gar durch Abrichtung und Zwang, konservativer sein als andere, also stärker übliche Traditionen fortführen als neue beginnen können.
handeln, als Person einen Vorschlag oder auch nur eine Aussage, eine Proposition, zu machen und für diese zu argumentieren bzw. gegenüber anderen Personen zu begründen.


Generische Handlungen bzw. Handlungsschemata sind keineswegs einfach Klassen von Einzelhandlungen oder Einzelakten, obwohl dies der Vergleich mit der Unterscheidung zwischen Einzelnem und Allgemeinem (Generischem) leider oft nahe legt. Besser ist schon der im Ausdruck „Handlungsschema“ mittransportierte Vergleich generischer Handlungen mit den Schemata einer Praxis wie der des Rechnens, in welcher beliebig richtig (aber auch falsch) ausführbare Regeln die Ausführung einer Rech-


Sprechen und dann auch Denken können nun ihrerseits als Handlungsversuche glücken oder missglücken. Gerade dies zeigt, dass sie die kompetente Teilnahme an Handlungsformen voraussetzen. Als Personen müssen wir also immer schon ein gemeinschaftliches „Spiel‘ konzeptueller, begrifflicher, wenigstens in Umrissen sprachlich artikulierter, Unterscheidungen beherrschen und eine gewisse Kompetenz der Bewertung von Erfüllungen gewisser Bedingungen besitzen.

Der Mensch ist ein sprachbegabtes Wesen. Aber nur als Personen beherrschen wir Begriffe, im Unterschied zur bloßen Beherrschung der Artikulationsformen des Sprechens. Letztere können auch Papageien antrainiert werden. Eine Person zu sein, die Begriffe beherrscht, bedeutet, die gemeinsamen Normen zu kennen, die sich aus dem Begriffsgebrauch in Sprechakten ergeben.

Unsere Möglichkeiten der Entwicklung personaler Kompetenzen hängen dabei wesentlich ab von den realen Gemeinschaften, besonders auch von der Primärgemeinschaft wie der Familie, in deren Tradition das Individuum lebt und sich als Person entwickelt.\[^{13}\]

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\[^{13}\] So dürfte z.B. kaum bezweifelt werden, dass die (frühe) Entwicklung Mozarts ohne die erzieherische Begabung (und die enorme Autorität) seines Vaters nicht möglich gewesen wäre. Aber auch unsere gesamte technisch-wissenschaftliche und politische Weltverfassung verdankt vieles den Kultur-Leistungen der Antike. Es gibt dann auch
Die Praxis nun, welche Bewusstsein und Selbstbewusstsein bzw. das zugehörige Denken und Selbst-Denken sowohl möglich macht, als auch verlangt, ist selbst schon eine Praxis der *interpersonalen* Beziehung zu anderen Personen. Erst in zweiter Linie, in einem logisch gestuften Aufstieg, wird daraus eine Praxis *intrapersonaler* Selbstbeziehungen.


2.3 *Ich-Modus und Wir-Modus*

Das Tier lebt nur im *Ich-Modus*. Das heißt, es nimmt einfach nicht teil an einer Praxis gemeinsamen Wissens, samt der dafür begrifflich notwendigen gemeinsamen Richtigkeitskontrollen, und zwar weder mit uns noch, nach allem unserem Wissen, mit anderen Tieren. Insofern, aber auch nur insofern, ähnelt das Tier den Maschinen, nämlich im Hinblick auf einen Mangel an selbständiger Kontrolle des Richtigen. Es unterscheidet sich von Maschinen und auch von Pflanzen wesentlich aufgrund seiner Subjektivität. Diese Subjektivität besteht in einer inneren und äußeren Sensitivi-

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so etwas wie Grade in der Entwicklung der Person, und zwar wenn man an den Umfang ihrer Handlungskompetenz denkt. Erst recht gibt es Grade der Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit, wenn man unter diesem Titel die (vernünftige) Urteils- und autonome Regelsetzungskompetenz einer Person zusammenfasst.
tät, der Fähigkeit zur Empfindung von Schmerz, Begierde, Befriedigung und Frustration, und einer gewissen Fähigkeit der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung präsentischer Umwelt, samt differentieller Antworten im Tun, also in der Selbstbewegung des Tieres.

Wir sollten nun entsprechend unterscheiden zwischen dem animalischen Bewusstsein als der präsentischen awareness in Bezug auf innere Empfindungen (sensations oder inner experiences) bzw. attention auf präsentisch wahrnehmbare Objekte auf der einen Seite, dem menschlichen Bewusstsein oder der conscientia im Sinne einer Teilnahme an einer gemeinsamen Kontrollpraxis des rechten Urteilens, Schließens und Handelns andererseits. Dann nämlich begreifen wir auch, in welchem Sinn Tiere kein Bewusstsein haben, und zwar nach all unserem Wissen. Dass Tiere kein menschliches Bewusstsein haben, das ist reine Tautologie. Dass sie kein Bewusstsein im Sinn der conscientia, des gemeinsamen Wissens über das, was als richtig oder unrichtig, wahr oder falsch zu werten ist, dass ist keineswegs tautologisch. Tieren und Menschen gemeinsam ist dagegen eine subjektive Sensitivität der inneren Empfindung und der nach außen gerichteten Vigilanz und attentiven Aufmerksamkeit der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung, samt der dadurch mögliche Selbststeuerung der Bewegung des Körpers im animalischen, begierdegesteuerten, Verhalten. Nicht gemeinsam ist die conscientia, die gemeinsame und dabei immer auch eigene Kontrolle des Richtigen, das aus einer transpersonalen eben damit auch partiell transsituativen Perspektive, eben im Modus des Wir, bestimmt ist.

Insbesondere ist die menschliche Wahrnehmung verschieden von der Wahrnehmung eines Tieres. Auch das ist zunächst eine Tautologie. Gerneint ist aber, wie John McDowell seit Erscheinen seines äußerst wichtigen Buches Mind and World nicht müde wird zu betonen, dass der Inhalt menschlicher Wahrnehmung, als das Wahrgenommene, längst schon begrifflich gefasst ist, dass also der Inhalt der Wahrnehmung und der Inhalt eines passenden Wahrnehmungsurteils, mit dem man den Akt des Wahrnehmens möglicherweise begleiten könnte, als Inhalt identisch sind. Das ist der Grund warum Wahrnehmungen prämissenlose Ausgangspunkte im schließenden Denken sein können und warum in Wahrnehmungen Begründungsketten enden können, warum also Wahrnehmungen (manchmal sogar ausschlaggebende) Gründe dafür sein können, dass wir (oder jemand) etwas weiß bzw. dass etwas der Fall und eine entsprechende Aussage wahr ist. Mit anderen Worten, das Wahrnehmen eines Tieres unterscheidet sich kategorial von menschlicher Wahrnehmung.
Ein richtiges und falsches deiktisches und symbolisches Benehmen und dann auch ein richtiges und falsches symbolisches (Sprech-)Handeln gibt es nun aber selbst immer nur auf der Grundlage eines möglichen gemeinsamen Wissens, der *conscientia*. Allerdings ist es etwas anders, das Benehmen direkt und präsentisch als richtig zu kontrollieren und eine Re-Präsentation von nicht Präsentischem als wahr zu beurteilen. In der Tat macht erst eine gemeinsame Praxis des symbolischen Handelns richtige oder falsche symbolische Re-Präsentationen von nicht präsentisch zu- oder vorhandenen Gegenständen oder Ereignissen möglich, oder dann auch von bloßen Möglichkeiten. Das geschieht über eine am Ende immer präsentische Überprüfung der Zuordnungsbedingungen zwischen Aussage und Wahrnehmung, die (der Idee nach) zu einem allgemein anerkennbaren Urteil über deren Erfülltheit oder Richtigkeit führt.

Es ist bedeutsam, dass die präsentische Ausführung der für den Menschen wichtigsten symbolischen Handlungen, der Sprechhandlungen in der Lautsprache, für sich betrachtet praktische keinerlei Aufwand an Kraft und Zeit erfordern, sondern, wenn die Handlungsf orm en erlernt sind, *spontan* ausführbar sind. Das heißt, wenn uns ein Wort spontan, insofern passiv, einfällt, können wir es sofort, spontan, insofern aktiv äußern, etwa im Unterschied dazu, dass ich ein Bild erst malen muss und dazu die erforderlichen Zusatzmittel brauche. Insofern können (und sollten) wir zwischen der Spontaneität eines symbolischen Sprachhandelns und der Willkürfreiheit anderer Handlungen, die ich ebenfalls nach Belieben ausführen kann, sagen wir dem Fahrradfahren, unterscheiden: Ich kann jetzt, um 12.00, spontan den Wunsch oder die Absicht fassen oder das Versprechen artikulieren, um 14.00 Fahrrad zu fahren. Und ich kann, wenn ich will, diese Wunschabsicht oder dieses Versprechen um 14.00 nach Belieben ausführen, wenn das Fahrrad zuhanden ist und mich nichts anderes von der Ausführung abhält. Dabei sind dann allerdings, und das ist für jede begrifflich angemessene, nicht mythologisch-dogmatische, Handlungsanalyse absolut zentral, andere Wunschabsichten keine *Ursachen der Verhinderung*, sondern be- stenfalls mögliche *Gründe* für eine Änderung der *handlungsleitenden Absicht*. Die handlungsleitende Absicht wird im Handeln selbst wirksam, und zwar auch dann, wenn der Ausführungsversuch aufgrund unvorhergesehener Ereignisse, insofern zufällig, scheitern sollte. Diese Wirksamkeit ist nun eine *kausale* Beziehung nur im englischen, fast uferlosen, Gebrauch des Wortes „*causal*“. In Wirklichkeit ist nämlich schon die Beziehung zwischen dem spontanen Einfall und dem Fassen einer Absicht in einer freien Planentscheidung nicht kausal, schon gar nicht die zwischen der Entschei-


Jedes Handeln ist dabei Ausführung von vielen verschiedenen Handlungschemata zugleich. Indem ich jetzt etwa diesen Text schreibe, tue ich

Wenn wir zwar von einem Akteur A sagen können, er verhalte sich gemäß dem Schema X, wenn A also, deskriptiv bzw. askriptiv, also im Modus einer äußeren Zuschreibung gesprochen, X zwar tut, er aber X gar nicht tun will oder ihm vielleicht (vor oder) während seines Tuns gar nicht bewusst ist, dass er X ausführt, sei es, dass er überhaupt nicht weiß (sagen kann), was er tut, sei es, dass er glaubt (sagen würde), etwas anderes als X zu tun, dann wollen wir X bloß das Verhaltensschema seines Tuns nennen. Ein Tun ist eine bloße Verhaltung, wenn es vom Akteur nicht bewusst unter ein Handlungsschema gestellt ist.

Wenn einer z.B. gähnt, mag dies eine Verhaltung sein. Hält er dabei die Hand vor den Mund, so mag sich dies so automatisch ergeben, dass er es gar nicht mehr eigens zu wollen braucht. Er wird in der Regel zwar wissen (sagen können), was er tut, aber er wird sich zu diesem Tun nicht etwa entschließen müssen. Natürlich kann einer auch absichtlich sein Gähnen zu Schau stellen, etwa um zum Ausdruck zu bringen, dass er sich langweilt.

2.4 Autonomie als bewusste Antwort auf Traditionen und Institutionen

Auf höherer Ebene ist es dann interessant zu prüfen, wann, erstens, eine 'Abweichung' von einem bisher gespielten Spiel als Fehler erkannt bzw. 'sanktioniert' wird, wann dagegen ein 'neuer Zug' im Spiel als eine Art neuer Regelungsvorschlag bzw. als Teil eines 'neuen' Spiels anerkannt wird, mit neuen 'Normen' oder 'Richtigkeiten'. Diese Normen oder Richtigkeiten existieren in der Form gemeinsamer Anerkennung, dass noch 'richtig' mitgespielt wird, also in der Abwesenheit eines entsprechenden Protest- oder Sanktionsverhalten. Drittens gibt es die Möglichkeit, dass eine Abweichung als Teasing oder Witz verstanden wird.


14 Dass sich der Mensch vom Tier gerade durch seine Sprachfähigkeit und sein (Sprach)Gedächtnis unterscheidet, wie dies Platon und Aristoteles, Descartes und Hobbes, Nietzsche und viele andere längst schon sahen, bestätigt sich hier erneut.

**LITERATUR**


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Tolerance and Truth in Intercultural Dialogue: Some Reflections

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1. The Problem of Intercultural Dialogue

It is only in the last few decades that “interculturality” and “intercultural dialogue” have become popular terms both in everyday and scientific discourse, while the problems referred to by these terms of course are far from being new. This may indicate an increased consciousness (1) of the omnipresence of intercultural contacts in the wake of globalization and (2) of the assumed or experienced detrimental consequences – for individual and social life as well as for democracy and global peace – connected with the failure of intercultural contacts. Thus, ‘interculturality’ and ‘intercultural dialogue’ have become symbols for human togetherness, and given the acknowledged importance of these concepts, academic disciplines dealing with human relations, such as philosophy, psychology or education, can no longer exclude them from the argumentative contexts of their respective fields. Consequently, there is a growing need to clarify the problem of interculturality, to examine its meaning, content and implications. Today interculturality must be a central subject matter of historically and/or systematically expounded theories in the humanities and in the social sciences – a requirement which is to be reflected within the various academic disciplines and in the interdisciplinary framework, taking into consideration the historical and the present social, political, and socio-structural forms and tendencies of interculturality, as well as its effects on individuals and individual identity.

In connection with this, the question must be asked how interculturality and intercultural dialogue relate to other fundamental dimensions of human thought and human behavior, two of which stand in the focus of attention of this paper, namely, tolerance and truth. It is asked whether intercultural dialogue with its need for tolerance – for admitting different legitimate ways of thinking and acting – is compatible with the pursuit of truth, which seems to require from the start that there can only be one true way of thinking and acting.
Before trying to answer this question, we need to take a look at the central terms. As for “culture”, there are some two hundred different attempts to determine its content. Obviously, “culture” is a term that people use in very different manners, and we cannot assume that there is a universally shared understanding of what is meant by it. For example, in the German language area, there is at least a tendency to focus on ethnicity and geography when speaking of cultures, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon language area, also culture-generating variables other than ethnicity and geography are stressed, such as generation, gender, affiliation, and social status (cf. Pedersen 2004, 3). What seems most significant is that culture, on the one hand, is manifested by artifacts (in this form, it is conserved and fixed) and that, on the other hand, it is a mental disposition shared by a group of people, which is relevant for their identity concepts and their perceptions of other people (and therefore dynamic). For intercultural relationships, the last sense of culture is probably the more important one, and hence it seems proper to follow Helen Spencer-Oatey (2000, 4), who describes “culture” as “a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values … which influence their behaviour and their interpretations of the meaning of other people’s behaviour.”

The term “interculturality”, in turn, refers to a relationship between two or more cultures, for which their difference and similarity, openness and delimitation are constitutive (cf. Friedenthal-Haase 1992, 16; Friedenthal-Haase 2002, 498). In this sense, we can speak of “interculturality” only if the relationship between cultures is neither directed towards a complete homogenization nor a complete separation, exclusion or even extinction, and only if at least a minimum of differing and having in common is acknowledged in principle and possible in reality (cf. ibid.).

This given, we can say that an intercultural dialogue is a dialogue that displays the features of interculturality just described. The partners in such a dialogue are likely to think differently – at least in part – about what is appropriate and what is not, and also about what is right and what is wrong. Thus, intercultural dialogue starts out with a relationship between persons who originally or “naturally” (or “unreflectedly”), as judged on the basis of their frameworks of value and interpretation, do not fully understand each other. The challenge that is structurally inherent in intercultural dialogue – a relationship characterized by basic mutuality! – has its roots in a lack of mutual understanding.

The aim of intercultural dialogue, in a most general sense, is to overcome this “natural” situation of non-understanding – and to avoid confron-
Intercultural dialogue can be seen as an answer to the challenges entailed by cultural diversity in our age of globalization, above all as an answer to the widespread fear that cultural diversity is not an enrichment of, but a threat to identity and that it leads to cultural clash. Perhaps it is even true that intercultural dialogue has, in response to this fear, become a new paradigm for global relations (cf. Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden 2001, 36 and 107-170), which is made visible and promoted on a broad basis. An example for the propagation of this new paradigm is the proclaiming of the year 2008 as the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” by the European Union; another example is the designation of the year 2001 (which, ironically, will always be remembered best by the terrorist attacks of September 11) as the “Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations” by the United Nations.

2. Intercultural Dialogue and the Question of Tolerance

The way in which the aim of intercultural dialogue is reached must neither involve an explicit or implicit superiority claim of one of the participants over the other, nor neglect existing cultural differences. The aim of intercultural communicative efforts, namely to maintain the difference between cultural systems and to come to a mutual understanding at the same time, is therefore difficult to achieve and may even seem self-contradictory.

But this aim is, as a matter of fact, not self-contradictory; the very idea of interculturality as mutuality requires from the start, as mentioned above, at least a minimum of differing and of having in common, without any detriment to the coherence of that idea. Interculturality is directed both towards the general, which the dialogue partners have in common, and towards the specific, in which they differ. Intercultural dialogue presupposes that some common ground between the cultures can be identified, which serves as a basis for a mutual clarification of the differences. Consequently, the possibility of a dialogue across the boundaries of cultures depends on the assumption that there are valid transcultural values which are applicable to all partners in the intercultural dialogue.

An important key to reaching the aim of intercultural dialogue is to reject any kind of centrism (for example, ethnocentrism) – to reject the universalization of a point of view which is only of particular validity – and to embrace tolerance. However, since value systems constitute cultures to a large degree, the pursuit of tolerance is often taken to consist in acknowledging that no culturally based value system can be objectively superior to
any other such value system. This means that either there is no objective standard of comparison for the different cultural value systems, or that, from an objective point of view, they are all of equal standing. In any case, it seems that the pursuit of tolerance demands that there is no objective basis for judging the value system of one culture to be better than that of another culture. Moreover, it seems that only this absence of objectivity and the acceptance of it can be the source of tolerance. In consequence, successful intercultural dialogue seems to depend on a relativist approach and on abstaining from ranking culturally different values according to objective importance and truth.

Now, is it indeed detrimental to intercultural dialogue to adhere to the assumption, and to express it, that certain values on one side of a cultural divide are objectively right, respectively important, whereas values on the other side of that divide are objectively wrong, respectively unimportant? I would like to consider this question. Doing so involves, centrally, a clarification of the relationship between tolerance and truth and of the implications of this relationship for intercultural dialogue.

Firstly, the Latin root of “to tolerate” reminds us that it means to endure something we dislike, disagree with or disapprove of. Consequently, it does not make sense to talk of toleration when expressing, say, agreement, pleasure, or untroubled friendship. Secondly, being tolerant implies being in a position to change something about the situation disliked, disagreed with or disapproved of. This indicates the voluntary nature of the attitude of tolerance; nobody can be forced to be tolerant. And thirdly, tolerance must be distinguished from indifference. We are not tolerant if we do not care about a matter; we are only tolerant in cases where we do care, and do not share an expressed opinion, view, attitude, custom or habit, but still put up with it.

Moreover, some theorists have rightly claimed that it is not enough to define tolerance negatively as the absence of intolerance, as a concept of mere endurance, but that it needs to be complemented by a positive dimension: of actively creating human reality by recognizing and esteeming difference. The UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance from the year 1995 (article 1) stresses that “[t]olerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. (…) Tolerance is harmony in difference. (…) Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. (…) It means that one is free to adhere to one’s own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings,
naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one’s views are not to be imposed on others.”

Obviously, tolerance is a virtue that is needed for intercultural dialogue. But how far does it go? Does it imply tolerating all cultural differences equally, not only enduring but esteeming all of them? Is it illegitimate, from a tolerant point of view, to pass judgments on other cultures? And does tolerating cultural features or practices other than my own exclude my believing that my own culturally determined beliefs and practices are better than the ones that I do not share?

3. Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Relativism

Many advocates of intercultural dialogue adopt a non-judgmental cultural relativist standpoint, claiming that value judgments about other cultures are to be avoided. The argument for this position runs as follows: Values and ideals are applicable only within the particular cultures which acknowledge them. As there are neither universal nor transcultural values, cultures can only be approached from within. It is impossible to adopt a culture-neutral standpoint or to find an objective standard for comparing values and evaluating ideals. Therefore, it cannot be shown that one value is objectively superior to another. Since a person can never leave the perspective of his or her own culture, judging the values of another culture amounts to cultural imperialism and cannot be morally justified. It is, therefore, required of all cultures to tolerate – in the cultural relativist sense – all other cultures and their respective value systems (cf. Khin Zaw 1996, 128; Siegel 1999, 393).

It is interesting to note that this argument which includes the rejection of all forms of universal value claims nevertheless makes universal value claims: demanding of all cultures to tolerate all other cultures and their respective value systems is, in fact, a universal value claim, just as is the claim that cultural imperialism is simply wrong (and not only from the perspective of a certain culture). The argument is, therefore, incoherent: it invokes transcultural values while it denies the existence of such values. There is only one logical way out of this situation that allows one to remain an advocate of intercultural dialogue: to give up the assumption that all values are culture-relative.

There are some other problems connected with the position that all values and ideals are culture-relative and cannot, and must not, be judged from the outside.
Firstly, from this relativist perspective it is possible to express one’s own beliefs, but it is impossible to claim that what one believes to be right is applicable across cultural boundaries. Rather, judgment on a given cultural practice, for example, can only be passed relative to the cultural context to which one belongs. Therefore, I cannot claim that female genital cutting is wrong as such. As I cannot judge another culture objectively, all I can do is claim that from my cultural perspective, female genital cutting is wrong. We can easily see that such criticism is without any bite, since it treats the question at issue as if it were a mere question of cultural taste. It can easily be silenced by the opposite viewpoint: “But in my culture, female genital cutting is a good thing; basta.” The dialogue comes to an end here (de gustibus non est disputandum). Clearly, the relativist position does not allow the claim that violations of human rights are objectively wrong, as these violations must, according to that position, always be seen in a cultural context. One could also ask, “Why condemn the Nazis? The things they did were just an expression of their culture, which must not be judged from the outside”, and there could be no valid objection to this if relativism were right. At this point, most of us will intuitively feel that something is wrong with the relativist position. But we can only reconcile our intuition with our philosophy if we acknowledge that some values are valid beyond the boundaries of any particular culture – namely, those values which belong to the sphere of “the right” (for example, human dignity and human integrity) rather than to the sphere of “the good” (cf. Rawls 2001), those values which can be generalized and refer to “moral questions” that can be decided rationally, rather than to “evaluative questions” of a particular good life that can only be discussed within the framework of a concrete historical form of life or an individual way of life (cf. Habermas 1991, 39).

Secondly, the cultural relativist standpoint cannot explain the non-coercive influence which different cultures exert on one another and have always exerted in the history of cultural development (cf. Nussbaum 2000, 48-49). If the assumption is kept up that there are no transcultural values, then the fact that cultures have always developed in exchange with other cultures must be seen exclusively as a mere question of power and domination, so that those values which spread from one culture to another cannot properly become values of this other culture but must always remain externally imposed and alien to it. It is undeniable that in the history of mankind there are many cases where values have been forced upon a weaker culture by a stronger culture. But what is of interest here are cases – and such cases exist – where one culture recognizes the – transcultural – truth or su-
priority in a feature of another culture and therefore adopts it, in other words, cases where one culture learns from another culture in a non-coercive way.

An important point of clarification needs to be made. Radical and moderate cultural relativists agree that there are no transcultural values in the sense of *culture-absolute values*, whereas there are of course *culture-relative values*. Radical cultural relativists hold *in addition* that different cultures never ever have any values in common; this is usually accompanied by the assertion that no culture can truly understand any other culture. The question that must be asked here is how, given these assumptions, intercultural dialogue can be possible at all – since an intercultural relationship, as was said above, needs at least *some* common ground. Moderate cultural relativists, in their turn, hold that certain values can indeed be shared (accepted) by different cultures. Thus, moderate cultural relativists can, *in a sense*, believe in transcultural values – but this is not the sense of transcultural value which is relevant here. Consider that transcultural values in the cultural relativist sense are only valid for the accepting cultures, *not*, however, valid independently of acceptance or non-acceptance. Therefore, they cannot be employed in criticizing another culture – if this criticism is to be more than a mere expression of how one sees matters from one’s own cultural viewpoint.

Let’s assume (cf. in a similar sense Harris 1982, 224) that Mary is a tolerant person who lives in a democratic society and is committed to the idea of equality – equality regarding both individuals and cultures. But what if one of these cultures – culture C – does not honor the idea of equality and does not equally respect all persons? From Mary’s point of view, valuing the equality of individuals requires her to criticize, or even condemn, the discriminatory features of this other culture, while at the same time valuing the equality of cultures requires her to refrain from cultural criticism. How might Mary escape from this dilemma? According to cultural relativism, she must make the following declaration: “From my point of view, I disapprove of the discriminatory practices of culture C, but at the same time, I hold that, from my point of view, culture C is as acceptable as any other culture.” This is obviously not a plausible way out of Mary’s dilemma. The *only* plausible way out for Mary is to draw limits to tolerance and to go ahead with criticizing the discriminatory features of culture C *without* at the same time letting C be as acceptable as any other culture. But this implies the recognition on Mary’s side that there are transcultural values in the culture-absolute sense, or in other words: that there is objective truth
regarding values. At the same time, these transcultural values constitute what must be held in common for entering into an intercultural relationship.

4. A Reconciliation of Tolerance and Truth in Intercultural Dialogue

But does not the assumption of the truth of one’s own convictions stand in the way of dialogue, even the ability for dialogue? And worse than that: does not this assumption lead to violence? Isaiah Berlin is right when he states that in the history of mankind “[f]ew things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals or groups (or tribes or states or nations or churches) that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth” (Berlin 2001, 12, emphasis in the original), as this belief “makes one certain that there is one goal & one only for one’s nation or church or the whole of humanity, & that it is worth any amount of suffering (particularly on the part of other people) if only the goal is attained” (ibid.). The problem Berlin draws attention to, however, is not the question whether there is objective truth at all; rather, he criticizes a certain manner of relating oneself to truth: the manner of presumptuously claiming that one is already in the possession of the whole truth, or on the sole way to truth, without allowing the possibility of error (the evil implication being that differing positions are to be despised or even extinguished). In fact, it is this arrogant – and ignorant (and perhaps fundamentally confused and insecure) – attitude that is the enemy of tolerance.

Moreover, there are two objections to the idea that assuming the truth of one’s own convictions per se prevents tolerance:

(1) The assumption that one must (try to) suppress, or at least interfere with, a conception of the good that one believes to be wrong can only be upheld if the deontic judgment – the belief that the conception is wrong – is also a responsibility judgment – a belief that it is mandatory to suppress the conception (cf. Wren 1991, 144-145; Churchill 1997, 204). In a pluralist society, this suppression can only be justified where the transcultural values of “the right” are at stake. In all other cases, the deontic judgment must be distinguished from the responsibility judgment, and it is perfectly consistent both to believe that a person A is wrong regarding X (e.g., a certain religious belief) and to deny that any other person has the right and the responsibility to prevent A from exercising X. On the contrary: a democratic society stands in need of a plurality of views and conceptions of the good life; and a humane and enlightened society will stress the individual’s
capacity and right to decide for herself whether to adhere to a certain conception of the good or not.

(2) The assumption that one’s own beliefs are true need not lead to a dogmatic or to an arrogant attitude – the attitude of considering oneself the sole possessor of truth. On the contrary, the Socratic wisdom that admits not to know, while it acknowledges objective truth and provisionally considers its convictions to be true, proves to be a rather realistic approach in relating oneself to the world. Our age, which has often been claimed to be an age of knowledge, can with equal right be characterized as an age of ignorance and uncertainty. No one can justify his or her beliefs completely; there will always remain assumptions that cannot be shown to be true – and, likely enough, some of them are false. Thus, the holding of a belief in the right way has a seemingly paradoxical form: When we believe something in the right way, we certainly assume (perhaps emphatically) that what we believe is true – and not only true from our own point of view –, but at the same time we accept the possibility that we could be wrong. This modest attitude allows us to see ourselves as permanent searchers for truth instead of permanent possessors of truth, and thus to see also others as searchers for truth, and leads us to an insight which is very important for intercultural dialogue and which has long been recognized by protagonists of the dialogical relation, as for example, by Martin Buber. It is the insight that there are many paths to truth. Although the whole truth can never be fully grasped, each path can lead, so to speak, to a piece of the truth, which can be grasped. According to Martin Buber, the lines that lead to the different aims of all true searchers of truth, if extended beyond their particular aims, intersect in a higher sphere, which Buber (1953, 345) calls “the truth of God”. According to Buber, education is essential for making this idea palpable; because it is the educational process which renders the intersection of the lines visible and experienceable; the different lines cross, and where they cross, human encounter can take place and true dialogue (cf. Meilhammer 2005, 174-175). Hence, in the educational process, not only “the sheer otherness of things in the world” can be learned, which “extends to recognition of the otherness of other cultures” (Standish 2006, 98), but also the experience of a common ground underlying the cultural differences.

The two above-described objections against the widespread idea that truth and tolerance are inimical to each other, suggest that the so-called paradox of toleration (cf. Raphael 1988, 139; Mendus 1989, 18-21; Langerak 1997, 116) can be solved: There is a plausible answer to the
question why one should tolerate something (instead of trying to prevent it) though one is genuinely convinced that it is truly wrong. There are three good reasons for toleration: (1) It is a person’s right – qua being a person – to have her own convictions (irrespective of other persons approving of these convictions or not); (2) these other convictions – provided they respect certain culture-absolute transcultural values, most importantly the fundamental human rights – can legitimately be considered as the expression of a particular path to (a piece of) truth; and (3) one’s own convictions could be wrong, although one cannot see this now, and perhaps never will. Thus, intercultural dialogue is more than just a confrontation, or indifferent expounding, of the different perspectives of different cultures. *Something* can occur which, from a cultural relativist stance, cannot be envisaged to the full extent of its meaning: *genuine* intercultural encounter – and intercultural learning – can take place, which can enrich one’s own value system (by new *truth*) and can also challenge it (by putting into question the *truth* of beliefs so far held unquestioningly). One will have to legitimize one’s own point of view.\(^1\) The perspective of the other can be the touchstone for one’s own perspective, which may pass this test, or may also have to be modified. This modest and self-critical attitude leads to *non-relativist tolerance*. It points to an understanding of intercultural dialogue that reconciles tolerance and truth.\(^2\)

**REFERENCES**


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1 John Stuart Mill (1992, 51f) remarks, with respect to the toleration of different opinions, that a diversity of views promotes truth, because each of these views (though they may be false) can contain “a portion of truth”; moreover, instead of holding our own opinions as simple prejudices, views that differ from our own views will compel us to defend what we think is true, thus providing us with a better grasp of it.
2 I would like to thank Kathrin Hönig (University of Zurich, Switzerland) for her pertinent comments on an earlier draft of this paper.


Disagreement and Misunderstanding
Across Cultures

HANS ROTT, REGENSBURG

1. Wittgenstein on misunderstanding vs. disagreement

In the *Big Typescript* of about 1933, Wittgenstein wrote:

The problem also emerges in this question: How does a misunderstanding become evident? For that's the same as the problem: How does it become evident that I have understood correctly? And that means: How can I explain the meaning? Now the question is: Can a misunderstanding be revealed in one person's affirming what another denies? No, because that's a difference of opinion and it can be adhered to as such. Until we *assume* that the other person is right .... ... What can be removed by an explanation I call a misunderstanding. The explanation of the meaning of a word excludes misunderstandings.¹

This passage is not particularly transparent. Wittgenstein considers cases of "being at variance" with each other, namely when one person affirms what the other person denies.

What he seems to be saying is that even clear cases of being at variance may be interpreted as harmless cases of "talking past each other", *if the first person assumes – as a matter of conversational heuristics – that the other is right*. This charitable assumption that what has been said is true

¹ Wittgenstein (2005, 30e). The following text is embedded in the one quoted:

So if to explain the word "lilac" I point to a patch and say "This patch is lilac", can this explanation then work in two ways - on the one hand as a definition that uses the patch as a sign, and on the other as an elucidation? And how is the latter possible? I would have to assume that the other person is telling the truth and seeing the same thing I'm seeing. ...

I could say: If what A told B is the truth, then the word "lilac" must have *this* meaning. So I can also assume this meaning quasi-hypothetically, and say: if I understand the word *in that way*, then A is right. But an ostensive definition corresponds to the "in that way".

We say: "Yes, if the word means *that*, then the proposition is true".
may in fact seem to turn "genuine" disagreements into "mere" verbal quibbles.

Similar distinctions like that between Mißverständnis and Meinungsverschiedenheit can be found in two famous papers of the 1970s. In "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1974), Donald Davidson distinguishes differences in conceptual scheme from differences in belief, and in "What is a Theory of Meaning?" (1975), Michael Dummett distinguishes disagreements stemming from difference of interpretation from disagreements of substance (disagreements about the facts).

Speakers have a firmly entrenched intuition that there is a fundamental distinction between genuine, substantive disagreement and merely verbal differences (differences in ways of speaking). But what exactly does this distinction between the two consist in? This is the main question of this paper, and I would like to apply it to the problem of intercultural communication. But the question is of course a reasonable one to put for speakers of the same language. We do not expect too varied or too fundamental divergences between speakers of the same language. But let us suppose for the purposes of this paper that only two persons, called "speakers", are involved in a given communication situation. Both disagreement and misunderstanding are spawned by linguistic utterances. If the speakers share the language, one of the speakers affirms $p$, the other one denies it, i.e., affirms the negation $\neg p$. On the face of it, the two persons are at variance with one another. So this appears to be a clear case of disagreement, since after all, speakers of the same language should not assign different meanings to the terms of their common language. But it may happen in the course of a conversation that things are sorted out in such a way that the two persons in the end agree that they have just been using their words in different ways. By assuming that the other one is right ("Until we assume that the other person is right ..."), both partners in conversation can come to agree that the previous disagreement was only a difference of façon de parler (of manner of speaking).

The situation for speakers of different languages or cultures is different. On the one hand, one is prepared to encounter all kinds of discrepancies, disagreements and misunderstandings much more frequently and in much more severe forms than between members of the same culture. After all, different languages mean different cultures, different cultures mean different attitudes, beliefs and desires. So presumably, conflicts are more likely

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2 Even though Davidson does not think that there is a clear distinction here.
to occur here than between fellows of the same cultural and linguistic community. This is part of what makes a foreign culture foreign. The situation, however, is more complicated. When two persons are speakers of different languages, they need to make use of a translation that maps the utterances of the one person into the language of the other person. The direct form of disagreement between two speakers of the same language that is codified by a language's negation particle cannot arise. Every sort of apparent conflict of opinion will make itself felt only indirectly, mediated by a translation. And an adequate translation, one might argue, must not only convey what the speaker seems to mean, literally speaking, but also what the speaker really means. Fundamental disagreements seem to be precluded by this method. For could it be that the speaker really has a picture of the world completely different from ours?

The plan of this paper is as follows. First I shall have a brief look at the idea of a good translation and the associated task of ascribing beliefs to a foreign speaker. I shall confront the Kuhnian scepticism about the existence of adequate translations with the Quinean doctrine of the overabundance thereof (Section 2). I shall then look at two rather prominent examples from anthropological research (Section 3). Their analysis favours Quine over Kuhn in that there seem to be common ways of linguistic expression and rationality across vastly different cultures. Then I have a brief look at an artificial example designed to bring out the fact that indeterminacy of translation results in indeterminacy of the distinction between disagreement and misunderstanding (Section 4). The paper ends with some remarks on the difference between translation across foreign cultures and translation within a cultural and linguistic community.

2. Translation of sentences and ascription of beliefs

Communication across different cultures requires translation. Our discussion will be restricted to objective assertions, not assertions about ethical or aesthetical matters, for instance. No other speech acts will be considered.

A translation is a function mapping the sentences (or utterances) of one language into the sentences (or utterances) of another language. The central idea is that translation ought to preserve meanings. But preservation of meaning is an idea we will try to make sense of, not an idea to start from. Translations need to be constrained in order to be counted as good or adequate translations. I suggest two important conditions:
a) **Perceptual anchoring.** A translation should be anchored in basic perceptual situations. It may be assumed that the same object is seen (heard, felt, smelt, tasted) at a given point of time by different persons in similar ways, and similar perceptions are likely to be grouped under the same or similar concepts. Although the boundaries may be drawn differently by speakers of different languages (sometimes also by speakers of "the same" language), concepts that are closely connected to perceptions should not be wildly at odds with one another. This requirement is motivated by the fact that language learning, whether first or second language, somehow starts with observation sentences.

b) **Homomorphy.** A translation should be as homomorphic as possible; circuitous, protracted translations are to be avoided. Translation should mimic the syntactical structure of the source sentences in the corresponding sentences of the target language. This, of course, is an ideal that cannot in general be perfectly attained, but still an ideal that is to be pursued. Homophonic translations go even farther than homomorphic translations: They are identity mappings, and it is plausible (though by no means necessary) to think of the source and target languages as identical. Homophonic translations are very special cases that do not even look like translations.

The two conditions, vague as they are, go a long way toward restricting the range of acceptable translations. How strong are these restrictions? It is very unlikely that they limit the number of acceptable translations of a given corpus of sentences to exactly one. Two other options, both undesirable at first sight, are much more likely. First, the restrictions could be so severe that for all realistic translation tasks, there is not a single translation meeting both Perceptual anchoring and Homomorphy. The pronounce-ments of speakers of different cultures or languages then are incommensurable, in the sense that there is no common measure to compare their contents, no translation can bridge the gap in *Weltanschauung* they embody. This calls in question the possibility of successful communication.

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3 A perfect correspondence in syntactical structure will only be achieved when objects are similarly categorized by the lexica of the respective languages. For instance, the sentence "this object has colour C" in a language having only three colour terms is likely to be translated into a disjunction of sentences in a language with seven colour terms. Thus lexical variance implies syntactical variance. Homomorphic translations are only possible between languages with vocabularies that are in this sense "similar".
Let us call this the *Kuhnian* option. The other option, in contrast, holds that for all realistic translation tasks, there is an abundance of acceptable translations. Lots of translation schemes satisfy the two constraints, and in fact they all do it, in some sense yet to be explained, equally well. Then we'll have to ask whether it makes any sense to talk of "the right translation" at all or whether there is an essential *indeterminacy*. This is, of course, the *Quinean* option.

On the face of it, the Quinean option is much more plausible than the Kuhnian one. The mere fact that we possess zillions of translations of texts – fiction and non-fiction alike –, with which we are more or less content, may serve as an empirical indication that the task of translation is a feasible one. It is true that every translation loses some distinctive characteristics of the original. But this does not discourage us from producing good translations. We rather need to see which further constraints to place on a good translation and whether they can be satisfied simultaneously.

The enterprise of understanding the utterances of a foreigner is not exhausted by the process of translation. Having translated a number of sentences of a speaker, the interpreter needs to make up her mind which beliefs to ascribe to the speaker. This is an interpretational step that is often overlooked. One question relevant here is whether the interpreter should assume that the speaker is logically competent in the sense that he is aware of the implications of what he is saying. Would he realize what his utterances commit him to? Would he be ready to follow them through even if they lead to some strange or even absurd consequences? Or would he rather want to step back if the contents of his utterances are found to be incoherent?

### 3. Two anthropological examples

Genuine disagreement presupposes understanding. What looks like substantive disagreement on the face of it, loses its bite if it turns out that we have just talked past one another. Thus even if we do not know whether a given discrepancy is a case of disagreement or misunderstanding, we need to make plausible anyway that understanding between cultures is possible in principle. I shall now give two anthropological examples that initially seem to favour the Kuhnian option. The cases of Chinese counterfactual reasoning and of Zande logic both became well-known for their apparent
indication that different people are of so different minds that understanding is hardly ever possible between them.

3.1 Chinese counterfactuals

Twenty-five years ago, Alfred Bloom (1981) published a small book with the title *The Linguistic Shaping of Thought: A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West*. He claimed to have gathered empirical evidence that Chinese people have great difficulties in reasoning from counterfactual assumptions (and thus in performing abstract theoretical reasoning in general), far more than English-speaking people. As an explanation of this alleged deficiency he offered the fact that the Chinese language does not provide for linguistic markers for counterfactual reasoning. There are some protracted or roundabout ways of expressing counterfactual suppositions, but Chinese does not have anything like the subjunctive conditionals of English. This was supposed to be a paradigmatic instance confirming the notorious Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – a double hypothesis of linguistic relativity and determinism, according to which specific lexical, morphological and syntactic features of a given language determine, to some extent at least, what the speakers are capable of thinking. If Sapir and Whorf were right, speakers subject to the limitations of their language could not think beyond the reach of their language. But then it seems, no translation from a language containing counterfactuals.

Bloom's publication generated a lot of discussion. Counterfactuals were called prime examples of abstract Western reasoning with which Chinese people were alleged to feel very uncomfortable. In the end, however, the inference from the absence of a specific counterfactual conditional construction in the Chinese language to the inability of its speakers to reason counterfactually turned out to be indefensible. Some of Bloom's

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4 Here is one of Bloom's stories and its result: "'Bier was an eighteenth-century European philosopher. There was some contact between the West and China at that time, but very few works of Chinese philosophy had been translated. Bier could not read Chinese, but if he had been able to read Chinese, he would have discovered B; what would have most influenced him would have been C; once influenced by that Chinese perspective, Bier would then have done D, and so on. The subjects were then asked to check off whether B, C, and D actually occurred. The American students gave the correct answer, no, ninety-eight percent of the time; the Chinese students gave the correct answer only seven percent of the time! Bloom concluded that the Chinese language renders its speakers unable to entertain hypothetical false worlds without great mental effort." (Pinker 1995, 56f)
counterfactually turned out to be indefensible. Some of Bloom's stories were ambiguous, some of his translations into Chinese were not idiomatic, and similar effects could be provoked in Arabic speakers as well as English speakers which both do have a marker for counterfactual conditionals. The discussion is still going on, but it is fair to say that Bloom's attempt to show that the linguistic peculiarities of a certain language can block its speakers' cognitive powers has failed. If Chinese and Arab speakers sometimes show little inclination to play the games anthropologists would like them to play, this may reflect mainly on the kind of tasks they were put to.

3.2 Zande reasoning

So let us take it for granted that other peoples' languages are capable of expressing complex propositions, and let us ask whether the logic on which human reasoning is based is universal. This brings us to another episode of anthropological research that begins with Edward Evans-Pritchard's (1937) famous research on the Azande, a tribe of north central Africa. This research drew considerable attention from philosophers, as witnessed, for instance, by Peter Winch's (1964) and Charles Taylor's (1982) discussions about the possibility of cross-cultural standards of rationality. Here, however, I want to focus on the discussion following David Bloor's chapter on 'Azande logic and Western Science' in his book Knowledge and Social Imagery (1976). Drawing on Evans-Pritchard, Bloor claimed that the Azande have a logic which is very different from the Western one.

The Azande (as of 1937) believed in witchcraft. More precisely, they believed in a witchcraft-substance in the belly which is inherited from parents to their same-sexed children, i.e., from fathers to sons and from mothers to daughters). While any Zande clan is likely to have some witches (of either sex), no clan is thought to consist only of witches. This, however, seems to run counter to the canons of (our, Western) logic. In the words of Evans-Pritchard (1937, 24):

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5 Perhaps the most well-known criticisms of Bloom were provided by Terry Au (1983, 1984), Lisa G. Liu (1985), Yohtaro Takano (1989) and Donna Lardiere (1992).
6 One of the counterfactual assumptions was "If all circles were large ...". If a disrespect for counterfactuals were typically Chinese, Quine would have had some Chinese traits. For Quine (1960, 222 and 225), the subjunctive conditional, depending on "dramatic projection", has "no place in an austere canonical notation for science".
7 "Zande" is the singular noun and adjectival form of the word and "Azande" is the plural noun. (Jennings 1989, 275)
To our minds it appears evident that if a man is proven a witch the whole of his clan are *ipsa facto* witches, since the Zande clan is a group of persons related biologically to one another through the male line. Azande see the sense of this argument but they do not accept its conclusions, and it would involve the whole notion of witchcraft in a contradiction were they to do so.

While Winch and Taylor addressed the rationality of primitive cultures in a broad perspective, there has been a very careful discussion of precisely this apparent inconsistency in Zande thinking (Triplett 1988, 1994, Jennings 1989, Keita 1993), based on just a few pages in Evans Pritchard (1937, 23-25). This strand of research came to a halt after Triplett's rather convincing diagnosis that "there is no evidence that Zande logical thought processes are different from ours" (1994, 760). Triplett's rendering of the Zande reasoning is reconstructed in the Appendix to this paper.

What do these widely discussed anthropological examples show? They provide some (modest) evidence that communication across cultures is not hindered by principal limitations of language and logic. Initial doubts and critical inquiries notwithstanding, it has turned out that counterfactuals can very well be translated "idiomatically" (Au 1983, 1984) into Chinese, and that the Azande do, if pressed, exhibit patterns of reasoning that are quite close to those of Europeans. These examples furnish no empirical evidence for thoughts and patterns of reasoning that cannot be translated from one language into another. So, quite against the initial intentions of Bloom and Bloor, we end up with an argument in favour of the translatability thesis.

Of course there remain deep differences of opinion between the Azande (as of 1937) and us (as of today). But initially the Azande seemed to contradict not only us, but even themselves. This very severe kind of disagreement in the end turned out to be based on a misunderstanding. The re-evaluation of the Azande case is not one driven by an "internal" process of reinterpretation. The alleged contradiction disappears after a careful reading of Evans-Pritchard. This happened only with a delay of 50 years, but it did happen. The speculations about a many-valued or paraconsistent logic of the Azande should have been cleared by now (cf. Cooper 1975 vs. Salmon 1978, and da Costa and French 1995).
4. An argument for the indeterminacy of translation

The sentences affirmed by a foreign speaker can be mapped onto sentences of one's own language in essentially different ways. According to Quine, there are multiple non-equivalent translations that are all, in some suitable sense, equally adequate. I shall now offer an explanation why this indeterminacy does not get reduced, even if we introduce a set of additional desiderata:

(i) truth (according to the interpreter)
(ii) consistency (logical coherence 1)
(iii) closure (logical coherence 2)
(iv) informativeness (logical strength)

These desiderata are semantic or logical constraints that play an important role in the task of translation of the foreign speaker's utterances. The numbering here is not supposed to reflect an ordering of importance. On the contrary, I think that various orderings may be reasonable. These four virtues are virtues that the interpreter ascribes to the utterances and beliefs of the speaker, and indirectly they become virtues of the translation. They have to be weighed against each other, and possibly against still more virtues. The desideratum listed first, truth, is the one that reflects whether there is a substantial disagreement (disagreement of belief, disagreement regarding facts) between speaker and interpreter. Whether there is disagreement, or how much disagreement there is, is thus due to how the desideratum of truth compares to the fulfilment of other, competing desiderata. We now turn to an example for illustration.

Suppose we have four utterances which we take as expressing beliefs of a foreign agent. Suppose further for simplicity that we have somehow figured out that the foreigner uses connectives that are identical with our logical connectives not, and and if … then. The utterances have the following transcriptions:

\[ \chi \]
\[ \psi \]
\[ \chi \land \psi \rightarrow \phi \]
\[ \neg \phi \]

We consider two attempts at translating these sentences. Translation 1 is a completely homomorphic one. It translates (putatively) atomic sentences into atomic sentences (column 1a). What the interpreter really has to pro-
vide here, however, is not just a translation, i.e., a mapping taking the four sentences of the foreign language and yielding four corresponding sentences of the interpreter's own language. Ultimately, in understanding the other, the interpreter rather needs to make sense of what is said, and thus he needs to ascribe beliefs to the foreign speaker. Aiming at desideratum (iii), we will articulate the speaker's commitments by including all logical consequences of what she has said (column 1b). Discovering that the sentences taken literally are inconsistent, we perhaps want to step back and say that the speaker really only believes three out of the four sentences. Since we cannot say which, we go for the disjunction (column 1c).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b (closure)</th>
<th>1c (cautious disjunction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$p$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\text{Cn} ( (p &amp; q &amp; r) \lor$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$q$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$(p &amp; q &amp; \neg r) \lor$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &amp; q \rightarrow r$</td>
<td>$\text{Cn} ( \bot )$ inconsistent theory</td>
<td>$(p &amp; \neg q &amp; \neg r) \lor$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\neg r$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$(\neg p &amp; q &amp; \neg r)$ )</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$= \text{Cn} ( (p \lor q) &amp; (r \rightarrow p &amp; q) )$</td>
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</tbody>
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The example gets more vivid if we assign some content to the letters. Let $p$ stand for "The land is suffering from a drought", $q$ for "Rain will come soon" and $r$ for "The harvest will be good". Now add $s$ standing for "The gods are angry with us". Assume that the alternative translation 2 is not fully homomorphic, but based on the methodological hypothesis that some categorical statements may really be hedged by an implicit precondition. Indeed they have to be understood as qualified by the clause "if the gods are not angry with us" ($\neg s$). Suppose that in our case $q$ is for some reason a good candidate for hedging, because we have come to think that all predictions concerning the weather are to be qualified in this way. So we translate the atomic sentence $\psi$ by $\neg s \rightarrow q$ (column 2a). Then we again ascribe to the speaker all consequences to the of the translated sentences (column 2b) which are consistent, so there is no need for a third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b (closure)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$p$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$\neg s \rightarrow q$</td>
<td>$\text{Cn} ( p, \neg q, \neg r, s )$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &amp; q \rightarrow r$</td>
<td>$\text{Cn}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\neg r$</td>
<td></td>
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Now let us compare the virtues of these translations. Suppose that from the interpreter's point of view, i.e., according to the interpreter's beliefs, the following propositions are true: $p, q, r$ and $\neg s$. As long as we deal with a set of sentences that is not logically closed (i.e., no "theory" in the logician's sense), it makes sense to count discrepancies between foreign speaker and interpreter. If all sentences but one are true by the interpreter's lights, we will say that the criterion (i) of truth is reasonably well satisfied (and write '±' for short). Here is a table of the semantic virtues of our respective translations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>translation</th>
<th>truth</th>
<th>consistency</th>
<th>closure</th>
<th>strength</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>1b</td>
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While belief ascription 2b has some advantages over ascriptions based on the homomorphic translation, it results in a lot of disagreement between speaker and interpreter. On the whole, the second translation may look slightly better than the first. But remember that there is a price to be paid for this: We had to compromise the syntactic requirement of homomorphic translation. Different translation strategies give markedly different results, and it is by no means clear which desiderata are the most important ones. So we have got an idea how the problem of translation admits of multiple solutions due to several partially conflicting desiderata. The indeterminacy of translation gives rise to a corresponding indeterminacy concerning the substantive disagreements between speaker and interpreter.

5. Conclusion

Contacts with foreign cultures provide us with valuable new experiences that widen our perspectives. By the same token, interacting with foreign cultures may be disconcerting. We may not understand what other people are saying and doing. Supposing even that we master the foreign language or have an interpreter to help us, we often ask ourselves: What do they mean by their words and sentences, what do they believe and want? The challenge is to make sense of other cultures as a whole.
Problems of verbal communication may manifest themselves in "discrepancies", that is, in disagreements or misunderstandings. Communication problems impeding dialogues may lead to all sorts of conflicts. Thus, when communication problems arise, it appears crucial to separate "genuine" disagreement from "mere" misunderstanding. I have focussed in this paper on the question when we can be said to disagree with some representative of a foreign culture.\textsuperscript{8} When do two persons of different cultures "really" disagree?

Disagreement presupposes (some very basic sort of) understanding. In order to identify a disagreement between speakers of different languages, some sort of translation between them is needed. I have argued that there is anthropological evidence that communication across different cultures and languages is possible, since (i) the degrees of sophistication in thinking or talking are not fundamentally different between different cultures (the Chinese counterfactual case) and (ii) the basic logics used are not fundamentally different (the Zande logic case). Disagreements and misunderstandings are not clearly separable, because (iii) it is only relative to a given translational scheme that one can talk of a member of one culture denying what a member of another culture affirms (the made-up story).

The point of my paper comes out clearly if we consider communication across languages rather than communication in a single language. However, it transfers to speakers of the same language (or, at least, of what looks like the same language). Radical translation, as Quine used to say, begins at home.

To this we add that the banal observation that disagreement begins at home. Intuitively, we expect to come across many disagreements with foreigners. But in a sense, it is harder for members of different cultures to disagree than for members of the same culture. Translations are there to solve communication problems, and as such they have the potential to iron out, or at least to cushion, differences of opinion. Within a language, there are well-established markers, negation words like "not" in particular, serving as devices for the direct expression of disagreements. They are not likely to be translated away. The problem of how to tell apart disagreements from misunderstandings is hidden by our fixation on homophonic translation of

\textsuperscript{8} I have said nothing about moral or aesthetic matters where we are likely to acknowledge legitimate disagreements even within our own culture. In aesthetic matters, we tolerate and even tend to welcome disagreements.
people sharing our culture. But translation across subcultures may in fact be just as hard as translation across cultures. Agreeing to disagree is one of the hardest exercises we know, and if it succeeds, it is an agreement about no matter of fact.

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9 This is not to deny that in particularly striking cases, we do give up homophonic translations. Cf. Quine (1960, 59): "The maxim of translation underlying all this is that assertions startlingly false on the face of them are likely to turn on hidden differences of language. This maxim is strong enough in all of us to swerve us even from the homophonic method that is so fundamental to the very acquisition and use of one's mother tongue. The common sense behind the maxim is that one's interlocutor's silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation—or, in the domestic case, linguistic divergence."

**Appendix: A logical reconstruction of the Zande case**

For the formalization I use as predicates the capitalized first letters of 'Witch', 'Male', 'Female', 'Parent' and 'member of Clan C'; 'S' stands for 'possesses witchcraft-substance', 'P*' for the transitive closure of P (to be read as 'ancestor'). We first formalize Triplett's (1988, 364) reconstruction of a central Zande argument as reported by Evans-Pritchard (1937, 24):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The argument</th>
<th>Formalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1') Every witch has the witchcraft-substance, and everyone possessing the witchcraft-substance is a witch.</td>
<td>∀x (Wx → Sx) &amp; ∀x (Sx → Wx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The witchcraft-substance is always inherited by the same-sexed children of a witch.</td>
<td>∀x∀y (Pxy &amp; ((Mx&amp;My) ∨ (Fx&amp;Fy)) → (Sx → Sy))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Male A and female B were both witches.</td>
<td>(Ma &amp; Wa) &amp; (Fb &amp; Wb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Everyone in clan C descends from A or B.</td>
<td>∀x (Cx → P<em>ax &amp; P</em>bx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Everyone in clan C is a witch.</td>
<td>∀x (Cx → Wx)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is an easy exercise to check that this argument is logically valid. Prima facie, the Azande seem to accept premises (1') – (4) but refuse to draw the conclusion, apparently in order to remain consistent with their belief that not everyone in the clan is a witch. In particular, the persons interviewed want to avoid the conclusion that they are witches. In this sense, it seems that they do not see the contradiction in their beliefs. However, as Triplett points out, consistency is saved if we replace premise (1') by the weaker premise
(1) Every witch has the witchcraft-substance. \( \forall x (Wx \rightarrow Sx) \)

(1) – (4) do not imply (5). (1) is actually in accordance with the "cool witchcraft-substance doctrine" (Triplett 1994, 756) reported by Evans-Pritchard (1937, 25). So Triplett saves Zande reasoning, but I don't think he is hermeneutically careful enough. Here is an improved reconstruction that is somewhat more faithful to Evans-Pritchard's original account:

\[
\text{The argument improved}
\]

(1\*) Every witch has the witchcraft-substance.

(2\*) The witchcraft-substance is always inherited by the same-sexed children of a witch, and this is the only way of getting witchcraft-substance.

(3\*) There is a male and a female witch in the clan.

(4\*) Any two members in clan \( C \) are related by common male and female ancestors.

(5\*) Everyone in clan \( C \) is a witch.

\[
\begin{align*}
(1\*) & \quad \forall x (Wx \rightarrow Sx) \\
(2\*) & \quad \forall x \forall y (Pxy & ((Mx\&My) \lor (Fx\&Fy)) \rightarrow (Sx \leftrightarrow Sy)) \\
(3\*) & \quad \exists x (Cx & \& Mx & Wx) & \& \exists y (Cy & \& Fy & Wy) \\
(4\*) & \quad \forall x \forall y (Cx & \& Cy \rightarrow \exists z \exists z'(Mz & \& Wz' & P^*zx & P^*zy & P^*z'x & P^*z'y)) \\
(5\*) & \quad \forall x (Cx \rightarrow Wx)
\end{align*}
\]

The biconditional in (2\*) strengthens (2) by taking care of the fact that the Azande say that "witchcraft does not trouble a person born free from it by entering into him" (Evans-Pritchard 1937, p. 23). I interpret this as meaning that the witchcraft-substance can only be had by inheriting it from one's same-sexed parent. (3\*) and (4\*) avoid the direct assumption expressed by (3) and (4) that each clan is formed of the offspring of a certain pair of witches. (3\*) says that there are both male and female witches in the clan, and (4\*) says that any two members of the clan have common male and female ancestors. (3\*) and (4\*) are weaker than (3) and (4), respectively. As with Triplett's reconstruction in terms of (1) – (4), the argument is invalid as it stands. It would be valid if (1\*) were strengthened to (1') which is denied by the Azande. The only thing that can be derived is that all members of the clan possess the witchcraft-substance. That substance may, however, be "cool" (i.e., inactive) in most individuals.

There are other strategies to ward off the charge of inconsistency (e.g., by suspecting a male witch's mother of adultery). In any case, the imputation that the Azande have a different logic from ours is ill-founded. Their reasoning may be ad hoc, but it does not violate the canons of classical logic.
Clash of Civilizations?
An Evolution-Theoretic and Empirical Investigation of Huntington's Theses

GERHARD SCHURZ, DUESSELDORF

1. Huntington's Theses

With his article "Clash of Civilizations" (Foreign Affairs 1993) and his book of (1996) Samuel P. Huntington, Professor for Politics at Harvard, created world-wide attention, which was amplified through the tragic event of September 11th, whose consequences culminated into a still lasting world-wide debate. Huntington's position can be summarized in the following three theses.

Huntington's thesis no. 1: This thesis is historical. It says that after the era of colonialism and the consecutive era of cold war, which ended with the breakdown of communism, the world has entered a new era, in which the artificial political division of the world is replaced by the more natural division of the world in historically old worldwide 'civilizations' which through the process of global networking come more and more in mutual conflict:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st World War</th>
<th>Collapse of Communism</th>
<th>Since 1990ies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Era of colonialism</td>
<td>Era of cold war</td>
<td>Era of clash of civilizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western hegemony</td>
<td>Artificial division of world into two blocks</td>
<td>Natural division of world into worldwide cultures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Huntington's thesis no. 2: According to Huntington, our world is naturally divided into civilizations or world-cultures. These are historically enduring constitutions of human societies, primarily characterized by religion, and secondarily by common history and by geographical region.

Huntington distinguishes the following eight world-cultures. Four of them are historically very old and more-or-less independent world-cultures, while the other four are partly derived (the last one is a 'family'):

Four large and historically old cultural blocks:
1) The Sinic or Chinese world-culture which begins 1500 B.C. and is
mainly Confucianistic.
2) The Hinduistic world-culture on the Indian subcontinent which begins around 1500 B.C.
3) The Islamic world-culture which begins 700 A.C. and has spread from the Arabic peninsula to central Asia, parts of the Indian subcontinent and of Indonesia.
4) The western world-culture which mainly determined by Christian religion. It begins around 700 A.C. and has spread from Western Europe to North America and Latin America.

In part historically derived are:
6) The Latin-American world-culture, which is closely related to the western world-culture.
7) The Japanese world-culture, which has developed from the Chinese world-culture beginning in 100-400 A.C.
8) The African family of cultures – because of the diversity of tribal identities and it is questionable, says Huntington, whether one can speak here of one world-culture.

Huntington's critics have soon noticed several general problems which are involved in Huntington's classification of world-cultures, such as the following:

- Can the major characteristic of contemporary world-cultures be really defined by religious attributes?
- Are these world-cultures really historically enduring characteristics – haven't these world-cultures drastically changed through historical time?
- Does an Orthodox-Christian world-culture really exist – aren't these countries similar because of their ex-communistic history?
- Is the Western world-culture really homogeneous?

Apart from these general problems, which will be analyzed in the next sections, several special problems have been popped up through the Huntington-debate, for example: Why is Buddhism missing (the fifth 'world-religion; cf. Huntington 1996, 61)? Why is the starting point of western culture set at 700 A.C. (and not, for example, 600 B.C. with the ancient Greek empire)? Given that Japan is included, why not Korea? What stands behind the 'family' of African cultures?, etc. However that may be, it does not tangle Huntington's third, major and most provocative thesis, which is
the following:

**Huntington's thesis no. 3:** The western ideal of *universal modernization* – western democracy & free-market economy as the direction in which all countries will develop if one gives them independence and imports western know-how (the world-wide 'Marshall plan') – *is false.*

Rather, our world divides itself naturally along the above world-cultures. They are more-or-less in *mutual conflict* with each other, and in part even *incommensurable.* They should better not be mixed.

Western societies, and in particular the USA, should retreat as a *leading model* from the international level. At the same time they should *protect* their culture against too many immigrants from incommensurable cultures (Huntington 1996, 524).

**Huntington supports his theses by the following evidences:**

- Non-western countries have taken over western technology, science and economy. But at the same time, they have kept or even strengthened their own cultural traditions. This is especially true for the east-Indian countries which had an enormous economic boom – Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southern Korea, Singapore, China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia (Huntington 1996, 129, 156-9, 167).
- Scientists of religion speak about a world-wide *come-back* of religious orientations with increasing fundamentalist tendencies – especially in the Islamic countries, in India, South America, in the ex-communist countries, and even in the USA (cf. Huntington 1996, 135, 144, 149; Kienzler 1996, 28ff; Riesebrodt 2000, 122). According to Huntington, the reason for this come-back is an *intrinsic crisis of modernity:* as a reaction to post-modern orientation-less and moral de-stabilization people turn back to religion-based absolute value-systems (Huntington 1996, 146).

**2. Huntington's 'World-Cultures' from an Evolutionary Viewpoint**

I think that Huntington's view of world-cultures as historically enduring characteristics is wrong. The following simple observation makes this plain:

**Anti-thesis to Huntington:** the western-Christian world-cultures in Europe's pre-modern time, from 800 to 1800 B.C., are much more similar to the contemporary non-Western societies (e.g. the Islamic countries) as to the modern Western societies.
My *anti-thesis is can be supported by many facts*, and I mention only a few of them:

- Contemporary Confucian values fit quite well with the conservative values of the European citizens in 19th century (cf. Müller 1998).
- There are many parallels between contemporary Islamic countries and European countries in the times when their were rule by Christian religion: Dschihad had its parallel in Christian crusades, submission of females under males was also central to Christian moral, and the post-modern liberties, e.g. concerning permissive clothing fashions, would have shocked my grand mother in a similarly drastic way as Islamic fundamentalists. In general, Jewish, Christian and Islamic religion are very similar to each other and have presumably the same historical roots.

Therefore I arrive at the following evolutionary diagnosis:

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**Evolutionary diagnosis:** Huntington's so-called world-cultures seem to be momentary developmental stages of certain cultural evolutionary processes. The reason for the contemporary clashes between world-cultures lies not so much in their intrinsic differences, but is the effect of the huge *temporal displacement* ('time shift') between their development stages – concerning economic and industrial development, and concerning secularization democratization.

In fact, the secularization of Christianity was a slow and difficult historical process, and given that Mohammed came six centuries later than Christ, it is prima facie not implausible that the secularization of Islam will simply need some more centuries of time.

But even if my evolutionary diagnosis is true, there is an important *successor question*:

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*Does the long-term development* of societies go into more-or-less the same direction, into the direction of modernization?

Or do different cultures develop into *different directions*? – in which case Huntington's theses would still have their point!

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These are the central question of Inglehart's empirical investigation, to which I turn in the next section.

Most of the contemporary discussions about Huntington and his theses about the clash between world-cultures are full of pro's and con's, but they are in lack of systematic empirical evidence (cf. Metzinger 2000 as a typical example). The more important are the empirical studies of the World Value Survey (WVS) project which has been founded by Ronald Inglehart at the University of Michigan, and which can be accessed at the WVS homepage [http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html](http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html). In this project, social scientists have developed and successively improved detailed questionnaires, by which people in more than 65 countries are asked questions concerning

- their attitudes towards religion, authority, labor, family, political organization, personal self realization, gender roles, homosexuality, liberty, etc.
- their lifestyle: married or single, how much time they spend for work, family, clubs, etc.

Each answer to a question corresponds to one empirical variable (which is standardized on an interval scale: mean = 0, standard deviation = 1). In order to interpret the more than 250 variables (answers), Inglehart has performed a factor analysis. In several independent WVS-studies or 'waves' (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005), two stable (statistically independent) factors have been obtained which explain more than 50% of the total variance of the empirical variables. The factor analysis has been performed with nations as empirical units, i.e., with the mean values for each country. The two obtained factors or 'theoretical parameters' correspond to latent causes of highly intercorrelated empirical variables; and they are best understood by recognizing the types of answers with which they have high correlations (or 'loadings'):

| Factor 1: tradition-religious versus secular-rational orientation: |
| Correlates with: religious vs. rational-secular value-orientation, importance of family bonds vs. individual freedom, national pride high vs. low, respect vis-à-vis state authority high vs. low, birth rate high vs. low, estimation of labor high vs. low. |

The transition on the 1st factor axis from traditional-religious to rational-secular values corresponds to the social transition from agraic to industrial civilizations – the so-called process of modernization.
**Factor 2: survival values versus self-expression values:**

*Correlates with:* low vs. high economic standards of life, importance of existential security & wok vs. pleasure & life-quality, low vs. high appreciation of gender equality, rejection vs. acceptance of homosexuality, intolerance vs. tolerance towards foreign immigrants, low vs. high interpersonal trust, acceptance vs. non-acceptance of authoritarian regimes, devaluation vs. appreciation of democracy.

The transition from survival to self-expression values corresponds socially to the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies with a high prosperity level and a dense social service infrastructure – the so-called *process of post-modernization*.

In his earlier books (cf. 1998), Inglehart defended a version of modernization theory in which more-or-less all nations follow in their development the same major modernization trends:

```
agrarian  →  industrial  →  post-industrial societies
modernization (factor 1)  →  post-modernization (factor 2)
```

Because of the WVS-data, Inglehart later weakens his view and recognizes a large amount of *culture-specific path-dependence* in this development (cf. Inglehart 2004, 141). In fact, it seems to me that Inglehart's modernization theory is even less supported by the WVS-data as Inglehart seems to think. In part, the WVS-data support a modified Huntington-type thesis about *divergent developments* of world-cultures, although Huntington's own classification of world-cultures is falsified by the data in many respects.

Fig. 1 shows the most recent cultural world map of nations based on the WVS-data of 2000 and 2005 (they include more nations than 1995). Some typical attitudes which correspond to different positions on this cultural world-map are shown in fig. 2. A closer inspection of figure 1 leads to the following remarkable observations:

⇒ The nations are not correlated along one path – for example along the diagonal path, which would be predicted by a simple 'monotonic' modernization theory. Rather, they are statistically independent along the two factors. Already this fact proves that there is a large amount of cultural divergence which cannot only be explained by temporal displacement in development.

⇒ The map exhibits cultural world-regions and, insofar, is in support of Huntington. But only some of Inglehart's cultural world-regions are in conformity with Huntington.
The Islamic countries are, as to be expected, in the lower-left corner, representing high traditional-religious and self-survival values, or low modernization development. Only the African countries are even more traditional.

Fig. 1 The cultural world-map. Most recent data from 2000 and 2005. (Source: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html)

The ex-communist countries have a striking position, highly rational-secularized though not post-modernized. This supports the view that their ex-communist history rather than orthodox Christianity is the major cause of their similarity. But also the east-Asian countries fit in this area: they also have an ex-communist history; but in addition their Confucian tradition was secular since early historical times. In this respect the east-Asian countries differ strongly from other world-cultures.
The so-called western Christian world-culture is very divergent – so divergent that it is doubtful to subsume it under one world-culture. At least, the religious characterization as 'Christian' seems to have little content. The cultural distance between extremely post-modernized countries in protestant Europe (say Sweden) to rather medium-positioned countries in catholic Europe (say Italy) is bigger than the distance of the latter countries and, e.g., Islamic countries.

Western and eastern European countries taken together make up two thirds of the entire cultural map – which means that the task to establish a cultural European identity is almost as difficult as to establish a cultural world identity.

The English speaking countries have a characteristically different position than the continental-European countries: the combine highly traditional-religious orientations with high level of post-modernization – which is, by the way, the opposite combination than that of the ex-communist countries.

---

**Fig. 2:** Typical attitudes which correspond to different positions on the cultural world-map (Source: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html)
That the development in both dimensions is correlated with economic progress and prosperity is shown in the fig. 3.

As a defender of modernization theory, Inglehart believes that modernization goes hand in hand with economic progress, progress in freedom and democracy, and increase of happiness and self-satisfaction of people. Not all of these claims are supported by the WVS-data:

⇒ Correlation with economic progress is clearly supported, as shown in fig. 3.
⇒ Correlation between post-modernization (importance of self-realization) and democratic development as measured by the so-called Freedom House
index is also supported (cf. the figure in Inglehart 2004, 161, and the WVS homepage).

What remains doubtful, or is only weakly supported, is the correlation between self-satisfaction and modernization. Since modernization correlates with GNP per capita, this can be seen from the figure 4 (findings from 1995).

Fig. 4: Correlation of happiness/self-satisfaction with GNP per capita. (Source: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html.).

On peculiar historical reasons, the ex-communist countries have a special position which gives the false impression of a high correlation. If they are omitted from the figure, the correlation is low: people in Ghana, China, or Mexico are not less happy than those in Austria, France or West Germany,
although their economic position is almost on the opposite end. On the other hand, differences between rich countries, such as France or Netherlands, are rather high.

The dissatisfaction of the people in the ex-communistic countries is caused by the fact that these people had very high expectations towards the new 'free' society which was promised to them after the breakdown of communism, and their expectations had been strongly disappointed. This is show in figure 5 at hand of data from Russia during 15 years: the percentage of people who say that they are satisfied with their life has fallen down from 70% in the year 1981 to only 48% in 1990 and 38% in 1996.

Fig. 5: Dissatisfaction in ex-communist countries – at hand of Russia. (Source: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html.)
4. Empirical Data on Evolutionary Trends

Developmental data are available only concerning the last decades. Figure 6 shows the change of cultural positions of 39 countries in the years from 1981 or 1990 to 1997 (time intervals are different because not all countries have been investigated in earlier questionnaires). It can be seen that the rate of cultural changes as well as their directions are rather diverse:

⇒ From 39 countries only 13 have followed the direction of modernization, i.e. have developed forward along both axes – where "forward" has to put in quotation marks.
⇒ 6 countries (Russia, Belarus, Great Britain, Estonia, South Africa and Nigeria) have developed backwards along both axes.
⇒ 12 countries have developed backwards to the traditional side, along the axes traditional vs. rational (South Africa, Brazil, Argentine, Turkey, India, Ireland and North Ireland; and in minor way also Spain, Italy, France, USA, South Korea).
⇒ 7 countries, most of them ex-communist countries, have developed backwards to the survival side, along the axis survival versus self-expression.
⇒ The most rapid cultural change has taken place in Poland, East-Germany and other ex-communist countries; but also Western Germany, Netherlands or Sweden a fast cultural change has taken place.

In conclusion: modernization theory is hardly supported on the short term scale. One may object that modernization is a long term development and cannot be judged at the level of decades – short time reversals are compatible with long term modernization trend. So let us finally ask:

Are modernization and post-modernization really stable universal long-term trends?

⇒ Concerning post-modernization: So far, this is not the case. The shift towards post-modern values is a very young phenomenon which has taken place in the Western generations after the second world war. This is shown by figure 7. and is supported by similar diagrams (cf. Norris/Inglehart 2004) which I omit here. Insofar post-modernization is characterized by a retreat of traditional family values, by low birth rates, and an increase
of single life style, it is doubtful whether this can really be an enduringly
stable cultural equilibrium – in particular, since this life-style depends on
high economic prosperity which can hardly be sustained, because of eco-
logical problems as well as on demographic reasons. Moreover, the high
prosperity on which post-modern values depend can hardly be realized for
the majority of humans living on earth.

**Fig. 6** Change of cultural positions of 39 countries in the last decade(s). (Source: In-
glehart/Baker 2004, 161. See also http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html)
Concerning modernization: Rationalization, increase of education, secularization, democratization, realization of equal human rights seem to be long term developments, which have taken place in the Western countries for several centuries. But even here things are not so simple: while religious activities have declined during this development, religiosity as such has dropped down a little, and has recovered during post-modernization. Figure 8 shows that while the attendance of religious activities has declined in post-industrial societies, identification as religious and belief in life after death have increased a little bit.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\% \text{ Believe in God} & 91 & 80 & 79 & 83 \\
\% \text{ Believe in life after death} & 83 & 62 & 68 & 69 \\
\% \text{ Religion 'very important'} & 87 & 60 & 55 & 64 \\
\% \text{ Identify as religious} & 73 & 58 & 59 & 61 \\
\% \text{ Comfort from religion} & 74 & 51 & 46 & 54 \\
\% \text{ Attend religious service regularly} & 47 & 45 & 21 & 28 \\
\end{array}
\]

Mean religiosity 100-point scale 73 54 53 28

Fig. 7: The transition towards dominantly post-modern attitudes is a very young phenomenon (Source: http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html.)

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\% \text{ Postmaterialists minus % Materialists} & 1970 & 1994 \\
U.S. & -30 & -30 \\
Britain & -30 & -30 \\
France & -30 & -30 \\
West Germany & -30 & -30 \\
Italy & -30 & -30 \\
Netherlands & -30 & -30 \\
Belgium & -30 & -30 \\
Denmark & -30 & -30 \\
Ireland & -30 & -30 \\
\end{array}
\]

Fig. 8: Importance of religion in agrarian, industrial and postindustrial societies. (After Inglehart/Norris 2003b, 55; table 3.2.)

So it seems that, at least to some degree, humans have a desire towards
religious orientations independent of the degree of modernization. This is further supported by figure 9, which shows that the correlation between religiosity (as measured by several indices) and modernization is little, and that between religiosity and post-modernization is almost zero.

In conclusion, the data show that religion is compatible with modernized democratic societies – but of course, only in its secularized form, in which the religious authorities are separated from the state authority. In this respect, Islamic countries are clearly in a pre-modern stage.

![Fig. 9: Religiosity (multiple indices) in agrarian, industrial, and post-industrial nations](http://www.pippanorris.com)

Although religion and many specific history-dependent cultural values and
habits may survive in modernization, one may still ask:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(%-Agreement)</th>
<th>Western countries</th>
<th>Islamic countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy performs well</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In favor of democracy</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection of authoritarian political leaders</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection of religious political leaders</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality is good</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce should be admitted</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion should be admitted</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality should be admitted</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 10: Difference in attitudes between 11 Islamic vs. 22 Western countries (9 ex-communist). Based on WVS-questionnaires 1995-6 and 2002-2. After Inglehart/Norris (2003a, 69f).

So also the people in the Islamic countries want democracy. But do they really mean the same with this word as Western societies? Their values concerning religious authority and in particular concerning the individual freedom in one's choice of life-style seem to be in conflict with a democratic constitution. For me this data indicate that although people in these countries want democracy – in a vague sense as a system 'ruled by the people' – but in several respects they do not seem to be mature for democracy. So I am inclined to draw the following conclusion: instead of attempting a forceful establishment of democracy onto countries whose people have pre-modern values concerning life-style and freedom of choice, the western countries have to wait until people in these countries are mature for democracy and are able develop it on their own feet. In the mean-
time, the most important task is the sustainment of a peaceful co-existence of the different world-cultures – which does not exclude to foster democratic developments in these countries by peaceful means such as economic or educational support, etc.

As a general conclusion of this paper I suggest the following one: altogether it seems that cultural evolution does not follow a uniform trend, but stands under opposite evolutionary forces or selection factors, whose strength are mainly dependent on the level of economy and education. The location of cultural equilibria in the cultural world-map – the regions in which societies stay stable for long time – are largely dependent on the constellation and the mutual balance of these forces. The following schema presents a simplified sketch of this view:

**REFERENCES**


Chinese Language, Chinese Mind?

CHRISTIAN HELMUT WENZEL, PULI

Chinesische Gesten verstehen wir so wenig, wie Chinesische Sätze.  
(We don’t understand Chinese gestures any more than we do Chinese sentences.)  
Wittgenstein, The Big Typescript

This article focuses on two questions. One is about the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which says that language plays a role in how we perceive and understand the world. To put it strongly: Language determines thought. The other question is more specific. It is about the Chinese language. Is Chinese, with its grammar and its writing system, fundamentally different from Western languages such as Greek, Latin, German, Spanish or English? And does this difference account for cultural differences in perception and understanding? We all live in one world. But individually and culturally, we also live in different worlds. One easily notices this when one lives abroad. What is the role of language in this? What is its influence on perception, thought and culture? I am interested in influences that are due not just to vocabulary (which should be obvious), but, more fundamentally and systematically, to grammar and writing system. Words can easily be added to a language, one by one and step by step, and they do indeed reflect thought and culture. But grammar goes deeper. In what ways it reflects thought and culture is a more difficult but more interesting question, so it seems to me.

There has been much debate about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, that language determines thought. It was praised in the 1950s and 60s, argued against in the 70s and 80s, and has been returning, this time with finer tuning, since the 90s. The debate about language and thought in general is still going on, at the borderline between philosophy and linguistics.

Is it true that language somehow “determines” thought? Do we think in words and sentences, or also, and maybe more basically, in terms of feelings, pictures, associations, and memories? What exactly are words? What exactly are thoughts? Compared to thoughts, language is more on the surface. It is more accessible and less abstract. Words are visible or audible.
They can be written down, at least so we say. But there are problems already at this level, as we shall see. Furthermore, what exactly is grammar? Does Chinese have a radically different grammar from that of Latin or English? Or is there some kind of universal grammar, so that all languages are basically the same? Does the Chinese script play a special role in this? Or could we easily change it, simplifying it by replacing it with an alphabet say, without paying a price for this, without changing the language too much and uprooting it?

1. Psychological Differences between East and West.
   Stereotypes and Evidence

There are stereotypes about East and West. It has often been said that the Chinese, Asians, or even Easterners in general, see the world as being more complex, more organic, composed of wholes and parts and interpenetrating forces (氣 Chi, 風水 Feng Shui) instead of being composed of isolated objects (atoms) that are determined by strict rules. It is said that Easterners strive for harmony more than for fairness, and that they have a greater sense of collective agency. To them the world is more dialectic (陰陽 Yin Yang), more continuous, flexible, and always changing, more cyclic and less linear in its development. They look at the whole and don’t decompose and dissect so much. They have developed acupuncture and not surgery. They do not rule out contradictions from the start, but try to transcend and integrate them.

These are stereotypes, but I don’t think that they are completely wrong. There are indeed differences between French, German and Chinese, or between Europe and the US. On the other hand, we must be careful with generalizations: China is not the whole of Asia: there is also Japan, for instance. Nor is Asia the whole East: there is also India. We must also be careful with drawing conclusions: Saying that one did this or that because he or she is Dutch, say, usually goes wrong. Individuals have all kinds of particular and special reasons for doing what they do. They have not only general histories and general backgrounds but also their individual ones. We cannot explain an individual person’s actions so easily in terms of rough generalizations about East and West, or about being German or Chinese. Nevertheless, generalizations can make good sense, but we should learn to combine them with warning signs telling us not to jump to conclusions so easily. We must be careful when using them in arguments and in
individual cases. To indicate that they nevertheless do make sense, and what kind of sense and how, I will give some examples.

1. Seeing a fish. To study perceptual sensitivity to background and circumstances, Taka Masuda showed a series of 20-second underwater scenes to students at Kyoto University and to students at the University of Michigan (Nisbett 2003, 89-92). In the scenes, there was a dominant fish: big, fast, or bright, and there was always some background: smaller fish, plants and bubbles. When asked what they had seen, the Japanese students mentioned more of the background than American students did. When shown additional scenes, some old, some new, some with the old background, some with a new one, and asked whether they had seen a scene before, the Japanese students recognized more scenes when not only the main fish but also the background reappeared, whereas this did not help the American students.

2. Chicken, Grass and a Cow. To compare looking at the world via relationships versus looking at it via categories, Liang-Huang Chiu (Nisbett, 140f) showed picture triplets to American and Chinese children, for instance pictures of a chicken, grass, and a cow. Does the cow belong to the grass or to the chicken? The children had to choose. Do the cow and the chicken form a group, or is it rather that the cow and the grass make up a group? American children tended to go for the first, Chinese for the second option. The first (the cow and the chicken) form a group by falling under a common heading or class (A and B are both animals). The second (the cow and the grass) form a group through interrelationship (A eats B). Classes come with rules of what counts as falling under them, but there need not be any inner connections between the members of such a class (there is no inner connection between a cow and a chicken; they do not interact). An interrelationship on the other hand is created by an inner connection. There is interaction between the cow and the grass. The cow eats the grass.

The experiment was modified by Li-Jun Ji, Zhi-Yong Zhang and Richard Nisbett, using words instead of pictures, and choosing students from the USA, Mainland China, and Taiwan (Nisbett, 141f). Again, the idea was to make the participants choose between “seeing” a common category versus seeing an inner relationship. The results were similar.

To test awareness of rules versus awareness of family resemblances, the experiment was further modified. A picture of two groups of objects together with an additional object was introduced. The additional object looked similar to all members of the two groups, but there were two kinds
of similarity involved: On the one hand (a), there was exactly one mark by reference to which one could say that the additional object must belong to the second group. That is, one could come up with a mark, a criterion of membership for a class, so that the additional object and all objects from the second group have that very mark (and thereby satisfy that very criterion) but none of the objects from the other group did. This mark might not be so obvious. It might be minor. But it is sharp. It gives an exact criterion. On the other hand (b), one could come up with several marks (and not just one), so that the additional object and most (but not all) of the first group and very few (but not none) of the second group share them. Here we have several marks, but they are not sharp. They do not form an exact criterion (because I had to add “but not all” and “but not none”). Nevertheless, put together, they might create a greater over-all similarity between the additional object and the first group. This was the idea. Analyticity versus holism. The experiment was carried out by Ara Norenzayan, Edward E. Smith, Beom Jun Kim and Richard Nisbett (Nisbett, 141-4), and the participants were Korean, Asian American, and European American. The question was, to which group the additional object looked more similar. Sixty percent of the Koreans went for the first group, sixty-seven percent of the European Americans for the second, and the Asian Americans were in-between.

There are more experiments of this kind. They are all statistical. They do not lead to either-or rules for individuals, but they show tendencies. It is interesting and instructive to see how such experiments are set up and what they might show. Thinking through them can help us in thinking about what cultural differences could be. In particular, they show that those stereotypes I mentioned above are not completely wrong.

2. Aristotle on Language, Mind, and the World

In On Interpretation, Aristotle wrote that “words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.” (On Interpretation, 16 a) Here we see a line of representations: Written word – spoken word – soul – world. Each represents the next: Written
words represent spoken words which represent states of the soul which, in turn, represent states of the world. We have symbols of symbols of impressions of the world: Symbols (written words) for symbols (spoken words) of impression (in the soul) of/from the outside (the world). This picture we find repeatedly and in different variations throughout history. Wittgenstein, for instance, wrote: “These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line one behind the other, each equivalent to each.” (Die Begriffe: Satz, Sprache, Denken, Welt, stehen in einer Reihe hintereinander, jeder dem andern äquivalent. *Philosophical Investigations*, § 96.) We have a line of representations, symbols, or signs, reaching out to the world, and each element in this line is equivalent to the other, one standing for the next. (Wittgenstein does not subscribe to this picture. He merely presents it as a commonplace in philosophy, and he presents it in the context of his describing our striving for an ideal logical exactness in language, which he thinks is an illusion.)

In particular, that writing stands to speech as does speech to its objects, is an idea that comes out clearly in Aristotle. To quote the above passage from Aristotle again, this time in my own translation, and closer to the original: “That which is in the sound, is a symbol for the passions that are in the soul; and the written is a symbol for that which is in the sound.” Εστι μεν ουν τα εν τη φωνη των εν τη ψυχη παθηματων σωμβολα, και τα γραφομενα των εν τη φωνη. We first have impressions, sense impressions in our souls. Then we give names, sounds as symbols to such impressions. Finally, we learn how to write them down, in terms of symbols for those sounds. What I want to draw attention to here is that the Greek script is phonetic. There is, roughly, an isomorphism between the spoken and the written. Once you have mastered the basics of writing in Greek (or Latin, or German, or Spanish), you can write down any word that you hear, even if you hear it for the first time; and you can read and pronounce any written word you see, even if you see it for the first time. Although this does not work perfectly, and it works even less perfectly in English for instance, it roughly does work, and this is a point that is fundamentally different in Chinese. We will see in what ways it is different and what the consequences might be.

The more or less isomorphic relation between written and spoken language that we find in Western languages with phonetic (alphabetic) scripts, might have played a role in the development of Western thought about word and object in general. It might have, so I would like to suggest, en-
couraged the view of language as being representational, a view that we find prominent in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* for instance. Thinking along Aristotle’s dictum, that writing stands to speech as does speech to its objects, there might have been an encouragement to view the relation between speech and object as an isomorphism of some sort as well: If there is an isomorphism between the first pair, writing and speech, why not also one between the second, speech and object? We might even speculate further. The isomorphism might encourage an atomistic view of the world: As the letters of the alphabet are like atoms, indecomposable meaningless elements, and as they represent the sounds of words that make up the spoken language, so, by analogy, the words might represent their objects, each being decomposable into elements (letters and atoms). This is all rather speculative. Nevertheless, I want to add one more speculative aspect, before returning to facts again.

A phonetic (alphabetic) script allows one to better analyze and reflect about the spoken language, because one has a way of writing down the sounds. This tool is not available in Chinese. Maybe an alphabet, due to the meaninglessness of its elements, that is, the letters, creates certain possibilities of thinking about language. All this is of course vague and speculative. But we should keep it in mind as we proceed.

3. Chinese Language, Grammar, and Script

First, I will give a brief and rough account of the development of the Chinese language. I do this in a way that brings out the structure that I need for my discussion. (1) The Chinese language is at its heart monosyllabic: One word, one syllable. Although Chinese has during its history increasingly combined words to make new ones, to translate foreign words, or to make words more specific, in its classical form (about 2000 years ago), and even before that, it has been monosyllabic and at heart still is so. What are the consequences of this? Including tones, there are, roughly, a little more than 1000 syllables in modern Mandarin (Putonghua). This is not enough. There are more than 1000 words. Therefore, (2) there have been, and there still are, many homonyms and homophones, words that are different in meaning but pronounced the same way. (Homonyms are also written the same, like “bank” (of a river) and “bank” (where you put your money), or in “You can drink a can of beer”. Homophones are written differently, like “two” and “too”, or “knew” and “new”. At this point of my story, though, writing
does not come in yet. It is only identity in pronunciation and difference in meaning that count for now.) We have this in every language. But in Chinese this is not an exception but the rule. Most words have homophones, say ten or so. If you take a sentence composed of five words, you then get $10 \cdot 10 \cdot 10 \cdot 10 \cdot 10 = 100,000$ possible combinations. How do we disambiguate this? How do we arrive at only one possible meaning of such a sentence? It is syntax and context that are the main ingredients here. Syntax (3) tells you that certain words preferably take certain positions. For instance, there is usually a Subject-Predicate-Object order in Chinese. (We will come back to the question, which has often been asked, whether or not Chinese has the categories of subject and predicate, or noun and verb. The answer will be yes and no, and we will say exactly in what way the answer is “yes” and exactly in what way it is “no”.) Syntax helps (by disambiguating) already in conversation, through mere word order, and you do not need the script for this. Context (4) comes in different ways. There is the context in the text itself, the words that have been said before and that follow; and there is the social context, who talks to whom and on what occasion. Besides these means of disambiguation, which we find in any language, Chinese has also the script as a possibility, assigning different characters for words that are pronounced the same way. It has this option, exactly because the script is not phonetic. If it were strictly phonetic, it could only reproduce the identity in writing (homonymy). But if there is little connection between writing and sound, then there is much freedom to add and modify in writing, in order to disambiguate without impinging on the pronunciation, and this is exactly what has happened in Chinese.

In the beginning of the development of the Chinese writing, there were some signs, usually pictorial, for basic (words of) objects in the world. These signs were semantic. Then they were used (borrowed) to denote other words that happened to be pronounced the same way (creating homonyms). These signs therefore turned out to play phonetic roles. In this way, the identities in pronunciation were carried over into the writing. They were reproduced in the writing. To disambiguate the identities in writing, without touching on those in speech, additional semantic signs (S) were introduced (or already existing ones were used) and added to the phonetic ones. In this way a Chinese character usually has retained up to the present a phonetic part (P) and a semantic part (S). The semantic part is usually its so-called “radical”, which serves for classification in dictionaries. It indicates a rough field of meaning, and it is this feature of a Chinese
character that is important for what I wish to point out later.

All this sounds rather abstract. So let us look at an example. The character 衣 stands for things having to do with clothes. It covers a wide range of meaning. It serves as the semantic part \( S \) in the following characters: 裙 skirt, 被 blanket, 袍 coat, 裏 = 裏 lining. In the first four, we find it on the left-hand side. The fifth is a variant of the fourth: Here the clothes-radical 衣 is divided into an upper and a lower part, and the part 裏 is inserted horizontally in-between. Chinese has its freedoms. 裏 is the phonetic part \( P \). In the first four characters, the phonetic parts \( P \) are on the right-hand side: 君 皮 包 里 respectively. Thus each has an \( SP \) structure, being composed of a semantic and a phonetic part.

All this is not so clean and nice as my story suggests. First, although most Chinese characters are of the semantic-phonetic \( SP \) type, some are concrete pictographs, abstract pictographs, or combinations of pictographs. I am focusing on the \( SP \) type here. Second, there is no exact one-to-one correspondence between fields of meanings and semantic parts (radicals). Nor is there an exact one-to-one correspondence between pronunciations and phonetic parts. Each character has its own idiosyncratic history. Each underwent changes for accidental reasons. Traces are often lost. But although these individual stories are lost, the main principles of development we know. They are the ones I have indicated. They have been applied at different stages and in different ways. Principles (of borrowing and of composing \( S \) and \( P \) parts) are not rules, and this is important here. They are not so strict. They leave more room for interpretation and change. We do not know when which principle has been applied. We will come back to this below.

With the monosyllabic structure and the introduction of characters, Chinese did not develop inflections. It did not develop suffixes to indicate case, number, person, tense, or mood. Endings would destroy the monosyllabic structure. Each word corresponds to one syllable, and in Chinese (more so than in English, for instance) it is clearly marked where a syllable begins and where it ends. There is no room for adding prefixes or suffixes. This has, so it seems to me, greatly hindered the development of that part of grammar which is called morphology. Chinese has particles (additional words that indicate the function of certain other words nearby and thus play morphological roles), but it has no inflections. It has no purely grammatical morphemes, such as “-ed” in English to indicate past tense, or “-ions” in French to indicate the first-person plural imperfect or conditional
tense. Sometimes certain words (particles) play such roles, but there are no inflections, which would do this on a much richer scale.

Greek and Latin on the other hand are rich in this respect. Every student of Greek or Latin remembers the long tables of conjugations and declensions. These are some kind of, as I would like to call it, “systematic schemes of variation” (SSV), schemes that are to be applied to any verb or noun or adjective. Such schemes are abstract and formal. They are systematically applied to the words of the language and can be seen as a schematic meta-structure. Reflection on the presence of such schemes in Greek invites one to wonder whether this might have anything to do with the development of formal logic or axiomatic-deductive geometry as we find them in ancient Greece.

The Chinese script has no inflections, it does not have such systematic schemes of variation, but (instead, one might want to say), it has meaningful semantic parts (S) and not meaningless alphabetic letters, as in the major languages of the West. This has the consequence that the Chinese script is a much more substantial part of the language. It contributes more to the Chinese language than does the Greek script to the Greek language.

The lack of inflections implies a lack of method for indicating whether a word is a noun, a verb, or an adjective. It implies a lack of method for grammatical cross-reference within a sentence, such as that this adjective must belong to that noun, due to case and gender. In German for instance, adjective and noun can stand far apart from each other, separated by a long relative clause, without causing confusion. In that case, the two words unfold their combined meaning only during a longer stretch of time in the reader’s mind, a time that is enriched by additional information, but without creating any uncertainty as to whether these two words belong together or not, and in what way they do. (Reading Thomas Mann gives a flavor of such possibilities.) There are, of course, other means of doing this: syntax, context, and particles. Nevertheless, Chinese lacks the method of inflections. It lacks this means of grammatical cross-reference within language.

This is at least one of the reasons, so it seems to me, why Chinese sentences tend to be shorter than German or Latin or Greek ones. Already in English, which does not offer as many inflections as German, it is difficult to reproduce long German sentences in translation. Kemp Smith for instance, in his ingenious translation of Kant’s first Critique, has often broken up sentences into two or more separate ones. It takes much feeling to do this, i.e. to reproduce the original cross-references. Sometimes it seems
impossible. This applies also to Chinese, maybe even more so than to English.

To indicate this lack of morphology, I shall cheat a little by using a mathematical “sentence” from a Han text on astronomy, which I take from Harbsmeier (Humboldt/Harbsmeier, 109):

二八十六三四十二．

Each of these eight signs, taken separately, stands for a number:
2  8  10  6  3  4  10  2 ,
Together, they can be read – this is only for those who know Chinese – in at least three ways, each of which is grammatically correct:

(a) 2  8  16  3  4  12  
(b) 2  80  6  3  40  2  
(c) 2  86  3  42

Inserting multiplication and equality signs, we get various readings, among them the following:

(a) 2 · 8 = 16 ,  3 · 4 = 12  
(b) 2 · 80 = 6 ,  3 · 40 = 2  
(c) 2 · 86 = 3 · 42

Only the first version is correct. We know this from mathematics. But we don’t know it from Chinese grammar, and that is the point I want to bring out. The original “sentence” does not mention multiplication or equality. Words or signs for these have to be added at suitable places, and according to grammar there are at least these three options. This example might sound artificial. I do not use it to prove anything. I only use it to indicate something, namely a certain contextuality: You must understand the meaning of the words, and you must go out into the world (here the world of mathematics) to see how things are there. Only from there can you fill in the relations between the words. Let us look at some more examples. I will now give two “real” examples, namely from Laozi (71) and from Zhuangzi. Each is taken from Harbsmeier, p. 112 and p. 182, respectively.
We can translate this as follows:

To know that you don’t know is best.
(or: To know and to believe not to know is best.)
Not to know that you know is sick.
(or: Not to know and to believe to know is sick.)
Only who recognizes this sickness as such is not sick.
(or maybe: Who is only sick of this sickness is not really sick.)

Pondering a little about this example should make clear how much has been inserted in the translation. The other example, from Zhuangzi, is this one:

生生者不生 life \ life \ - \ not \ life

which can be translated as:

What gives life to what is living does not live itself.

This example nicely shows how one “word”, namely 生 , can function in different ways: The first 生 can be read as a transitive verb meaning “to give life to”. The second 生 can be read as a noun (object) meaning “the living”, or “what is living”. The third 生 can be read as an intransitive verb, meaning “to live”. (The particle 者 turns the whole 生生 into a noun: that which gives life to what is living. 生生者 then becomes the subject of the sentence.)

Now we can come back to the question of whether Chinese has subject and predicate form. In the above sentence, the first 生 functions as a transitive verb of the first part, 生 (to give life to what is living). In combination with 者 this becomes a noun phrase and the subject of the sentence.
The second 生 functions as noun and object (what is living) with respect to the first 生 (to give life to). The third 生 functions as intransitive verb and predicate of the whole sentence (to live). So, if we view 生 as a single word, out of context and in isolation, we cannot say whether it is a noun or a verb. But in the sentence above it takes on certain functions that we can well regard as subject or predicate. The function seems to be there, but not the class! Words do not nicely fall into classes. If you try to put them into such classes, they drift from one into another. At best, they have tendencies to preferably fulfill this or that function. The Chinese therefore have never classified their words into such classes.

Inflections would indicate classes, but we have seen that there are none in Chinese. One therefore might wonder how “real” the functions are. They come out if we translate, into English or French for example. But if we don’t, then they simply do not “come up”. Are they then “hidden”, under the surface, or are they not “real”? Certainly they are not as real as in languages where we have classes of words that go together with such functions, the classes of verbs and the classes of nouns. One can write down a list of verbs, but it is more difficult to write down functions. Functions are more abstract, and they need contexts to express themselves.

Harbsmeier brings a nice analogy here. He compares words in, say, Latin or Greek, with the figures in a chess game, and words in Chinese with the players in a soccer game. In chess, each figure can make only certain moves according to certain rules, whereas in soccer, a player, say from the defense, can, if the opportunity presents itself, run ahead, cross the field all the way, and score a goal. He usually has the function of defense, but he might change that for another in certain circumstances. The difference between class and function is fundamental to Chinese, so it seems to me, and maybe it has subtle consequences for the user of this language. We will come back to this.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose ideas I have been using a great deal up to now, in his long French letter to Abel-Rému sat of March 7, 1826, characterized the Chinese language as being “isolating”. It isolates words, concepts, and meanings. Given the monosyllabic character and the lack of cross-referential inflections of the Chinese language, this claim makes much sense to me. One has to move in and out of the language itself. One cannot “unfold” the meaning of a sentence by paying attention to the inflections, as one can in Latin. There one can do this, at least to some degree, even if one does not know the meanings of several words. One can go by
the suffixes. One can let oneself be guided by the inflections (the systematic scheme of variation SSV). Chinese has syntax and particles, but no inflection. At this point one might wonder whether this implies that one needs to move farther out from the formal grammatical features and into the world of meanings and (social and textual) contexts. Of course this would only be a difference in degree. Consequently, proponents of an externalist theory of meaning might happily conclude that Chinese would be more “meaning-externalist” than Western languages.

We now can make the following tentative claim:

C1: Due to its being “isolating”, Chinese might require the language user to be more context sensitive, both within the text as well as outside in the world where the language is used and where the “meanings” are.

We can add a second, tentative claim to this. Let us think again about the special semantic + phonetic (SP) structure of the Chinese script. A Chinese character refers to the meaning of the word partly through its phonetic part (P) and thus indirectly via the spoken word; and partly and more directly through its semantic part (S). We thus have a triangle: Starting from the written word (A), which has the SP structure, we have two lines, one to the pronunciation B (guided by P) and from there on to the meaning C, and another directly to C (guided by S).

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A = P + S \rightarrow C
\]

This triangular structure should play a role in the thinking of someone who writes Chinese. Although it is difficult to say just how much of a role it does play, the SP-structure of the script is certainly there: Lexicography organizes the words around the semantic parts, and people use dictionaries by looking up those semantic parts (the radicals), if they see a character they do not know.

In Western (alphabetic) languages, we have, as we pointed out in Aristotle above, a linear structure. The written word (A) stands for the spoken (B), which in turn stands for the meaning (conflating for a moment the soul
and the world as Aristotle mentioned them). There is no direct line from A to C. There is no semantic S-part in A:

A → B → C

Looking at these diagrams, we see the difference between the triangular and the linear structures of reference, which leads me to the second tentative claim.

C2: Due to the semantic part in its script, the Chinese language involves the reader and writer of Chinese more directly in the world of meaning and objects.

I have taken the triangular structure between script, sound, and meaning from an article by Tze-Wan Kwan (2001). He has perhaps overestimated the significance of the semantic part, S. After all, S is only one part of a Chinese character, and the associated field of meaning is vague. Chinese characters are not pictures. Only parts of them (the semantic parts) are somewhat pictorial.

Comparing the two claims, we see that claim C2 is minor when compared with C1. It applies only to the script and to those who use it, whereas C1 applies to the language as a whole, not just in its written form but also in its spoken aspects. The feature of being isolating (monosyllabic, without inflections) is more fundamental, so it seems to me.

If there is less grammar, then the language projects less onto the world, that is, it has less of a systematic scheme of variation (SSV), and it is more open for the language user to induce the connections between its words from the outside, that is, from the world, on that occasion. To put it schematically, instead of

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\begin{array}{c}
\text{Word} \quad ---- \quad \text{Object} \\
\mid \\
\text{Word} \quad ---- \quad \text{Object}
\end{array}
\]

where the formal grammatical connection between the words is projected from the language into the world, we have:
where the material, real connection between the objects in the world is induced into the language.

If a language tends to minimize the number of words it uses in a sentence, and classical Chinese very much does, and very elegantly so, then it puts a greater burden on the reader and listener to fill in what has to be understood from context and situation. This also applies to its active users, those who write or speak, because they have to put themselves into the position of the reader and listener if they want to make sure that they will be understood. This applies to any language, but it does so more prominently in Chinese, so it seems to me.

The fact that there are functions instead of classes of words has consequences. Chinese is more contextual, interpretive, open, flexible, and holistic than Western languages. It is based more on roles than on rules. I know that all of this is vague, but I think that what I have indicated about the structure of Chinese above does give some substance to this. We are talking here of tendencies, not strict determinations or impossibilities. Languages are elastic. Given enough space and time, one can do almost anything in one language that one can do in another. The problem is space and time. Unique tendencies exist within particular languages. Some languages are better in certain things than other languages. They allow one to do certain things more easily, more conveniently, and with less effort. They create affordances. Going hand in hand with this, they might also require certain things that other languages don’t require. Requirements and affordances are tendencies, but they create habits of thought, which in turn affect the mind. In the next section, I wish to bring this out more clearly.

4. Language affects the Mind? (Sapir-Whorf)
Empirical Evidence

Before drawing a picture in broader strokes, I would like to indicate an experiment (regarding two particular words) that gives some evidence to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It suggests how language in certain ways “determines” thought. This leads us to think that something similar could be
the case, not regarding single words, but regarding grammar, which is the point of my paper.

We often talk about temporal relations in terms of spatial metaphors. English and German use horizontal ones: We look forward to a better future. The worst is still ahead of us and not yet behind us. Back in the good old days things were different. Before you leave, please think for a moment. Similarly, in German we use the words: bevor, hintennach, hinterher, voriges Mal, zurückliegen. Chinese uses horizontal terms as well: 前 (in 前天, the day before yesterday) and 後 (in 後天, the day after tomorrow), but it also uses vertical ones: 上 (top, up, above) and 下 (bottom, down, below). So one says 上個星期 (“up week”, meaning last week), 下個星期 (“down week”, meaning next week), and 上個月 (“up-month”, meaning last month) 下個月 (“down month”, meaning next month). Time does not only go by, it goes downwards, too.

Does this affect the way that speakers of Chinese think about temporal relations? Lera Boroditsky (2001) showed that native Mandarin speakers are influenced even when they are asked in English (when they “think for English”). They were shown vertical and horizontal arrays of objects and in between they were asked various questions, such as whether March comes earlier than April. They were faster in their response after having seen vertical arrays. For native English speakers the result was the opposite. Bilinguals fared in-between, according to the age at which they had begun to learn English. Then native English speakers were (somewhat artificially) taught to speak about time in vertical terms, and they then tended to behave like native Mandarin speakers in these tests.

Language creates habits and patterns of thought, and if we take stereotype- and prototype-theories of concepts seriously (according to which mental images play a central role in our having concepts of things), results of the kind pointed out above should not come as a surprise. Of course, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is still disputed and not settled. Nevertheless, a good number of experiments have recently come up with good evidence in favor of it. A good collection of reports of such experiments can be found in Gentner and Goldin-Meadow (2003). I do not want to go into further experiments here. It should be more or less clear that language plays a role in our thinking. The question is to what extent, and in what sense, we can say that it “determines” thinking, and what the deeper, or broader, consequences would be if that were the case. The point I am trying to make here is that there is something fundamental about the Chinese language that is
different from what we find in Western languages. This fundamental difference consists not just in the use of words like 上 (up) and 下 (down) to express temporal relations. What I am after here are the implications of the grammatical (not lexical) differences between languages.

The grammatical structure and the isolating character of Chinese that I have pointed out above are not local. They are not bound to particular words that reflect particular conceptualizations. Rather, they are everywhere in Chinese. They are, so it seems to me, more at the root of a language. I do not know of any empirical study that tries to bring out the implications of these general grammatical differences for the way language users think. Nevertheless, it would be most interesting if such an experiment could be carried out along the lines of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

In the sections above, we have seen some linguistic differences between Chinese and Western languages on the one hand, and some psychological world-view differences between Asians and Westerners on the other. I have done this in such a way that certain parallels suggest themselves: On the one hand, the Chinese language tends to require its user to be more context sensitive; on the other, there is evidence for Asians being more perceptually sensitive than Westerners to background and interrelations in their understanding of the world. The question now is whether there is a connection, an inner causal connection and not just an outer accidental parallel, between the two: between the requirements that the Chinese language imposes on its users, and the higher perceptual sensitivity of Asians. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would seem to suggest that there is such a connection.

But the differences in perceptual sensitivity that surfaced in the experiments pointed out above might have all kinds of cultural and educational reasons and causes. How can we know that language is one of them? Furthermore, I have only reported a handful of experiments, and these involve not only Chinese, but also Japanese and Koreans, and they do not speak Chinese. Although Japanese still uses some Chinese characters, it now also uses syllabic writing (Katakana and Hiragana) in its script. Korean formerly used Chinese characters, but now has a phonetic script (Han‘gŭl). They do not have a Roman alphabet, yes, but they do have phonetically based scripts, whereas Chinese has a morpheme- or word-based script. They do not inflect, yes, but they agglutinate instead, whereas Chinese is an isolating language.

If Korean and Japanese are closer to Western languages and do not have
the linguistic features I have pointed out for Chinese (monosyllabic, lack of inflection), then it might be more likely that the parallels (between Asian perception and the Chinese language) are merely accidental. The perceptual behavior of Koreans and Japanese might then be due to other factors, not to language, and in particular not to the Chinese language. Furthermore, if this is true, it might hold for the Chinese as well: They might perceptually behave in certain “Asian” ways (together with the Japanese and Koreans) due to reasons that have nothing or little to do with the language itself.

On the other hand, trying to give support to Sapir-Whorf again, Korean and Japanese ways of behaving and seeing the world, their culture, aesthetics, arts, values, social structures, education, etc., have been strongly influenced by the Chinese, and these in turn might indeed have been influenced by their language in the way I have suggested. Thus we would at least have an indirect, namely historical influence.

To go one step further, on the opposing side, someone might object that Chinese today is not the same as the classical Chinese of 2000 years ago, where the monosyllabic structure was more dominant, so that the features of the Chinese language I pointed out would be of little consequence today. This person might also add that many Chinese cannot read or are otherwise not sensitive to those features. To all this I would answer, firstly, that even modern Chinese is at its heart monosyllabic, and second, that Confucius certainly was sensitive to those features and that many Chinese have read Confucius since then and have set up systems of education under his influence. The traces of Confucius exist, more or less, everywhere in Chinese society, even today. The traces do not fade; they evolve. This also applies to Japan and Korea, maybe gradually also to the West, when Chinese views begin to enter Western societies. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis thus shows a new face, a historical one.

Korea and Japan are influenced by the Chinese and by the Chinese language. Nevertheless, they do not speak Chinese. This casts an oblique light on the parallels between Asian perception and the Chinese language pointed out above. China is not all of Asia. Nor is Asia “the East”. There is also India, and as Sanskrit has a rich morphology, we must be even more careful here and avoid over-generalizations and hasty conclusions.

Despite these complications, I still think it makes good sense to ask whether there are causal relations between the linguistic and the psychological. If there are, and if we look at language and culture in evolutionary perspectives, then those causal influences go both ways, from culture to
language and vice versa. But if a language has already evolved and “decided”, as Humboldt sometimes likes to put it, to stick to and further develop certain features (in the case of Chinese: being monosyllabic, isolating, and having characters for its script) and not to develop others, then this can set up certain structures that are impossible to trace back and re-develop differently. It can be like a tree branching out. Branches do not naturally shrink back. Furthermore, once they begin to grow, they grow bigger and bigger and smaller branches begin to grow from them. Chinese grammar might be such a parting point.

If all this makes sense and if we keep in mind the growing economic and political strength of China versus the USA and Europe, then we have an interesting perspective. We will have a point in saying that there remains a difference (in tendency) between China and the West, at least as long as Chinese and Western languages, as we have them now, in particular their grammar, live on, side by side. Of course these languages will further develop and influence each other. But that is another story.

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REFERENCES


Harbsmeier, C., see Humboldt.


1. Es gibt mehrfache, kulturell differente Ursprünge und Traditionen von Philosophie

Es gibt Philosophie in nicht-europäischen Traditionen, wie es Philosophie in der europäischen Tradition gibt, im strengen Sinn des Wortes "Philosophie" – als explizite Reflexion ontologischer oder epistemologischer oder ethischer Probleme.


Ich erwähne nur nebenbei, dass es heute immer noch nicht selbstverständlich ist, unter 'Philosophie' im strengen Wortsinn Denktraditionen zu subsumieren, die nicht in griechisch-okzidentaler Geschichte entwickelt worden sind. Es gibt aber, auch wenn diese Grenze überschritten wird, durchaus keine Einigkeit darüber, welche 'außereuropäischen' Traditionen einzubeziehen sind und wie dies zu geschehen habe. "Es ist noch nicht lange her", schreibt Lorenz in der Einleitung zu seinem Buch über indische Denker, "da war das Interesse an außereuropäischen Denktraditionen im wesentlichen eine Sache von Spezialisten, und auch bei ihnen war der Zweifel verbreitet, ob es in Kulturen, die nicht von der griechischen Antike abhängen, von Religion unterschiedene Philosophie überhaupt geben könne." (Lorenz 1998, 15)

Die "Spezialisten", von denen Lorenz hier spricht, können unterschiedliche akademische Disziplinen verkörpern: es kann sich um komparative
PhilosophInnen handeln, die eine gewisse Randstellung innerhalb ihrer Disziplin einnehmen, es kann sich aber auch um PhilologInnen oder allgemeiner ExpertInnen einer Fremdkulturwissenschaft (wie der Sinologie, der Indologie, der Islamistik, Afrikanistik etc.) handeln. Dass PhilosophInnen aus philosophischem Interesse sich damit befassen, ist nicht selbstverständlich, eine entsprechende Ausbildung gehört im allgemeinen nicht zu ihrem Bildungskanon.

Mit einem gewissen Maß an Akzeptanz und Plausibilität können heute aber doch Ansätze rechnen, die neben der griechisch-okzidentalen auch noch chinesische und indische Denktraditionen als "Philosophie" ansehen. Das war noch viel weniger so, als Hülsmann und Mall 1989 "drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie" beschrieben (vgl. Mall/Hülsmann 1989), doch findet sich dies auch in anderen philosophiegeschichtlichen Darstellungen, wenngleich sich solche Darstellungen zumeist, was die Abschnitte über China und Indien betrifft, doch nur auf das Alte Testament beziehen und somit dafür scheinbar einen eher antiquarischen Wert beanspruchen. Die gewöhnliche 'postkoloniale' Lösung der Frage besteht nach wie vor in der Rekonstruktion der einen Geschichte der Philosophie, der dann die separaten Geschichten (im Plural!) zur Seite gestellt werden.

Es ist denkbar, dass Philosophie in jeder menschlichen Gesellschaft ab einer gewissen Entwicklungsstufe entwickelt wird. In Richtung dieser These gehen Arbeiten, in denen als 'Ethnophilosophie' das Denken einer Vielzahl von Gesellschaften untersucht wird, deren oft orale Traditionen man zu rekonstruieren versucht. Wir brauchen im Zusammenhang mit unserer Fragestellung nicht auf solche Versuche einzugehen, denn es ist ausreichend, wenn gezeigt werden kann, dass für Philosophie etwas aus der Befassung mit außereuropäischen Traditionen überhaupt zu gewinnen ist.

Wichtig scheint mir die Frage nach Einzigkeit, Vielheit oder Allheit bezüglich möglicher Ursprünge der Philosophie in zweierlei Hinsicht. Erstens deshalb, weil das weltanschaulich-philosophische Denken mehrerer, nicht aller klassischen Traditionen, z.B. chinesische, indische, arabisch-islamische und griechische in heutigen Gesellschaften stark weiter wirkt. Das rechtfertigt nicht nur, es verlangt eine interkulturell orientierte Ausrichtung auch der Philosophie, wie Holenstein zu Recht feststellt: "Ein Plädoyer für die Vermeidung von behebbaren Missverständnissen und für die Besinnung auf zivile Umgangsformen in der Auseinandersetzung mit uns fremden Kulturen bedarf keiner moralischen Motivation. Schieres Eigeninteresse genügt." (Holenstein 1999, 30) In dieselbe Richtung geht Collins' Bemerkung, dass gebildete Menschen, wenn erst einmal durch wirt-


2. Kulturell differente Philosophien sind gegenseitig interpretierbar

Eine kulturell geprägte philosophische Tradition kann mit den begrifflichen Mitteln einer anderen erfasst und interpretiert werden.

Ausgesprochen spekulativ klingt die zweite Annahme, wenn damit behauptet würde, dass jede kulturell geprägte Philosophie mit den begrifflichen Mitteln jeder anderen interpretierbar ist. Sie wäre, da es sich im Unterschied zur erstgenannten um eine Allaussage handeln würde, nicht im strengen Sinn verifizierbar. Es ist jedoch eine heuristisch fruchtbare Frage, zu untersuchen, wie und mit welchen Ausdrucksmitteln derartige Übernahmen geschehen.

Zunächst ist die Möglichkeit der Gegenseitigkeit zu suchen. Dies ist mit einem Interesse an außereuropäischer Philosophie nicht zwangsläufig gegeben, was zum Beispiel eine meiner Vier Fragen zur Philosophie in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika deutlich macht. Bei diesem Versuch, den gewöhnlich eurozentrischen Blick auf die Gegenwartsphilosophie kritisch zu bedenken, formulierte ich als zweite Frage "an Kolleg/inn/en in Regionen außerhalb von Europa und Nordamerika":
"Welche Möglichkeiten sehen Sie, die Probleme des 'Übersetzens' von philosophischen Grundbegriffen aus dem Kontext außereuropäischer Kulturen in den Kontext der gegenwärtigen, vor allem europäisch-angloamerikanischen Philosophie zu bewältigen?" (Wimmer 1988, 11)

Es kam mir damals offensichtlich bei dieser Formulierung nicht in den Sinn, dass der gegenläufige Prozess des Übersetzens von ebenso großer Bedeutung sein könnte. R.A. Herra, der in seiner Antwort eine kritische Reflexion aller meiner damaligen Fragen vornahm, verweis auf die Einseitigkeit eines solchen Interesses und gibt zu bedenken:

"Die Antwort muß mit okzidentalen Konzepten erfaßt werden: was bedeutet das? Es bedeutet erstens, daß die Frage die Art des Antwortens vorbestimmt, und zweitens, daß die Art des Antwortens voraussetzt, mit okzidentalen Zeichen umzugehen und zu denken. Oder, um es weniger rhetorisch auszudrücken: die Antwort auf eine Frage nach der globalen Philosophie muß sich, um verstanden, ja sogar um formuliert zu werden, auf die begrifflichen Mittel dieser Philosophie stützen und von hier aus antworten. Schon der Akt des Fragens nach einer Philosophie der Philosophie aus interkultureller Perspektive selbst ist ein okzidentaler Akt, globalisierend, ausschließend. Diesen Akt auszuführen heißt, sich für die Philosophie, für den Okzident engagieren zu lassen." (Herra 1988, 16f.)


Interkulturell orientierte Philosophie geht dem gegenüber von einer Einsicht aus, wie sie Garfield beispielsweise formuliert hat, nämlich dass

"kultureller Abstand etwas offensichtlich für einen irgendwie fremden Interpreten macht, was für den in einer Kultur Lebenden verborgen ist. Vielleicht lesen wir so Platon mit größerem Verständnis als Platon selbst es je gekonnt hätte, Tibeter oder Tutsis können Platon – und insbesondere Quine – mit größerem Verständnis lesen, als wir es je könnten." (Garfield 2000, 47)
Ob dies wirklich so ist und ein solches "größeres Verständnis" wiederum kommunikabel gemacht werden kann, bleibt eine Frage in jedem Einzelfall. Die heuristische Annahme jedoch, dies könne der Fall sein, ist wesentlich.

3. Unterschiedliche Differenzen sind relevant für Philosophie

Kulturell differente Prägungen betreffen sowohl Fragestellungen, als auch Begrifflichkeiten, als auch dominante Thesen philosophischer Traditionen.

Die dritte Annahme betrifft Schwierigkeiten, die sich allgemein im Vergleichen von philosophischen Richtungen ergeben. Es ist ein wohlbekannter Sachverhalt, dass Philosophierende nicht immer und überall mit gleicher Intensität sich den selben Fragen zuwenden dieselben Begriffe verwenden oder auch nur dieselbe Aufgabe als die ihre ansehen.


4. Vergleichen soll Sachfragen der Philosophie betreffen


In der vierten Annahme liegt eine Formulierung vor, die nahelegt, in der Philosophie zwar nicht von historischen Untersuchungen und Vergleichen abzusehen, diese aber auch nicht als Endzweck zu betrachten. Die Forderung nach der Einbeziehung von außereuropäischer Philosophie in der Darstellung ihrer Geschichte oder in systematischen Fragestellungen
kann auf verschiedene Arten eingelöst werden. Nicht in jedem Fall einer solchen Einbeziehung kann man auch schon von 'interkultureller Philosophie' sprechen.

Es ist zu unterscheiden zwischen einem ständigen und systematischen Einbeziehen von Argumenten, Begriffen und Thesen aus okzidentalen wie nicht-okzidentalen Traditionen bei der Klärung von Sachfragen einerseits (also einem 'interkulturell orientierten' systematischen Philosophieren) und einem Vergleichen einzelner philosophischer Traditionen andererseits. Diese zweite Art wird von der komparativen oder vergleichenden Philosophie betrieben, denn jeder, "der heute über die verschiedenen Philosophie- und Kulturtraditionen denkt und schreibt, kann nicht umhin, diese miteinander in Beziehung zu setzen, zu vergleichen. Dies nennt Matilal 'comparative philosophy in a minimal sense.'" (Mall 1995, 52; Matilal 1982, 259)


5. Interkulturelle Orientierung ist in der Philosophie notwendig wegen deren Universalitätsanspruchs

*Jede als universell geltend intendierte These von Philosophierenden ist möglicherweise kulturell geprägt; kulturell-partikuläre Thesen sind jedoch in der Philosophie nach deren eigenem Anspruch nicht ausreichend.*

Es liegt ein *Dilemma der Kulturalität* darin, dass mehr zur Frage steht als bloß eine Komplettierung der *Philosophiegeschichte* durch eine vergleichende Interpretation außereuropäischer Denktraditionen. Das Projekt der Philosophie – in unterschiedlichen Kulturtraditionen – bestand und besteht darin, in grundlegenden Fragen zu allgemein verbindlichen Einsichten zu gelangen. In diesem Sinn geht es seiner Intention nach nicht darin auf, eine bestimmte, kulturell geprägte Tradition weiterzuführen. Und doch ist jeder konkrete Anspruch auf allgemeine Einsichtigkeit oder Intelligenzität nur mit den Mitteln zu formulieren und zu rechtfertigen, die eine bestimmte Tradition zur Verfügung stellt. Das wichtigste dieser Mittel ist die Sprache, in der Denken sich jeweils ausdrückt – Philosophierende haben
nichts anderes, um zu zeigen, was sie denken, als ein jeweils bestimmtes symbolisches System, sprachliche und metasprachliche Begriffe.

Ich will hier zur Illustration auf ein Projekt hinweisen, das Wiredu vorgeschlagen hat. Er spricht von der Notwendigkeit einer "begrifflichen Entkolonisierung" der philosophischen Sprache in Afrika, die darin gegeben sei, dass selbst so zentrale Begriffe wie "Truth, Knowledge, Reality, Self, Person, Space, Time, Life, Matter, Subjectivity" und zahlreiche andere für ihn, dessen Primärsprache das westafrikanische Akan ist, oft und in für die Philosophie systematisch wichtigen Zusammenhängen Konnotationen haben, welche bestimmte Thesen der europäischen philosophischen Tradition unformulierbar oder zumindest höchst unplausbibel erscheinen lassen. Sein Vorschlag für die zentralen Termini der Philosophie lautet nun, die jeweiligen Thesen und Probleme in der je eigenen Sprache zu durchdenken und nach deren Maßstäben die Überzeugungskraft der fraglichen Thesen zu beurteilen. (vgl. Wiredu 1997, 12)

Wiredus Vorschlag ist ernstzunehmen, doch führt er weit. Konsequenterweise dürfte das Verfahren nicht auf solche Sprachen begrenzt werden, deren Sprecher einem Kolonisierungsprozess unterworfen waren, sondern müsste bei jeder Sprache durchgeführt werden – und bestünde dann wohl in einer 'Enthistorisierung' der philosophischen Terminologie. Es wäre aber, im Unterschied zu ähnlichen enthistorisierten Projekten (wie beispielsweise im Wiener Kreis) gefordert, die vielen jeweils 'eigenen Sprachen' zu nutzen, aus ihnen Maßstäbe der Plausibilität zu gewinnen, und erst dann Einsichten, Urteile, Thesen "on independent grounds" zu prüfen. Das schreibt den 'eigenen Sprachen' eine große Aufgabe zu. Zudem bliebe weiterhin das Problem, die so gewonnenen Einsichten wieder zu übersetzen, es sei denn, man zögere sich eben auf so etwas wie eine 'ethnische' Philosophie zurück und ließe die jeweils anderen außerhalb des Diskurses.

Das Entscheidende in Wiredus Überlegung ist, dass eine starke Unplausibilität von Aussagen, die in einer Sprache formuliert wurden, in einer anderen Sprache bewusst werden kann, für oder gegen die dann argumentiert werden muss, und zwar nunmehr unabhängig von den zunächst sprachlich bedingten Assoziationen oder Plausibilitäten. Wie auch immer das Ergebnis einer solchen Argumentation aussieht, eines will Wiredu festhalten: Viele zentrale Konzepte und Lehren der okzidentalen Metaphysik und Theologie sind, wenn er sie in seiner Muttersprache auszudrücken versucht, hoch unplausbibel (ebd., 17) – und dies ist Grund genug, sie einer ernsthaften Prüfung zu unterziehen.
Ich sehe nur eine Möglichkeit, Wiredu in diesem Punkt zu widersprechen – eine allerdings höchst zweifelhafte Möglichkeit: indem man nämlich behaupten würde, Akan und andere Sprachen seien eben strukturell ungeeignet für philosophisches Denken. Die These wäre dann etwa: es gibt einige Sprachen (vielleicht auch nur eine einzige), die geeignet sind, philosophische Begriffe und Thesen angemessen auszudrücken. Andere Sprachen seien dies nicht oder doch so lange nicht, bis sie vielleicht entsprechend angepasst wären. Diese These, so seltsam sie zunächst klingt, ist doch nicht ganz unbekannt.

Die These klingt nicht nur seltsam – und ich erlaube mir hier, Heideggers einschlägige Formulierungen nicht zu zitieren – sie setzt schlicht zu viel voraus: nähme man sie ernst, so könnte sie nur begründet werden von jemand, der/die selbst in allen fraglichen Sprachen gleicherweise kompetent und philosophierend erfahren wäre (was natürlich eine unsinnige Vorstellung ist) oder wenn zumindest gewährleistet wäre, dass eine durchgehende und stets gegenseitige Kritik aller (und nicht nur einiger europäischer) Sprachen in bezug auf die darin naheliegenden philosophisch einschlägigen Plausibilitäten bereits geleistet ist. Dann allerdings wäre Wiredus Programm der "conceptual decolonization" bereits durchgeführt. Dem ist nicht so.


Es ist nicht unmöglich. Aber der Blick bloß in die eigene Denkgeschichte wird uns nicht lehren, ob es wirklich so ist. Wenn es nicht so ist, so entgeht uns als Philosophierenden etwas – der Sache nach. Wenn uns jedoch nichts inhaltlich wirklich Anderes begegnet, so hätte durch ernsthafte Auseinandersetzung unsere Tradition einen wichtigen Test bestanden. In jedem der beiden Fälle ist ein Gewinn, kein Verlust durch eine wirkliche Auseinandersetzung mit fremdkulturellen Denktraditionen zu erwarten.
6. Tendenziell kann und soll Philosophie polylogisch vorgehen

Unter den Bedingungen der Globalisierung sind Verfahrensweisen philosophischer Diskussion und Argumentation zu entwickeln, die mindestens tendentiell polylogisch sind.


Es gibt im Zusammenhang dessen, was man allgemein als "Ethnosophie" bezeichnet kann, eine Art von sperrigem Ethnozentrismus, der sich als Bescheidenheit ausgibt (vgl. Wimmer 2004, 58ff). Er tritt etwa dann auf, wenn eine Formel wie "für die Tradition N gilt p" zugleich einen Rückzug vom Anspruch des allgemeinen Geltungsanspruchs von "p" signalisiert und andererseits die Forderung impliziert, im Konzert der Weltbilder und der Meinungen gehört zu werden – auch außerhalb der "Tradition N". Ist dergleichen gar nicht angezielt, hat man sich wirklich zu fragen, was da eigentlich wozu ausgesagt wird. Mit solchem scheinbar bescheidenen Rückzug kann allerdings auch ein durchaus stolzes Isolierungsbeharrn verbunden sein.

Nehmen wir nun an, es gebe nach gegenseitiger Information in einer Sachfrage der Philosophie die relevanten und miteinander nicht vereinbaren Positionen A, B, C und D. Die "gegenseitige Information in Sachfra-

Wir können unter diesen Annahmen schematisch folgende Modelle von Beeinflussungsprozessen im genannten Fall des Bestehens von vier differenten Urteilen unterscheiden:

(a) Einseitig zentraler Einfluss: Monolog
Unter der Annahme, dass die Tradition "A" allen von ihr differierenden endgültig oder eindeutig überlegen ist, wird deren Verhältnis zu diesen anderen so gedacht, dass Beeinflussungen mit dem Ziel der Angleichung an
A in Richtung auf B, C und D ausgehen, dass von diesen jedoch keinerlei relevante Rückwirkungen auf A erfolgen.


(b) Gegenseitiger teilweiser Einfluss: die Stufe der Dialoge

In der Realität kommt es beim Aufeinandertreffen von A, B, C und D auch dann zu Dialogen und gegenseitigen Beeinflussungen, wenn sie aufgrund von traditioneller Selbsteinschätzung theoretisch wegen der selbstverständlichen Überlegenheit der je eigenen Tradition gar nicht als notwendig oder, weil eine unüberschreitbare Verstehensgrenze zwischen dem Eigenen und dem Fremden gedacht wird, strenggenommen als nicht möglich erachtet werden.


(c) Gegenseitig vollständiger Einfluss: die Stufe des Polylogs


In der menschlichen Wirklichkeit existiert diese Form gegenseitiger Beeinflussung unter Voraussetzung tatsächlicher Gleichrangigkeit und un-
ter Infragestellung aller Grundbegriffe, lediglich als programmatische oder praxis-regulierende Idee; dasselbe trifft allerdings ebenso für die erstgene-
nannte Vorstellung eines einseitig zentralen Einflusses zu. Wenn also die Wirklichkeit sich stets als eine mehr oder weniger vielseitige Form der zweiten Stufe beschreiben lässt, so ist doch zu fragen, nach welchem der beiden Extreme hin eine Orientierung begründet werden kann. Das heißt: es ist nach der Argumentierbarkeit, nach den logischen Voraussetzungen oder Vorannahmen des Modells eines nur einseitigen Einflusses bzw. desjenigen eines Polylogs zu fragen. In theoretischer Hinsicht scheint mir diese Frage unschwer zu beantworten: solange die Möglichkeit relevanter, jedoch divergierender Traditionen hinsichtlich philosophischer Sachfragen besteht, ist das erste Modell einer bloß einseitigen Beeinflussung nicht zu rechtfertigen, das Modell des Polylogs jedoch sehr wohl.

In praktischer Hinsicht ist damit noch nicht allzu viel gewonnen. Fraglich ist ja, mit welchen Verfahren der Argumentation dann philosophiert werden kann, wenn nicht von vornherein feststeht, welche Begriffe, Kategorien, Ausdrucksmittel überhaupt als angemessen zu betrachten sind. Dies ist zwar ein neuartiger Sachverhalt – es gibt in der Philosophie so gut wie in anderen Disziplinen unterschiedliche Stile, die ein gegenseitiges Verstehen oder auch nur Ernstnehmen erschweren können, aber unvermeidbar sind –, jedoch verschärft sich die Sache, wenn Angehörige mehrerer Kulturen miteinander zu argumentieren beginnen. Dies ist nicht auf die Frage der gemeinsamen Sprache bezogen: eine solche ist unabdingbar und es ist nicht unbedingt ein Nachteil für die Klarheit des Ausdrucks, wenn sie nicht die Muttersprache ist. Soll aber beispielsweise die Rezitation eines Liedes aus Afrika ebenso als Bestandteil einer philosophischen Argumentation gelten wie die Interpretation der These eines Klassikers der okzidentalen Tradition? Selbst wenn innerhalb der Gegenwartspolitik – etwa im Bereich der Beispiele, die von Philosophen der Analytischen Philosophie gerne angeführt werden – die Grenze der als zulässig erachteten Quellen manchmal ziemlich weit gezogen wird, dürfte es doch Widerstände hervorrufen, wenn jemand ein afrikanisches Lied im Rahmen eines Arguments singt und vielleicht auch noch darauf besteht, es müsse, um den Sinn zu erfassen, dazu getanzt werden.

Dies ist ein konstruiertes Beispiel. Doch werden Philosophierende welcher Tradition auch immer, wenn sie die Vielheit des kulturellen Ausdrucks ernst nehmen, Argumentationsformen begegnen, die ihnen fremd und gelegentlich auch unpassend erscheinen. Darin liegt eine Herausforderung. Sie besteht darin, dass Wege gefunden werden müssen, in Argumen-
tationen Formen zu finden, die offener gegenüber neuen Ausdrucksweisen sein müssen als die gewohnten, die aber doch zu inhaltlichen Ergebnissen führen sollen.


**Literatur**


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Intercultural Polylogues in Philosophy

FRANZ M. WIMMER, VIENNA

1.

Since this is a conference of philosophers about philosophy and matters relevant to philosophy, I shall not talk about intercultural dialogues in general, nor will I speak about dialogues in the fields of religion or culture (fields which have to be distinguished, by the way), dialogues between politicians, etc. My statement will try to concentrate on intercultural dialogues in philosophy. This means, according to my understanding of "philosophy", that I have in mind essentially dialogues on ontological, on epistemological, or on normative questions.

2.

I propose not to talk about "dialogues" but about polylogues, considering that any question discussed by philosophers coming from different cultural backgrounds and traditions, ought to be argumented by the conceptual means and from the viewpoints of many, virtually from the viewpoints of all relevant philosophical traditions. The simple reason for the term "polylogue" lies in the fact that (a) the association with "dialogue" very often seems to be that there be (only) two parties involved – though the Greek "diá" simply means "between" or "inter" and does not imply any number – and that (b) there are conceptual and methodological differences between dialogues where only two parties are involved compared to others where more than two are. Furthermore – which I only can state here, not exposing it – it is a fact that in most cases where there are cultural differences, rele-

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1 Statement to Panel "Intercultural Dialogue", 29th Wittgenstein-Conference of the ALWS Kirchberg am Wechsel, August 11th 2006. Other statements, in the order of contribution, have been given by: Mohammed Shomali (Qom, Iran), Patrick Riordan SJ (London, UK), and Eveline Goodman-Thau (Jerusalem, Israel)
vant to philosophy, there will be *more than two cultural traditions* concerned.

3.

Now let me formulate my first question: What could be expected to be the subjects and the purposes of intercultural polylogues in philosophy?

I should like to answer this question in three steps:

a) In many cases, mutual interest between philosophers who come from different cultural backgrounds, shall lead them to *explaining* to each other the *different concepts* and *theories*, and the *meaning* of what had been said in the teachings and texts of one's tradition. Without going into more details, I consider this process to be the aim of "comparative philosophy" with the purpose of *understanding* culturally different philosophy. As such, it is not yet what intercultural philosophical polylogues should aim at.

b) In my opinion, the issue of intercultural dialogues or polylogues in philosophy is *not only mutual understanding*. It rather is mutual criticism, *mutual enlightening*, by activating all the *different traditions* of thought with their respective concepts and insights, their methods of argumentation, etc.

c) So what would be the *issues* concerned? Theoretically, *every philosophical question or concept or theory* can be the subject of intercultural polylogues – and I seriously propose to consider non-occidental philosophical concepts and theories in whatever issue is concerned in philosophical discourse.

*Practically*, however, such subjects will be discussed in an intercultural orientation which is *controversial* from the point of view of the *leading traditions* of culturally different groups. Another example may show that there are various theoretical procedures to be expected.

If the *universal validity* of (some) ideas of *human rights* is criticised by the argument that they were of "western origin", we have to be aware that there are at least three levels of argumentation:

– Firstly, there is the question whether this is *historically correct* – and the argument can be doubted in that respect, at least partially. Such discussion on historical evidences, on possible contributions or influences will not de-
cide the question, but will help to differentiate and to formulate the problem more clearly.

– Secondly, the general point that would have to be discussed is whether any idea could be universally valid if it originated from only one cultural tradition. The answer to be expected from philosophers of whatever cultural tradition, will be "yes", except for those who deny universal validity with regard to any issue.

– Thirdly, the argument might mean that the understanding of what "human being" means, differs between Western (e.g.: liberal) tradition(s) and one or more non-Western (e.g. Confucianist, traditional African) tradition or traditions. In that case, mutual understanding of what is implied in any of these traditions, will be a necessary condition for dialogues, but will not be sufficient to overcome the differences. At this point argumentation between all the different traditions – polylogues – ought to start in order to gain more universality in their common attempts. Of course, philosophers doing so will have to presuppose some basic (mainly logical) principles. However, they also will be open to revise other presuppositions relevant to the subject (as, e.g., that persons be individual human beings, and the like).

4.

At this point one has to formulate two more questions: Does philosophy intrisically need such intercultural polylogues? Moreover: Are they possible?

a) I want to answer to the first of these questions with a hypothesis, which I cannot discuss here in any detail. The hypothesis is: Philosophy as such – be it Occidental, Indian, Chinese, African or from any other cultural background – is confronted to a dilemma, the dilemma of culturality. By this I mean something very simple: Philosophy as such aims at universally acceptable, universally intelligible insights, propositions, and theories. This is one side of the dilemma. The other side:

No philosopher and no philosophical tradition have any means to show and to express what they think other than symbolic systems developed within particular cultures and worldviews. Most philosophical thought is
expressed in a language – not to forget: in one of many human languages which differ, among other things, in their ability to formulate abstract ideas – and there is no such thing as one language of reason.

Every single language used to express philosophical thought can transport hidden presuppositions that may make plausible something which would be highly implausible or even impossible to formulate in some other language(s). Every language or symbolic system in general has certain particularities which might be a virtue or a vice with respect to philosophy – and it is not only language that needs to be mentioned here: religious or weltanschauungs-backgrounds play a role as well.

This dilemma of culturality is the main reason which makes me think that there is an intrinsic need for intercultural polylogues in philosophy. Without such intercultural verification one simply cannot be certain about one's particularities. Therefore, the alternatives to intercultural polylogues in philosophy are only two forms of cultural centrism: either separative centrism (avoiding the claim to universality, aiming only at something which is "true" or "valid" for "us", i.e. for a particular human community) – or expansive/integrative centrism (claiming universality of one's own position and not taking into any account others' positions, as far as these differ from the own position). The outcome will be relativism in the first, mere propaganda and persuasion in the second case.

b) Now let us consider the next question, already mentioned before: Are intercultural polylogues in philosophy possible at all?

In controversial matters, stemming from different traditions, we do not know whether one or other or none of the parties is right in the sense that a postulate were universally intelligible or valid, before a dialogue or polylogue has taken place.

A theoretically pure model of polylogue would imply that every party is completely ready to give up its own convictions – except for very few basic principles of logic without which no argumentation would be possible at all – if and only if there are stronger arguments given for the other's position. It is not likely that such a disposition is normally to be expected in real life – not even among philosophers, even less among people strongly bound to religious, political, or deep-rooted cultural thinking habits.
The *first consequence* of this observation with respect to intercultural polylogues in philosophy will be that no such thing can be expected from *encounters of representatives* of any provenience. It is not trivial to underline that *philosophical dialogues and polylogues are not between cultures, nor between political units, nor between religions* (which would ask for representatives of religions, of states, or of culturally defined communities, all of them relying on or bound to defend some extra-theoretical interest), but between human beings trying to argument for or against propositions or theories on purely theoretical grounds.

Still, this remains a theoretical consideration in itself. It is quite unlikely that discussions between philosophers, whose thought is rooted in culturally different philosophical traditions, ever take place under conditions of complete equality in any non-theoretical matter.

Therefore, we could ask for practically feasible consequences. There might be *practices* in academic philosophy tending towards intercultural polylogues, as it could be taken as a practical rule to look for the discussion of an issue under consideration in at least one culturally rooted philosophical tradition different from one's own. For Westerners that would mean not to close their lists of authorities at the borders of the occidental lore.

Such opening and curiosity quite often will provide unexpected thoughts and insights – and it is possible thanks to translations and the global nets of intercommunication of our globalizing world.

5.

We should ask the last question now: *What can be expected from intercultural philosophical polylogues?*

These are two questions: *What can the rest of humankind expect when philosophers activate intercultural dialogues and/or polylogues in their disciplines?* And second: *What can be expected for philosophy itself from such dialogues and polylogues?*

The answer to the first version of the question is not very easy. We certainly ought to distinguish between consequences for other scientific disciplines, and such consequences as might be relevant to non-scientific fields.
Since academic philosophy would "globalise" in such a perspective at least in the way that it would become natural for philosophers to know the basics of more than their own regional tradition. This, after the impact of colonialism, might not be easy for non-Westerners, just as it will be a difficult task for Westerners, although in a different way. However, parallel interest within other disciplines – as, e.g., in linguistics, psychology, history, social theory and others – might not only help, but bring about interesting questions and viewpoints for a globalizing society, as we would learn about the different concepts of other regional traditions.

Sometimes, such research might have its impact again in philosophical discussions. Here I just want to hint at the fact that ethic questions concerning genetics are usually treated by referring to purely monocultural concepts, which obviously is inadequate.

Furthermore, dialogical and polylogical habits in the field of philosophy could even have an impact on fields other than the scientific one. Such habits and practices could contribute to avoiding common presuppositions of superiority-inferiority of "cultures", "ways of life" etc., even in politics. It is my personal experience that in political discussions about the goals and the means of what formerly has been called "developmental policy", and now is labelled "developmental co-operation" the concrete ways justifying the "co-" often are very unclear and searched for elsewhere. If philosophers were trained in truly inter-cultural encounters in their own field, I do not doubt that they would be asked by others about their respective experiences.

The answer to the second version of the question above can be very short:

*By intercultural dialogues and polylogues philosophers may come closer to what they aim to by profession, i.e. to universality.*
The idea of intercultural dialog consists of several assumptions. One of them opposes dialog to other forms of intercultural contact like conflict and coercion. Dialog is a gentle way of filling up the intercultural gap. Conflict is a harder one. So there is a moral content in this assumption, it opposes negotiations to violence, and it says that to avoid violence, and thus to avoid suffering is the proper aim of the human actions. I call this assumption: “negotiations without suffering”.

Another assumption of the idea of an intercultural dialog says something about the notion of culture. If it is an inter-cultural dialog, then we deal with, at least hypothetical, separated entities (or processes) called cultures. It says that the culture is a relatively homogenic and isolated whole, which can be studied and described as such. Although this may have been true in the seventeenth century, it seems out of date today. Contemporary cultures are so complex and multidimensionally linked to one another that in result – as Zygmunt Bauman writes– “everyone is a stranger today” (Bauman 1990, chapter 3). I call this assumption – accepting the doubts – “heterogeneity of culture”. It can also be called “multiculturalism”.

The third part of my conceptual framework consists of some theses about the cultural function of philosophy. Richard Rorty in his Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature claims that philosophy should keep up cultural conversation (Rorty 1979, chapter 7). It is to be a sort of a keystone located between different cultural areas. Jean-Francois Lyotard in turn, puts forward a moral postulate in his theory of conflict and justice. He says that philosophers should fabricate vocabularies for those, who are unable to express their arguments and reasons in a situation of conflict. In the asymmetrical conflicts, the existing public vocabulary represents only one party while the other is knocked off to the abyss of silence. Thereby, a philosopher is obliged by the idea of justice to “give the voice” to the silent (Kwiek 1994, part 2). Finally, Józef Niżnik in his Arbitrariness of Philoso-
phy defines philosophy by its function which is the ability to cohere the human symbolic world by arbitrary conceptual inventions (Niżnik 2006).

Having given those three conceptions, we can imagine philosophy as a practice that aims at linking and binding together separated cultural areas by operating on vocabularies, and thus by supporting negotiations and knowledge against violence. In short, the three approaches share the assumption of “negotiations without suffering” with the idea of the intercultural dialog.

Now, I would like to add the assumption of “heterogeneity of culture” to that view on philosophy. If it operates / should operate as a dialog stimulator and its “pillar”, than it is dialog among different areas of heterogeneous cultures or among various strangers living in the same global society. The empirical differences among the areas are big enough to justifiably call them “cultures” (for the notion of culture see Banaszak, Kmita 1991).

Thus here are my claims about intercultural dialog. Since presently there is no way to hold the assumption of “homogeneity of culture”, there is no way to interpret the notion of intercultural dialog in a narrow, purely ethnic sense. Contrary, intercultural dialog is a dialog among different areas of globalizing civilization. Furthermore, because of modernization processes, the civilization changes accelerate bearing fruit of “experiencing the loss of a life-world (Lebenswelt)”, as Odo Marquard calls it (Marquard 1994, 43). This means that social reality changes so quickly that individuals permanently lose their competencies to cope in their everyday activities, because the very everyday reality reshapes continuously independently of their will and actions (Bauman 2000).

Thereby my next claim is: in such a permanently changing social and cultural reality there is no way to “settle” the dialog for good. In other words, it is impossible to resolve arising problems just by inventing a way of dialogizing and then ritualizing it (i. e. setting an institutional form). Contrary, changing reality permanently requires new tools, new vocabularies helping to keep the dialog up and to move it to new areas and new cultures. Dialog, according to claims of Rorty, Lyotard, and Niżnik, has to support the vitality of civilization by fabricating and preserving links among its different areas. It has to arise whenever there is a threat to negotiations without suffering and to justice, whenever a possibility of violence emerges on the horizon. Finally, it has to attempt to cohere cultural realities in order to enable us to make sense of the surrounding world and our lives.
Philosophy has become more and more marginal throughout the twentieth century, so one can hardly imagine it as a political instrument for promoting dialog in the way of institutional changes. Thereby philosophy, viewed as a domain of operations on notions and vocabularies, remains at a cultural level and leaves the institutional level to other social forces. So it should recognize cultural gaps that threat negotiations without suffering, develop conceptual instruments for filling them, i.e., for describing the gap situation, and expressing the needs and desires of the individuals involved. And finally it should develop a general vision that allows temporarily cohering the culture.

Inspired by the works of Zygmunt Bauman, Bruno Latour, and Hans Jonas, I call this project “long-range ethics”. Bauman remarked that moral impulse is weak and unable to travel further beyond our life-world (Bauman, Tester 2003, 165). Jonas noticed the necessity of working out the ethics that would be able to overcome this obstacle (Jonas 1980). Latour together with other Actor-Network Theorists has given us instruments to investigate and describe long-range actions (Latour 1987, 177-257).

Thus the long-range ethics project could be described as follows: Our moral experiences, and ethics, that is the many ways we put the experiences into words (theories, proverbs, narratives, etc.) are locked in the cocoon of the life-world (Lebenswelt). So is our moral sensitivity. So is also our ability to recognize and interpret what is going around. One may try to explain this situation of humans being tied to a life-world perspective referring to biology or history. It could be said that humans have evolved as primarily belonging to small communities. It could also be said that throughout the whole history, social reality relied on small groups. Only the modernization processes change, or even destroy this arrangement. Small communities, based on face-to-face relations, start to weaken and disappear, replaced by big social organizations based on abstract contacts. In other words, the blur and complex world of institutions remaining beyond the horizon of our life-worlds grows bigger and bigger.

Earlier, the individual actions usually were followed by the effects that were easy to observe and grasp in a moral perspective. Modernization has changed that, inscribing most of (all?) everyday individual actions in the wider institutional contexts. The direct effect of this is that the results of human actions occur far away in time and space from their sources. The easiest way to imagine that is to think about a war or ecology. On the one hand, we have a direct fight with swords or sticks, when an individual faces his/her enemy. On the other hand, we have a soldier firing a bomb in
a situation resembling a computer game: there is a screen, a joystick, and a comfortable armchair, but there is no physical enemy. Only the electronic trace of an enemy. In the same way, we can see the relation between radioactive garbage of today left as a problem for tomorrow’s generations. It is easy to multiply the examples, but it is crucial not to stick only to those two contexts. Contrary, moral understanding of the areas possessed by the networks of techno-science, economic markets, and politics is a vivid problem. In the same way, we do not understand morally our individual, everyday actions that originate in our life-worlds, but result far away from them.

In accordance with the project of long-range ethics that would keep up intercultural dialog, I would like point out briefly the areas of possible break downs and gaps in social and cultural reality. I will use various theories of modernization for that purpose. In other words, I would like to point out the areas that enable a dialog to get started, to be kept up, or to be intensified. Certainly, this list is not complete. However, facing the acceleration of civilization changes does increase the doubts about the very possibility of a complete list.

1.1 Slow and fast

The slow time – fast time gap results in two groups of problems: domination of fast time and information excess (Eriksen 2001). Slow time is characterized by linearity and cumulativeness. Slow linear time leads to the idea of progress, personal development, continuity of individual and social projects, long-term planning.

Fast time accelerates some of the features of slow time, so the continuous line turns into a set of separated dots of intensity. Cumulative line turns into cumulated points. In fast time, projects are short-term, because reality changes too quickly to keep them too long. Development of coherent personality is replaced by the juggling of identities. Continuity and coherence of projects retreat for contingency, ad hoc actions, manipulating with anything at hand. Thomas Eriksen calls it “the Lego syndrome” – anything is connectable to anything else (Eriksen 2001, chapter 7). He also claims that fast time is contagious and tends to displace slow time. This means that slow time groups and individuals move towards social margins.
1.2 Writing and electricity

Some literature studies result in mass education, in which individuals socialized in McLuhan’s “Marconi constellation” meet requirements created by the culture of writing. Individuals used to rhythm of television and the Internet interactivity are confronted with individualizing writing. Their inclination to search for links and to do many different things simultaneously proves to be an obstacle because knowledge consists in classifications and they are demanded to show bodiless, one-channel attention (de Kerkhove 2001, McLuhan 2003). Students handle this in different ways: by diagnosed dyslexia and dysgraphy, watch films instead of reading books, suffer of ADHD cured pharmacologically, by double adaptation.

I view all those phenomena as results of cultural gaps, which need the intercultural dialog. It would link fast time culture with the slow time one, information excess culture with information deflation culture, culture of writing with culture of electric media. Lack of good vocabularies for describing the gaps make the intercultural contacts result in disease, oddity, others’ “ill will”, or conflict.

1.3 Risk and partial modernization

Ulrich Beck in his Risiko Gesellschaft claims that modernization fabricated the new forms of risk (Beck 1986). I start with the social risk.

He claims that modern individualization was only partial, and is now completed (Beck 1986, part 2). Processes of individualization have destroyed traditional protections spread above the individuals, like social class or stratum and left the nuclear family as the last protection. However, mass education together with other processes let us notice inherent modern injustice consisting in inscribing men in the labour market and women in not paid home work. The latter was in fact a invisible fundament of modernization. I think we need not only institutional solutions for that injustice, but we also need a vocabulary to comprehend, to describe, and to discuss and evaluate it; a vocabulary which would be able to express the experiences of the “internally” colonized.

The clash between network individualism and traditional community bond is the other consequence of individualization (see Castells 2000 on network society). The first is based on weak ties, and “wallets” of personal lives, the latter on strong bonds and strong identification mechanisms.
1.4 Technoscience: the changing and the changed

“Natural” risks are tied to unpredicted consequences of modernity. Nature is not “out there” any more, it is an integral part of the collective. Instead of nature, we should speak of surprisingly associated hybrids possessing social, natural, and discursive features. The associations may fabricate risk.

Thus, two general claims: 1. Technoscience, while stimulating modernization, also stimulated unpredicted consequences that may turn into risks (Beck 1986, part 1). 2. Technoscience in the modern world fabricated the new beings – hybrids, which have populated our collective through the “back entrance” and unpredictably reshaped it (Latour 1993, Latour 2004).

Thereby my thesis is: presently, we need an intense dialog between those who participate in fabricating hybrids, and the “receivers”. In other words: dialog between the “inside” of technoscience and its “outside”. We need to start it with deconstructing the scientistic ideology which has protected the way technoscience operates.

2. Short-range and long-range ethics

Having given various theories of modernization, we can throw light on various areas that require dialog. It needs to go on among groups, individuals, different parts of one’s life and mind, institutions, and so forth. I spoke of “intercultural dialog” or “long-range ethics” to name that multiform need.

The notion of long-range ethics stresses in turn on different attributes of our life: on the fact that our routine actions in our life-world cause results far beyond it, and vice versa, the effects we observe in our life-worlds are caused by something or someone located far beyond it. I think, Jonas is right, when he claims that this is quite a new situation in our history (Jonas 1980). Thus, for purely pragmatic reasons – in order to survive and live as happily as we are able to – we philosophers should contribute to fabricating the instruments that would help to cope in such a strange world.

Besides that inside philosophy, a dialog between short-range and long-range ethics should be started. The aim is to merge them together, and not to replace one with the other one. And there should be started a dialog in the culture between fast time areas and slow time areas; between those who happen to be on the bright side of modernization, and those who remain on the unseen, dark side; between those, who, like philosophy professors, feel in the culture of writing like a fish in a pond, and those, who are drowned
in the electricity culture, and feel like strangers in the Gutenberg galaxy; between those, who are afraid of community mechanisms, but have learnt to live in the society of network individualism, and those, who do not grasp the latter, but view it as a disintegration of tradition and society; between those who support social change by stimulating operations of science, and those, who take these changes as something happening without their will and participation. In the last case, the dialog should reshape traditional scientism, and open the way for a discussion about the collective by simultaneously using political and scientific resources. Ulrich Beck talks of a transition from traditionally specialized science to the science specialized in connections (Beck 1986, chapter 7).

Obviously, all those areas require dialog as much as institutional actions, which philosophers, as a professional group, can hardly influence. But we do have influence on creation of new notions, on their connections, and on viewing our world in a new perspective – cognitive, ethical, social or political. This is exactly what I would expect from involving philosophers in the inner/intercultural dialog.

REFERENCES


1. Exposition of the Problem

The problem that I would like to address in this paper is how we can form sound moral judgments of actions that take place outside of our own historical and cultural context. Strictly speaking, there are two different problems, one concerning judgments of historical events and one concerning judgments of contemporary cultures. However, there is a strong logical similarity between both types of moral judgments insofar as they both concern judgments about something that takes place in a life context different from our own.

It is, I believe, easy to see that this is indeed a problem in the sense that the historical or cultural context does make a difference concerning our moral judgments. For example, when Alexander the Great conquered the city of Tyros he crucified all surviving men in the city and sold the women and children into slavery (Fox). Yet, despite the severe violation of human rights during his conquests historians usually do not tend to place Alexander in the same league with dictators like Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong-il. Or, to take another example, it is reported that some tribes in the highlands of New Guinea honor newly deceased relatives by devouring their corpses (Diamond). Abhorrent as it may seem to us, there would be no point in blaming the tribesmen of New Guinea for keeping up a revered archaic custom.

Thus, there are many cases where a certain amount of cultural or historical moral relativism seems appropriate. It is simply a fact that values change over time and differ between diverse cultures of the same epoch. If we do not take account of this fact in our ethical convictions, we risk to become hopelessly parochial or to slip into absurdities. On the other hand, the opposite standpoint, a complete cultural and historical relativism, would be equally unsound. For, to take an extreme example, there is certainly no way of justifying the atrocities that communist or fascist regimes committed during the last century on the grounds that tolerating licentious manslaughter was common at that time.
Obviously, we can neither leave historical and cultural contexts aside when forming moral judgments nor must we fully submit to these contexts. The right solution has to keep the golden mean somewhere between these extremes.

2. Breaking up the Question: Judgments of Institutions and Judgments of People

Moral judgments can be formed with different goals in mind. They can be formed for the purpose of solving conflicts, which is the case when a judge decides the verdict. Or they can be formed merely with the aim of gaining a well reasoned moral opinion on some subject matter. This is the goal of historians when they evaluate historical persons and their actions. The former requires that we reach definite and unambiguous solutions, while the latter allows some amount of ambiguity. If it is just for the sake of forming an opinion, we may look at the issue from different angles without reducing the different perspectives to a single ultimate decision. The following discussion is primarily concerned with well-reasoned moral opinions. How the cases where definite decisions must be made are to be dealt with will only briefly be considered later, in the concluding paragraphs of this paper.

What are the reference points that we should look out for in order to form well-reasoned moral judgments of strange cultures and bygone epochs, if we are to avoid the extremes of imposing our set of values (moral absolutism) and moral relativism alike? My proposal of a solution is to make a fundamental difference between the judging of social institutions, including moral codes, and the judging of people acting within the social institutions of their time and culture. While the former may be evaluated rigorously, only taking into account the objective possibilities for having other institutions at a certain development stage, the latter should be judged in the context of the moral common sense of the respective time and culture.

2.1 Judgments of Institutions and Moral Systems

When looking at moral systems or social institutions abstractly, we do not need to take into account in how far it can be expected from a human being to emancipate herself or himself from traditional moral prejudices and to rise above the level of the current social surrounding. Under this perspective, we therefore do not need to have any hesitation to judge rigorously
according to our own ethical standards. The reason why we should do so is simply that morals matter. Moral rules regulate how people should treat each other, and it is a matter of great importance how people are treated—anywhere in this world. More emphatically, we could say that there exists such a thing as a world responsibility, which compels us and at the same time entitles us to take up a stance on what happens to human beings anytime and anywhere in this world. On a mythical level, our world responsibility is the expression of the unity of mankind that is, of the moral bonds that connect any human in this world with any other human being. If we assume world responsibility in this sense, we cannot suspend our moral judgment merely on behalf of the remoteness of context—at least not when important matters are at stake.

There should be only two restrictions to the rigor of moral judgment in this case: limits of possibilities and limits of importance. “Limits of possibility” describe the fact that certain morally approvable goals may not be feasible in some contexts. Take, for example, the introduction of liberal democracy. This form of government (most probably) cannot exist if not certain prerequisites concerning social structure, economic prosperity, educational level and the like are met (Schmidt). Moreover, in order to install a liberal democracy, a good deal of technical knowledge about institutional arrangements and procedures is required, a technical knowledge that is in its fully developed form a relatively recent invention. Therefore, it would be absurd to make a moral point of the absence of liberal democracy in, say, medieval Europe. The same holds true for the intercultural case, although it is a little less obvious there. For, if the technical knowledge required to realize some moral goal exists somewhere in this world then it should in principle be available anywhere. However, there can still be objective limits of possibilities that preclude the realization of this or other moral goods in a certain context. In this case, we cannot simply judge according to our own moral standards, which tacitly rely on the existence of certain “objective possibilities” (Weber).

Regarding the limits of possibilities as a restriction of moral judgment, there is a danger of mistakenly or dishonestly assuming limits of possibility where there really are none. The problem of determining objective possibilities or the limits thereof is, however, an epistemological problem more than one of moral philosophy. It is precisely the problem that historians and social scientists face when they want to assess the “objective possibility”

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1The idea of world responsibility is borrowed from the total responsibility of the individual for everything that some strata of the philosophy of existentialism assume.
(Weber) of historical developments. As our knowledge of the laws that
govern social developments or the course of history is extremely limited,
determining the “objective possibilities or impossibilities” of social de-
velopment is quite a difficult task. The techniques by which social scientists
help themselves out when they want to assess the “objective possibilities”
that a given historical situation offers include the comparison with similar
situations at a different place or time, or looking at the alternatives that
were (or are) under discussion among the actors within these situations,
presuming that something that was seriously considered by the contempo-
raries was probably not totally unrealistic. Roughly speaking, everything
that ever existed represents a possibility, but it may still not be a viable al-
ternative in a given situation, and conversely, some possibilities may never
have been noticed or even thought of and would still be realistic alterna-
tives.

In the intercultural context, the question is frequently raised whether the
 adoption of certain values, for example modern values like human rights or
religious tolerance or democratic government, is compatible with a certain
cultural background, say Islamic culture. This is an important question con-
cerning “objective possibilities”, because if there really would be such an
incompatibility of modern values and cultural tradition then demanding the
adoption of modern values would entail nothing less than the abandon-
ment of a culture. To answer the question, whether the adoption of modern val-
ues is compatible with retaining the traditional culture, a comparison with
our own culture might help. There was indeed a time when Christian occi-
dental culture posed quite a contrast to the above-mentioned “modern val-
ues”. However, the propagation of these values through the movement of
Enlightenment and ultimately their adoption did not lead to the abandon-
ment of Christian occidental culture but only to a transformation of this cul-
ture. There is no reason why a similar transformation should be inaccessi-
ble to other cultures, although we will potentially have to face the fact that
the members of other cultures may perhaps not want to adopt modern val-
ues. But since there is an objective possibility of reconciling Islamic culture
with modern values, we do not need to have any hesitations about criticiz-
ing the insufficient observance of, say, the human rights in many Islamic
countries today.

The other restriction for the judgment of moral systems and institutions
of foreign cultures or past epochs concerns limits of importance of the sub-
ject matter at hand. The “importance of the subject matter” depends on the
rank of the moral values concerned and on the level of being involved,
which in turn depends on spatial and temporal distance and the strength or weakness of social or just empathetic ties. We can call the principle according to which the importance of a moral subject matter decreases with remoteness the *principle of locality*. A good example for the employment of this principle are burial rites. In most countries (including western countries) these are strictly regulated by the law and strong feelings are involved with regard to the appropriateness of the respective ceremonial proceedings. Yet, although the burial rites in different countries may strongly contradict each other, this is hardly a matter of intercultural controversy. As their regulation by law testifies, this does by no means entail that they are morally neutral.

There exists, however, a difference here between the intercultural case and the historical case. In the historical case, the moral importance may indeed decrease until almost nothing is left. Historians do not really need to argue about the human rights violations that occurred during Alexander’s conquests, if only because there are other aspects of these happenings that are of much greater historical interest. But in contemporary times, if in some place of the world severe violations of human rights occur then the moral aspect cannot be ignored.

Thus we could say that the importance of a moral question is the smaller the farther away it occurs and the lower the rank of the values involved, but that – if basic values are concerned – it may never become so small as to render the answer completely unimportant. The latter may be understood as a consequence of our *world responsibility*.

With these restrictions, moral judgments of foreign cultures and past epochs according to one’s own set of values represent the upper limit up to which a rigorous moral absolutism (i.e. the unanimous application or imposition of one’s own values in any context) is sensible. However, it is only so, when we judge abstractly about moral systems or about institutions. When we judge the actions of concrete people, this is still too much, because we have to take into account the unavoidable limitations of human nature and especially the fact that anybody’s perspective is necessarily limited by the time and culture, he or she is born into and lives in. This will be the topic of the following section.

2.2 Judgments of People and their Actions

People in different countries and in different historical epochs act in accordance with the most diverse systems of norms and values. But it is hardly
possible to accept all these different sets of values on an equal footing, unless we do not wish to take any of them seriously any more. This, however, raises the question of fairness when we form moral judgments about what people did in former times or what people do in other places of the world.

The answer proposed here is that we should judge the actions of concrete people against the background of the moral common sense of their respective culture or historical period. This simple answer may, at first sight, appear like plain moral relativism, but it is not. “Moral common sense” can be described as the morals that are common knowledge and are in effect over a longer period of time. Moral common sense as a criterion frees us from the necessity to take account of such sets of moral rules that are only transitory or that remain partial even within one society or that are in the long run not compatible with the necessities of every day’s life. This is especially the case for morals that may be characterized as the outcome of fanaticism. Fanaticism is an exceptional state of mind that can hardly be kept up over a longer period of time, and it is to its full extend often only adopted by a subgroup of the society. It may, for a certain while, act as a kind of “Übermoral” that overshadows the common sense moral, but it will never fully replace the common sense moral, although it must be assumed that it can influence the subsequent development of the moral common sense to a certain degree. An example for this kind of “Übermoral” are the morals embodied in the ideologies of totalitarian states. Typically, the totalitarian morals are so excessive that before they have pervaded the whole society they are either broken down or have, before long, been watered down to a much more common sense like version of themselves. That the Nazis made some attempts to hide the annihilation of the Jews from the rest of the population bears proof of the fact that they were aware of the existence of another set of morals according to which genocide is a crime. If they chose to adhere to Nazi morals instead, they can – even under the variant of moral relativism advocated here – be held fully responsible for this choice.

The line of reasoning in the previous paragraph does of course rest on the optimistic empirical assumption that “fanatical morals” are normally not long term stable. But if this is true then we can safely rule out fanatical

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2This idea as well as the following discussion of “Übermoral” is strongly inspired by Hermann Lübbe’s treatment of “political moralization” (Lübbe).

3This definition is, of course, not very strict, but only intended as a rough explanation to supplement the verbal intuition the phrase “moral common sense” suggests.
morals without risking to be “unfair” to the people acting according to a fanatical set of morals. For, neither do we demand that they act according to an enlightened set of morals that they cannot realistically be expected to take account of (or even just be aware of), nor are we, by taking recourse to the (context dependent) moral common sense, forced to accept the most unreasonable moral excesses.

But is the criterion of moral common sense really sufficient? Several problems this criterion raises suggest that it is too liberal and therefore must be restricted some more:
1. The criterion is ambiguous: There may be situations where several common sense morals are in conflict with each other. Also, the common sense moral is continuously changing. According to which common sense moral shall we then form our judgments?
2. The criterion is conservative: If we slavishly stick to the criteria of moral common sense then we would always have to give bad marks to those people that are ahead of their time. Moral progress would be practically forbidden.
3. The criterion is insufficient in cases, where the traditional morals allow or even demand grave moral vices: While fanaticism may be only short lived, atavisms and superstitions can form an unquestioned part of a moral tradition. An extreme example is that of genital mutilation of girls practiced in some regions of Africa (Amnesty International Report). The practice is so abhorrent that any abstract principle of moral judgment that does not allow to banish it, must be considered insufficient.

1) The first objection does not necessarily call for a restriction of the criterion of moral common sense, but for a further decision on whether it should be applied liberally or in a stricter way. A liberal application would mean that any of the several conflicting common sense morals should be accepted. That is, if some action is right according to one of these different common sense morals, we are not entitled to criticize the person committing it any more. This may lead to contradictions in the sense that possibly opposing actions must both be accepted as morally legitimate. (Borrowing a metaphor from politics, we could say that as outside observers we ought to follow a policy of non-intervention when different common sense morals are in conflict.)

The other way to resolve the conflict between several competing common sense norms would be simply to pick the one that deems us the best (according to our own values) as reference. One might object that this solution essentially breaks the moral relativism to which we have confined our-
selves when judging the actions of people. But, after all, we have only introduced a limited relativism to avoid unfair moral judgments. The sort of judgments to be excluded on behalf of their unfairness are primarily those where we would implicitly demand from people to become moral inventors in case their conventional morals should prove unacceptable to our enlightened standards. But if we confine what we may call the justified demand of moral self-reflection to the respectable systems of common sense morals competing within the context under discussion then the unfairness is much smaller and may to this extent be justified by our urge not to give in to a fully fledged moral relativism. Of course, whether we ought to choose a liberal or a strict application of the criterion of moral common sense may depend on the particular circumstances, especially the moral importance of the subject matter in question.\(^4\)

2) The second objection can only be met by extending our criterion of moral common sense so that it also includes progressive morals (from our own point of view). Unfortunately, we can now hardly argue for a strict application of the criterion in the above (1) sense any more, because it would seem unfair to expect from the majority of people the appreciation of the progressive point of view right away. What we have gained is only that we are not forced to condemn the progressivists as a consequence of our own criterion. This may in effect lead to “tragic situations”, situations where conflicting values clash without even a theoretical possibility of resolution.\(^5\)

3) The third objection could appear to be the most crucial one, because it seems to force us to dilute our criterion of moral common sense by other criteria, like the criterion of moral importance, which otherwise should – due to its relatively strong subjectivity – only be applied as a lower rank criterion. But if we think about it a little longer then we might also come to

\(^4\)It should be emphasized that even if we chose the liberal application of the criteria of moral common sense, we still need not include fanaticism in the previously described sense, because fanaticism does not even count as common sense moral.

\(^5\)Usually, there are good reasons for avoiding “tragic situations” in any system of ethics: Tragic situations are often just a bad excuse for not taking a stance or for already having chosen the wrong side in the past. More importantly, tragic situations are essentially a type of ethical contradiction and contradictions should by and large be avoided. What appears to be a contradiction in an ethical system is practically a matter that is decided by the right of the strongest. Normally, we do not want that. But if there is really no sensible way to resolve an ethical conflict it might in certain exceptional cases even be the most humane choice to accept tragic situations and thereby the decision according to the right of the strongest. For, then the inferior is still spared from additional moral humiliation of having been illegitimately wrong.
the conclusion that it is especially the case of superstitions and atavisms where the two-tier approach to moral judgments of institutions and norm systems as such and the people acting within these systems pays off. The best way to overcome superstitious customs is by education and tenacious convincing. A moralizing attitude is in danger of producing the adverse effect. The two-tier approach allows us to condemn the practice itself without reacting with moral reproach against the very people that need to be convinced.

If we keep in mind that, following our two-tier approach, the social institutions as such should still be judged rigorously, then the relatively weak criterion of moral common sense may, with the qualifications made above, be morally satisfactory for the judgment of concrete people and their actions.

3. Objections and Refinement

The two-tier approach to moral judgments concerning foreign cultures and bygone epochs permits a multifaceted and – as I hope – a much more balanced view than a single set of criteria would. Still, it is open to many objections, the most obvious of which is that it introduces too many and too grave contradictions into our moral reasoning. For example, we can be forced to condemn a certain action taking place in different cultural context because it contradicts one or more of our core values, and at the same time we cannot criticize the person performing this action because he or she acts according to accepted moral standards of his or her culture. I believe that tolerating this kind of contradictions is a lesser evil than either laissez-faire moral relativism or the intercultural arrogance of moral absolutism. (Of course, a certain dose of both relativism as well as Western arrogance is still present in my approach.)

When forming an opinion we can be content with a multifaceted view and, most probably, this is even better than a single sided view. But when we have to take decisions these should be taken unanimously. The problem becomes urgent, for example, when we have to decide on how to deal with immigrant subcultures that bring their own traditional values, some of which might come into conflict with moral standards of the host society. There can be only one law in one country, so that at least when the conflict comes down to legal matters, we will probably have to revert to a solution that is more in the spirit of moral absolutism. Still, our judgments will be more reasoned if we keep in mind that the problem as such is not as simple.
Quite the opposite becomes true, when we are concerned with intercultural dialogue. One can hardly start profitable a dialogue on the basis of a claim of moral superiority. A dialogue can only succeed when the partners talk to each other on an equal footing, which requires an attitude that may be termed the *willing relativism of dialogue*. This does not mean that we are not allowed to stand by our moral convictions, but prima facie we will look at the convictions of the others as equally respectable.

Summing it up, the two-tier approach to moral judgments expounded here will in many concrete situations have to be resolved to a more univocal point of view or judgment. However, putting the step of resolving at the end (in situations where this is necessary) has the heuristic advantage to allow more well reasoned judgments over the alternative of deciding definitely on a system of values first. It allows us to criticize moral standards that we strongly reject without having to react in an irritated way against the people who comply with them. The moral judgments arrived at by the two-tier approach will therefore probably be more satisfactory than otherwise.

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At stake is a theory of intercultural understanding and communication (*interkulturelle Verständigung*). Such a theory is part of a general theory of interpretive understanding (*Verstehen*). The goal of interpretive theory, broadly construed, is to show how the *understanding of cognitive content* is possible through interpretation, i.e. how epistemic access to an object that is supposedly ‘meaningful’ is to be achieved. As such, it is essentially a normative discipline, and it is so in at least two aspects. In a narrower epistemic sense, the objective is that the interpretation gives us an adequate or true account of what is to be understood. Yet in a broader intersubjective sense, interpretation is normative since it requires us to get to the understanding that is expressed in the other symbolic context. In other words, getting it right about the meaning always involves an interpretive recognition of the self-understanding of the other agents.

However, because the understanding of the other’s self-understanding is necessarily our understanding, the task is to show how an interpreter situated or grounded in a particular culture is capable of bridging the difference between her own self-understanding about something so as to gain access to the meaning and self-understanding of another. And since such a process will necessarily involve communicating with the other about something, we have to show how communication has to be structured such that an understanding of the other’s meaning is possible.

Making communication central to understanding another cultural agent will involve three claims. First, the two senses of normativity, i.e. getting it right about the meaning and recognizing the self-understanding of the other, are inextricably intertwined. One cannot understand another unless one is oriented at the other’s self-understanding. Interpretive truth or rightness is possible only by recognizing (in the sense of capturing or knowing) the other’s intentions, and that means that one understands the other only if one takes into account the self-understanding of the other. As this is done from one’s own background, we are talking here about an idealized form of interpretive orientation in communication; the construction of the other’s self-understanding will prove to be a complex and mediated process be-
between one’s own and the other’s concepts and practices, within which one’s own and the other’s self-understanding get articulated as (more or less) distinct discursive positions. ¹

Second, the desiderata of interpretive theory can and must be met by analyzing the interpreter’s competences. It is not enough to develop a theory of the basic normative requirements of interpretation. Rather, it is necessary to show how those normative orientations can be realized. As they will have to actualized by situated interpreters, we have to show how those socially situated agents have the potential to unleash the desired interpretive process. What we thus need to discuss is which interpretive capabilities are normatively desirable and how they can be realized by social subjects.

Finally, we claim that such a theory of interpretive competences will emerge through a reconstruction of the cultural constitution of self-identity, thereby providing what we could call the hermeneutic roots of recognition. By reconstructing the social sources of identity-formation that constitute an individual self, we similarly approach the capabilities that can ground intercultural understanding and communication.

The basic project is this: Selves are shown to be dialogical identities, which means that they are (a) essentially shaped by the recognition of other agents, with whom they are engaged in social interaction in mutually shared cultural contexts, and (b) agents are essentially open, internally diverse, and never fully accomplished structures, which follows from the derivation of their identity from dialogical processes of perspective-taking. This model avoids the assumption of a self dependent on fully determined cultural contexts. Selves are instead internally perspectival, multiply-shaped centers of meaning and agency. At the same time, other cultures cease to be holistically closed and impenetrable meaning blocks, since they themselves are constituted by symbolically mediated perspectives and assumptions. While also realized in bodily schemes and social institutions, it is largely the symbolic mediation that defines the agents’ cultural identity. Intercultural understanding and communication (interkulturelle Ver- 

¹ Such an idealized methodological orientation is far from empty or powerless. It forces the interpreter to reconstruct in most depth and detail the cultural contexts that underlie the other’s meaningful expressions, and as such prevents any simplistic imposition of ethnocentric schemes and assumptions. The internal epistemic normativity with regard to truthful understanding thus involves an important ethical-political consequence, as it entails the need to ground any interpretation of the other in an analysis of her underlying symbolic and practical contexts.
ständigung) is thus not well conceived as bridging a gap from one culture-bound self to another, where cultures would be self-centered contexts of meaning, but should rather be seen as the always partial, always possible, yet always culturally situated process of addressing and recognizing other perspectives in relation to those that define one’s own meaningful background.²

1. The Dialogical Formation of Self-Identity

The basic intuition behind a social theory of identity formation is that the structure that essentially defines the self can best be reconstructed by looking at social processes, in particular at the dialogical perspective-taking that emerges at a crucial point in human social interaction.³ An essential aspect of self-identity is that there is a consciousness of self that distinguishes itself as a self, i.e. knows itself as a distinct kind of being, and yet knows itself to be identical with itself, i.e. is sure of itself as self. What is required here is the capacity to reflexively objectify oneself, and yet to remain cognizant that it is oneself that is engaged in this process. Yet how

² The German term Verständigung cannot easily be rendered with one word in English. Verständigung ties together the two ideas that (a) to understand someone, you have to communicate with the other so as to understand what she or he believes, and (b) communication itself must be oriented at perceiving and comprehending the issues from the other’s point of view. Some might say that Verständigung entails (c) the additional connotation that communication might also (or even always) aim at reaching consensus. However, Verständigung can also end up with a consensus about a substantive disagreement about something, while this disagreement must itself be based on an understanding of the different perspectives involved. It is this more basic connection between interpretation and communication which is important for us here, suggesting that both points of view have to be fully considered and integrated into the final understanding of meaning. The motto is: No full understanding without communication, and no real communication without grasping the other’s concrete perspective about something!

³ The claim that social conditions are necessary for self-development might be contested, as a social reconstruction will always be limited to showing that given certain social conditions, the production of certain subjective cognitive attitudes and competences plausibly follows. This leaves room for the pre-existence of those subjective capacities, be it in a transcendental, metaphysical, or otherwise ontologically pre-given self. But if we exclude the dogmatic positing of the structure of self-consciousness, we must then show how self-identity emerges from an empirical source—and here social interaction proves most fruitful.
can the self address itself as a distinct self, and yet remain sure of its identity?

A plausible answer is that the structure of social interaction involves the experience of another as a distinct entity, and that the related social capacity of perspective-taking enables the self to take the attitude of another toward itself. With regard to the social development of human agents, one can first distinguish a phase in which the newborn interacts on a pre-objectifying level with the environment: its own desires and ‘intentions’ are a mass of immediate impulses and ‘experiences’ as much as the stimuli or events coming from the environment are taken in to satisfy basic needs including food, warmth, sleep etc. Out of the unarticulated mass of perceptions, basic processes of imitation emerge, as well as early patterns of recognition with regard to features and structures of the environment. The sensory organs such as eyes and hands become more and more capable of fixating objects, of identifying certain objects as the same, and of expressing positive or negative responses directly in response to such identified objects (Gehlen 1988; Kögler 2006).

However, it is crucial that the object- or event-identification always takes place in an interactive context in which human subjects either directly represent the objects that are identified (such as the faces of mother, father, and other close subjects) or else are crucial in representing additional things (such as milk bottles, toys, or clothes). Central stage thus takes the human-interactive process. Here, basic pattern of imitation emerge, but more importantly is the cooperative process in which even in the earliest stages the infant and the adult begin to adjust their actions to a set of repeated actions and processes. What takes place here is prior even to what Mead called the conversation of gestures, because actions are here adjusted to one another without taking on an expressive nature. Later on emerges a real communication of gestures, which takes place when the expressive feature of one organism is taken into account for the response of another, and when on that basis social interaction is regulated. At this juncture, an object-identifying consciousness is involved, as one organism understands and registers the gesture of another, and adjusts its own action accordingly. Both together are therefore involved in a social act, and we are now on the plane of real social interaction.

Yet again, the self demands, in order to fully establish its intrinsic reflexive nature, a self-objectifying step, a step which requires that the conversation of gestures be transformed into a genuine communication of significant gestures. This involves the capacity of the organism to represent to
herself the response of the other. The previous objective social interaction, which creates a society in itself, so to speak, is replaced by the organisms taking themselves the attitude of the other, by objectifying the acts of the other to themselves, by means of which the social interaction becomes for itself, becomes a real sharing of the involved perspectives by the agents engaged in the communication. This is the birth of self-reflexive thought, and as such of the human self proper.

In order for the full constitution of the self to emerge, the following conditions thus have to be in place. First, perspective-taking in which one agent represents the attitude of another to herself (and vice versa) must become the shared understanding of the meanings involved. An agent not only knows what the other is going to do, and reflexively adjusts her acts accordingly, but also knows that the other knows that she knows what the other intends. In this scenario, in which both agents interact in an objectively shared world, the taking of the other’s perspective thus creates a common space in which both can interact. Both can now understand that fledging teeth or a clinched fist means anger and possibly attack by one organism, and might mean fear and flight as a possible response by another organism. And both can now represent the gestures as indicating acts to which both have access to, and thus both understand. With this move, the immediate encapsulation into a pre-scribed action-circle is burst apart, since the diverse action-options of individual agents become accessible for all agents involved, and thus allow for a reflexive adjustment, for a delayed response, to the situation.

But second, this whole scenario already implicitly draws on the construction of a shared language for a situation. Indeed, only when the individualized perspective-taking becomes a communication of significant symbols in which meaning is shared, the internal requirement for language, i. e. to be a medium of shared meaning, is reached. If we now recall that the constitution of self-identity is tied to the taking the attitude of another to oneself, and that the other’s perspective must not be experienced as an alien imposition onto the self, but as its own reflexive act, we see that the level of language as shared meaning is essential for self-consciousness. Because the agent can take the other’s perspective and understand its meaning, it can use such a perspective with regard to itself without losing itself into an alien realm of external objects or events. Since the constitution of the self as ‘object’ emerges from the intersubjective source of another human agent, that self can see itself also as a human agent.
This is why Mead sees the constitution of self-consciousness and the emergence of a shared language as two sides of the same developmental process (Mead 1934). Consciousness of self requires an objectifying attitude toward oneself, which comes from taking the perspective of another agent toward oneself. The capacity of perspective-taking involves that the other perspective is understood, and only as such becomes the basis of my self-objectification. But such an understanding can only happen if the self and the other are both involved in the process of dialogical perspective-taking, and if out of this process the constitution of shared meaning emerges. If perspective-taking would be a one-sided process undertaken only by one agent, what would be considered the perspective of the other could be a pure projection of one consciousness onto another. Besides the fact that we would here lack the very structure of self-objectification, for which another subject-position outside of one’s immediate experience (and yet integrated in its reflexive process) is required, the identification of the meaning of my self would lack any objective (i.e. shared) grounding outside the (potentially shifting, unrealizable, self-referential) perspective of oneself.4

Accordingly, self-consciousness requires self-objectification which can be explained by the capability to take the attitude of another subject toward itself. And in order for this process to enable a stable and continuing self-identity, the taking of the other’s attitude toward oneself must be co-existent with a medium of shared meaning. It thus requires language. This, however, further implies that for the constitution of self, the presence of the other remains a constant requirement. The self remains dependent on the recurring recognition of the other. Only in a context in which interpretive self-attributions exist in an objective realm of socially shared meanings can the self attach an identical sense to itself as self.5

4 We should think here of Wittgenstein’s private language argument in its specific application to the problem of constituting an identical self (Wittgenstein 1953). The self not only needs the other to reflexively see itself as a distinct entity, but it also needs to be able to conduct this process in a shared realm of meaning in which the other remains a permanent partner. Otherwise, the self-objectification would collapse into an inner, unstable, and unchecked sphere.

5 Self-identity is thus truly a socially established form of meaning. It allows for social role- or identity-types that individuals can assume as their identity in a shared realm of meaning and for which they can be recognized. The individualizing ‘touch’ of these roles comes through the filling of the roles with a particular life-history, its unique events, dates, contexts, etc. This is also the source for a unique form of recognition, i.e.
2. Cultural Identity and Hermeneutic Competence

We are now in a position to suggest a dialogical conception of cultural identity that productively mediates between the Scylla of social holism and the Charybdis of atomistic individualism. According to the theory of dialogically constituted selves, the identity of the self is culturally bounded. We have seen that the self needs the symbolic medium to identify itself as a stable and identical self. This means that interpretive or symbolic self-attributions need to draw on the stock of available meanings that a cultural context provides. The concrete cultural context thus grounds the general possibility to take a reflexive relation to oneself. Similarly, linguistic analysis shows that meanings do not exist atomistically as independent ‘sense’-data, but rather are holistically embedded in a context of assumptions and practices that form a taken-for-granted background (Searle 1989, 1995; Gadamer 1989; Habermas 1983/1987). Particular speech acts uttered by intentional subjects draw their meaningfulness from being situated in such a shared background understanding. Accordingly, the relation to oneself, one’s self-understanding, is a reflexive construction of identity against and amidst the background of shared meanings and practices. Whatever can count as one’s individual identity is thus grounded in a socially shared realm that defines me as me.

Yet this socially based self is also the ground for the possibility to transcend and transform one’s given identity, as the formation of self-identity is itself a process that is shaped by different perspectives derived from social interaction. It is this aspect of self-identity that designates our (admittedly sketchy) conception of a dialogical self as a ground for a normatively desirable and empirically possible practice of intercultural understanding. This systematic intuition can now be stated more clearly: since the self, as we saw, is emergent from a process of symbolically mediated perspective-taking, it entails as a potential the very resources that need to be activated to reach an adequate and truthful understanding of the other. Since we do not just want to outline how intercultural communication should ideally look, but also want to point to empirical resources that can be utilized to enact this process, the actual constitution of the situated self provides a promising ground indeed. What now needs to be shown is how exactly the

for fulfilling one’s role in a remarkable and exemplary way. See Mead (1934) and Honneth (1995) for discussion of this issue.
To begin with, I want to present two systematic points that will help focus and motivate this project. First, if the self is seen as emerging through perspective-taking, a wide-spread misconception concerning the problem of intercultural understanding can be overcome. This is so because the dialogical self is an intrinsically open and perspectival self, which means it can never be identified with one particular and closed-off set of beliefs and practices. The self emerges, precisely as a culturally situated one, through a variety of conceptions and practices. Those symbolic assumptions and social practices entail concrete meanings and establish particular attitudes, but the fact that they are appropriated by adopting them from the external source of social others implies that the emergent self remains intrinsically tied to dialogical openness and a pluralism of perspectives. If this is true, then the issue of encountering other and possibly very different conceptions and practices poses itself not in terms of leaving one fixed identity behind so as to reach or enter another one, but rather as an activation and opening of the current set of beliefs, assumptions and practices toward other such beliefs, assumptions and practices. The idea is one of an expansion of the scope of meaningful perspectives from within an already pluralized scope of self-identity, rather than assuming a fixed cultural identity facing the fixed block of another cultural context.

Second, the dialogical formation of self-identity is not a process that simply happens to a pre-existing self, but it rather brings to life a self that did not as such previously exist. In this regard, the dialogical process of self-formation transcends the traditional opposition of activity and passivity inherited from the philosophy of consciousness and tied to the idea of a self-sufficient mind that entails spontaneity in some respects and passivity in others. If we conceive of the self as dialogically emergent through adopting perspectives, we are dealing with a unique fusion of external and internal moments that ultimately make a clear-cut distinction between the passive and the active aspects of identity impossible. True, one could hold that the material content of external perspectives as well as the structural condition for perspective-taking (by providing contact with social others) is pre-given, while the process of adopting those perspectives and fusing them into a more or less coherent self-identity displays the activity of the subject. But the essential point is that the dialogical self only emerges as a subject capable of adopting those perspectives and thus constructing a (situated and culturally grounded) identity through the existence of exter-
nal perspectives. The subsequently achieved autonomy of organizing those perspectives through reflexive choice and deliberation is thus grounded in a culturally pre-given context which forms the resources for developing one’s agency in this regard. The self thus emerges by developing those resources as agent-based capabilities which enable perspective-taking and the construction of the identity of an autonomous self (Kögler 2000). For our project of intercultural understanding, we have to reconstruct those interpretive capabilities that allow for the dialogical constitution of self-identity. If we can identify the particular hermeneutic competences that come to pass through the development of a perspectival self, we hold, I suggest, the key to those attitudes that help open the door to meaning and values of other cultural practices.

A hermeneutic competence can be defined as the capability of a human agent to creatively respond to a given context or challenge by reconstructing frames of understanding and action relative to a certain value-orientation (Weber 1978). The concept of hermeneutic competence is thus intrinsically related to the conception of intentional human agency, according to which agents are bound to act purposefully on the basis of conceptual-practical pre-understandings vis-à-vis their intentional goals (including the means and contexts of their realization.) An agent acts hermeneutically competent if he or she is able to realize the value or purpose relative to an interpretive scheme, but based on a creative, cognitively adequate, and value-realizing project. What is at stake is thus the flexible and context-based adjustment of given schemes (necessarily provided by the background understanding) and a given situation within which an interpretive skill is exercised. An important double feature of a hermeneutic competence is that it is (a) reflexive, i.e. that it is skill that involves the conscious re-assessment, re-conceptualization, and re-construction of aspects of the situation (and oneself in it), and (b) situated, i.e. that it is always already

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6 It is here that a general and convincing argument for multicultural concerns has its place: if selves are culturally shaped, in order to flourish they require a replenishment or even preservation of precisely those contexts that helped make them who they are (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1992). Yet we will also see that the dialogical core of cultural selves allows them to expand their horizon, and thus to recreate themselves in contexts not initially given. And we should not forget that such cultural background contexts are not only enabling, but can also have restrictive and ‘disabling’ effects on their agents. For a stimulating critique that exposes problems in the wide-spread use of ‘culture’--however at the expense of doing full justice to its resource-providing function--see Appiah 2005.
embedded in a given context that engulfs and pre-grounds whatever can and needs to be thought and done.

We will now introduce three basic value-orientations in which agents are bound to display skills and capabilities that fit the aforementioned definition. The most relevant value-orientations are toward self-realization (1), successful participation in social and cultural interaction (2), and a general understanding of world and self (3). We will do so by reconstructing relevant social-scientific and social-theoretical approaches that have articulated those value-orientations with an eye toward the involved hermeneutic capacities. Needless to say, the three value-orientations we shall discuss are often intertwined, but it is nevertheless possible to keep them analytically apart and distinguish different discursive practices with regard to their respective value-orientations.

(1) The value of self-realization has been emphasized in a relevant way by cultural approaches within psychology (as well as by post-Nietzschean and Foucauldian accounts of the self). Rejecting either a behaviorist or third-personal approach to the self, these psychological accounts understand the self as an ongoing narratively self-constructed process. The self becomes a self-referential autopoietic ‘entity’ that brings itself into existence through the ongoing orientation at self-chosen values that are taken to be crucial and thus come to constitute its identity (Billmann-Mahecha/Straub 2006). The self is considered real, as it really exists in those acts of self-understanding, and yet it is not seen in a Cartesian or essentialist manner, as it is an emergent self-reflexive reality situated in a shared context of cultural values.

What is crucial in our discussion is that this narrativist framework shows that subjective agents emerge as active constructors of their own selves based on existing value-frameworks. In other words, what really constitutes them as selves is their capacity to relate themselves to values. Selves emerge by maintaining an identity over the course of a life-time, which involves a constant, flexible, and reflexive adjustment of one’s own situation to chosen value-orientations. Self-realization is thus oriented toward values that are supposed to realize what is (the) good for the self—but as such they are themselves symbolical-practical vehicles of the constitution of selves as selves.7

7 Cultural psychology developed a set of categorial distinctions here, for example the one between being able to reinterpret certain values in light of changed circumstances, or to abandon the values themselves for alternative ones. The subject’s capacity to retain a healthy and happy life is crucially dependent on being able to creatively adjust...
(2) While the hermeneutic dimension is brought out well in the narrative self-psychology, since selves emerge here by continuously reinterpreting their existence, the psychological perspective restricts the focus on how one constructs a good life for oneself. This limitation is overcome by sociological and social-theoretical perspectives that ask about how the (socially situated) selves are related to social contexts. More precisely, it shows how subjects are constituted by being made participants in social and cultural life. What is crucial here is that the social sources of selfhood are seen as background features that help explain why a certain symbolic understanding of agents emerges in the way it does. Bourdieu’s cultural sociology, for instance, emphasizes that the habitus is a real force in social life, because it constitutes something like an agent’s incorporated and tacitly presupposed ‘world-view’ (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). The habitus is seen as an intermediary category that relates objective social conditions to the conscious, intentional, and explicitly value-oriented acts of individuals.

Again, this cultural dimension does not exist in terms of fixed conceptual schemes, nor is it identical with behaviorist mechanisms that trigger an agent’s response based on previous experiences in light of new events. It is rather a true hermeneutic skill, in the sense that it represents a socially-induced pre-understanding of how to perceive, act, and think in terms of a symbolically mediated value-understanding. While the habitus can be reconstructed as schemes, it does not exist in ‘frozen’ or crystallized form, but rather in the ongoing activation through agents who owe their identity to the previous symbolic and practical contexts of engagement. Accordingly, the habitus enables agents to successfully participate in the manifold social and cultural contexts. Agents have to acquire the capability to orient their acts at the generally shared understanding of a given value in order to make creative, beneficial, and mutually comprehensible contributions to a given social field.

(3) However, both the individual and the social dimension of self-understanding can be superceded toward an even more general and encompassing sense of reflexive self-understanding. The agent’s capacity to thematize the world as such is a discursive possibility well established by a host of generalized modes of reflection, including myth, religion and theology, metaphysics and epistemology, moral and social theory, and modern philosophical discourse. What interests us here is the general reflexivity that takes account of its own historical-cultural situatedness, yet without one’s own aspirations and goals to the changing objective opportunities for their realization. See in particular Greve/Suhlamm in Billmann-Mahecha/Straub 2006.
abandoning its intrinsic claim to understand the world truthfully, i.e. to achieve an adequate general understanding (and not just a fiction, illusion, or imaginary account) of existence. I suggest we call this particular form of situated reflexivity hermeneutic consciousness. The structure of hermeneutic consciousness can be brought out by realizing that it dramatizes the temporal sense of situatedness that defines the modern-philosophical self-consciousness.

Modern philosophical discourse expresses a very particular interpretive skill by combining the two aspects of hermeneutic competence, reflexivity and situatedness (Habermas 1987; Foucault 1990). Gadamer captured this move by defining the result of his philosophical-hermeneutic reflections as ‘historically effected consciousness’ (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein) (Gadamer 1989). A self that is defined by a hermeneutic consciousness remains intrinsically oriented at values that it deems crucial and important—and thus avoids a self-debilitating relativism (Hollis/Lukes 1982, Krausz 1989)—but is similarly aware that all such value-orientations are essentially shaped by particular cultural, social, and political contexts—and thus avoids the abstraction of a punctual or atomic self (Taylor 1995).8

The uniqueness of this cognitive attitude can be seen by its difference to transcendental and historical consciousness. The transcendental reflection assumes that the reflexive attitude in philosophy can reach a level of self-sustained meaning or validity. In order to guarantee and ground this assumption, the claim of a separate sphere of pure consciousness or meaning

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8 The psychological-biographical and the sociological-culturalist modes of reflexivity both remain focused on some empirical-contextual ground of agency, be it either the individual’s or the social environment’s structuration of meaning. This involves an essential relativism, as the meaning is seen as relative to the self, however situated, or relative to the social class position. Philosophical discourse traditionally assumed a stance of unbroken universality—which cannot be sustained—but it assumes in its modern version the stance of reconstructing the grounds of validity or truth-claims on the basis of our situated, historical, temporal, and linguistically mediated existence. The discursive practices of philosophy thus actualize the potential of language to transcend individual and social life-contexts to reflect on some general aspects of existence, meaning, etc. This reflexive move, which consists in accepting a historically situated origin of discourse while maintaining a trans-contextual stance with regard to meaning and validity, defines all important philosophical projects since Hegel. Whether in the evolutionary form of the philosophy of history, in phenomenology, analytic theory of meaning, neo-Kantianism, and recent normative speech act theory and communication theory—the project is to reconstruct from within the existing modes of action and discourse the possible access to a universal realm of meaning.
has to be made. This realm is taken to be gleaned from structures of consciousness, as in Neo-Kantianism or Husserl, or from symbolic forms, as in Cassirer or analytic positivism. However, against this assumption, the phenomenology of understanding (*Verstehen*) reveals that pre-assumptions always shape and pre-guide our understanding, which means that any intentional understanding of something as something is internally defined by holistically complex and temporally changing background-assumptions (Gadamer 1989; Dreyfus 1980; Kögler 1999). The assumed self-certainty of the subject and its meanings is thus an illusion; the substance of history rules over the subject’s allegedly pure intentions.

Yet the claim of *historical consciousness* that all meaning is relative to historical and cultural contexts equally misconstrues the nature of understanding, since it reduces all meaning-intentions to particular epochs and contexts that are presented as self-sufficiently closed and fully defined in their structure. This move ignores the intentional meaning-core which is part of human speech and which essentially points beyond any particular context by assuming to be comprehensible by any human agent. Furthermore, it inconsistently assumes for its own understanding a position above all particular meaning-contexts, as it proclaims the possibility to objectively understand all historical meaning by being ‘equally’ distant to all epochs (Ranke) in its quasi-God’s eye view on history. Here, the fact that access to meaningful expressions requires reconstruction of the intentional concepts, which involves bringing into play one’s own intentional preconceptions, which in turn are embedded in a concrete holistic context, proves that such a ‘position above all positions’ is a methodological fiction (Gadamer 1989).

It follows that the *situatedness of consciousness* is grounds for rejecting a pure sphere of meaning or consciousness, which plays a role in both transcendental philosophy and historicism. Positively, this means that a reflexively situated self-understanding has to take into account its orientation at values and concepts, and yet do so based on the awareness of its own historical-cultural-social contingency. Serious value-orientations grounded in concrete cultural contexts define the cognitive attitude of a hermeneutically enlightened consciousness.

3. The Dialogical Recognition of Others

This consciousness of situatedness vis-à-vis one’s own self-understanding can now become the ground for a *hermeneutic ethos toward understanding*
The hermeneutic ethos, understood as an intentional orientation toward the other and the other’s meaning, consists in addressing the other as someone with whom one can reach a mutual understanding about something (*ein wechselseitiges Verständnis über etwas erreichen*). The other agent is conceived as someone who is intentionally oriented toward issues, values, and situations (including an attitude toward the good life and hermeneutic competences to participate in social life), and who can also share the meta-understanding of this process (i.e. is capable of a hermeneutic consciousness). Yet the particular hermeneutic ethos stems from the reflexive understanding of the interpretive situation, which as hermeneutic consciousness knows its own pre-understanding to be shaped by particular cultural concepts and practices. Thus, while the interpretive orientation is intentionally geared toward issues or subject matters, it is always accompanied by a reflexive understanding of the role of conceptual schemes and practices that pre-guide what one understands and interprets.

From this follows that one cannot assume that to rationally understand the other simply means to translate the other into one’s own terms, as those terms might miss what contextually defines the other’s beliefs, assumptions, and practices. They would thus fail to be adequate to the self-understanding of the other. Furthermore, since one is situated and thus lacks a transcendental or ontological access to truth, any possible difference in belief cannot a priori be explained as error, confusion, or ideology on the side of the other. If we thus stick to intentional understanding, keeping contextual situatedness in mind, we have to approach the other’s meaning from the perspective of someone engaged in a dialogue where openness and intent to first understand the perspective of the other is required. The other cannot be approached but in the attempt to reconstruct how he or she would understand the concepts and issues at stake, as one’s own situatedness precludes any objective or universally pre-justified assessment of the meaning of the other. Yet as we are engaged in an intentional understanding of the beliefs, assumptions, and practices of the other, it similarly means that we cannot make sense of the other except for relating the other’s meaning to our own cultural preconceptions and practices. Thus, while our concepts are ruled out as pre-given standards of judgment, our concepts and assumptions nonetheless must be invested and tested if understanding is to occur at all. The ethos of hermeneutic dialogue tries to capture and articulate this very dialectic.

The understanding of a symbolic expression is oriented at meaning (*Sinn*), i.e. at understanding what is said. Yet to understand meaning, we
have to understand the content of what is being said, i.e. to be oriented at
the subject matter of whatever a text says (or an action intends). Now, in
order to get access to the subject matter, we have to relate what is said
about something to our own conceptions, and to assume that what is said
about the issue at stake ‘makes sense.’ In other words, since symbolic ex-
pressions ‘acquire’ sense by being meaningful to us, we have to be able to
project plausible beliefs and assumptions onto the other’s expressions. To
understand them, we need to render them as saying something plausible,
something that makes sense. Gadamer calls this an ‘anticipation of rational
completeness’ (Gadamer 1989) and Davidson reconstructs this as the
‘principle of charity’ (Davidson 1984). Accordingly, only if we can recon-
struct a plausible account of the other’s statements—plausible in our eyes,
maximizing truth in our eyes—can we assume to understand the other. As
understanding requires us to make sense, the interpretation necessarily in-
volves an attempt to reconstruct the other’s statements and acts in a manner
that is somewhat rational to us.

Yet while this rational assumption as it stands is a necessary pre-
condition for understanding, we also know that hermeneutic consciousness
understands itself to be situated, which means it must be interested in tak-
ing into account the concreteness and alterity of the other vis-à-vis oneself.
It is important, however, to show how the understanding of the particular-
ity of the other emerges from within an intentional value-orientation at
meaningful sense, so that the biographical or sociological reduction is
avoided, while the relative right of their perspectives is preserved. And
here we see that even though the interpretation must necessarily begin from
one’s own taken-to-be-true background beliefs, the process of interpretive
understanding is not adequately described by maximizing true beliefs or by
realizing a truth-based fusion-of-horizons. What is rather happening in the
intercultural context is an increasing sense of the basic assumptions that
guide another’s statements and acts, and that allow one to infer and recon-
struct the beliefs and assumptions as seen against the other’s concrete as-
sumptions and values. While such a differentiation is of course located in a
context in which one does agree on basic concepts, the subtleties of the
other’s beliefs and perspectives are understood as one’s own horizons
learns to employ the other’s assumptions and to construct and organize be-
liefs as according to the other’s perspective. Translatability in terms of true
sentences is not to be achieved, as the beliefs are often relative to value-
assumptions that alone define their contextual validity (MacIntyre 1971;
also Winch 1991, 1964). Thus, respecting the other as an intentional agent
with whom one enters into dialogue must involve a respect and recognition of the concrete background assumptions underlying the other agent’s concept of rational or plausible action.

However, with this first step the reconstruction of different symbolic horizons remains entirely on the level of a conceptual reconstruction of premises of understanding. Yet to fully account for the other’s agency, we have not only to make sense of the other, but also show that those concepts actually lead the other to act, that they form the causally motivating background on the basis of which the other’s speech acts and social practices are undertaken. Here, we need to include a perspective that leaves the purely symbolic level behind and reconstructs the psychological grounds on the basis of which individual agents act. As we are interested in agency, we need here an empirical anchor that relates to the particular agency that would explain why an agent chooses a certain behavior over another. This will necessarily be mediated by our understanding of the other’s symbolic-cultural background, but it will essentially draw on the basic capacity of perspective-taking as it involves empathetic aspects of understanding another agent’s commitment to basic values, emotional responses to one’s life experiences, and in particular the need for recognition that defines socially constituted selves. This dimension thus broadens the hermeneutic perspective beyond the internally rational and language-based approach. However, it is important here not to assume any direct access to the other psyche, but to mediate those accounts by a discursive reconstruction of the other’s beliefs and assumptions (Kögler/Stueber 2000).

Yet if we thus embed the other meaning not merely in another symbolic order, but also in some concretely situated agency, we cannot overlook that such agency and its particular social and cognitive competences are always socially shaped. This follows already from the thesis of cultural identity-formation. It takes on a methodological significance because it forces us to take into account the social structures that causally shape the build-up of the self-understanding of agents. In the methodological discussions surrounding hermeneutics as a social science method, the need to complement a purely linguistic or psychological perspective by one that analyses social power structures was early on emphasized (Habermas 1988, 1990; Gadamer 1990). The understanding of meaning—if ‘understanding’ is here not arbitrarily limited to a very narrow domain—must involve all factors that contribute to its structure—and that involves an analysis of the forms of power that implicitly define intentional self-understanding (Foucault 1979; Hacking 1999).
If we now put this methodological reflection on its normative feet, we arrive at three modes of hermeneutic recognition that are borne out by interpretive dialogue.

(1) The other agent is recognized as a reflexive self that is capable of engaging in a context-transcending process of self-understanding. True, to rationally recognize another agent, we have to take her by her word, have to interpret her cultural acts, expressions, and practices. Yet we always know that the other’s intentions and reflexive thoughts are potentially beyond those particular forms of expression, that they can be expanded by dialogue itself, and that agents can take a reflexive stance toward their contexts and practices. There is thus no reduction of individual agency to cultural identity—on the contrary, we recognize the universality of the other through her particular dealings in her context and culture.

(2) While we thus universally recognize the other as reflexive self, the other is also always recognized in his or her cultural particularity. The self beyond the actual realm of societal and cultural relations is an empty fiction, and we made clear that we abandoned the notion of a transcendental or atomic self. This involves that a person’s recognition involves the recognition of her cultural context as prima facie valuable, as a realm of identification that defines the very ‘essence’ of subjectivity we are dealing with. The interpretive reconstruction of the other’s culturally embedded self-understanding is thus a normative guidepost for all understanding, since it is the creative and particular construction of cultural identities which constitutes the other’s real human nature. However, once this recognition is in place and the reconstruction of value-assumptions is in process, the mutual challenge, criticism, and transformation of assumed value-preferences is part and parcel of intercultural understanding understood as a serious dialogue.

(3) Finally, and on the basis of taking social situatedness seriously, we recognize that the other is essentially co-defined by pre-existing power relations. Hermeneutic competences required for social life are acquired by participating in hierarchically organized relations entailing a differential access to cognitive, economic, and emotional resources. Accordingly, to fully recognize the other, we have to take into account his or her vulnerable nature, his or her constrainedness by objective social, cultural, and historical circumstances. Our concept of agency would fall prey to a hermeneutic illusion were we to build its understanding on pure self-transparency or autonomy regarding action-intentions and means. To locate the other’s projects and practices in a context defined by trans-subjective
social forces recognizes a truth about the other: his or her empirical heteronomy. Yet if we always combine this mode of recognition with the two previous ones, namely recognition of the other as a reflexive agent and recognition of the other agent as culturally distinct, we will be able to avoid the paternalizing stance of earlier forms of ideology-critique or ethnocentric attributions of irrationality.

We need always keep in mind that the ethos of hermeneutic dialogue conceives of the roots of recognition as operating similarly between the self and the other. Universal respect for the other as reflexive self, hermeneutic sensitivity toward the other’s cultural background, and a critical reflexivity regarding the power constraints imposed on situated selves, are considered interpretive ideals which should guide both sides. First and foremost, it should enable any interpreter, whether theorist or agent, to see herself from the perspective of the other.

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‘World-Views Clashing?
The Possibilities of Dialogue’

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What possibilities exist for dialogue between radically different world-views? Can there be anything like argument between representatives of positions which have few if any premises in common? Professor Otto Muck of Innsbruck has analysed the structure of dialogue between world-views, and has elaborated the logic of arguments in the context of such dialogue (Muck 1975, 1983, 1984, 1999). I have found this approach very helpful in the field of political philosophy, in particular in the philosophical debate about justice. In this paper I explore a line of thought developed by John Rawls within political philosophy which might be of use for the dialogue between religious world-views. In particular I am interested in the dialogue of Catholic Christianity with Shi’a Islam (Riordan 2004b).

1. Otto Muck on world-view dialogue

In 1983 Professor Otto Muck of Innsbruck presented a paper to the International Wittgenstein Symposium on the contribution of the philosophy of science to clarifying the life-carrying function of religious belief (Muck 1984). Other articles on this and related themes and his book on the philosophy of God have analysed the logical structure of *Weltanschauungen* and have clarified the role of philosophy in facilitating dialogue between world-views, especially religious world-views (Muck 1983, 1999). Muck discusses these questions as a contribution to clarifying the specific rationality of religious language, with the hope of facilitating rational dialogue between world-views. He relies on G.D. Kaufman’s introduction of the concept of *Weltanschauung*: ‘Any being, as speaking and acting, has a symbolic representation of its environment, with an evaluation of it relevant for decision and action’ (Kaufman 1966). Muck’s introduction of his concept of world-view follows Kaufman’s operational emphasis. By world-view is meant the set of convictions and attitudes of a person as these affect the shaping of his or her life. More precisely, this is the lived world-view. This can be the basis for an explicit formulation of this atti-
tude. But of course an attempted explicit formulation can be a more or less adequate presentation of the lived world-view.

I do not have the space here to sketch the extent and richness of Muck’s discussions. Suffice it to note that he addresses the problems associated with interpreting world-views, the relevance of phenomenological analysis of engendering experiences, the role of key concepts and general sentences in the core of a world-view, and the distinctive types of justification which are possible in forms of dialogue. For my purposes I will concentrate on his elaboration of four criteria for the assessment of world-views.

The introduction of the term ‘world-view’ relied on the function a world-view is understood to fulfil in any person’s life. This function grounds the criteria which would enable one to determine whether or not and how adequately any particular world-view fulfils the stated function. Muck insists that the proposed functional criteria are not to be confused with the claim bound up with anyone’s convictions that his point of view corresponds to reality. They serve rather to explain how someone would recognise errors in his views and how he would change his position in a manner open to rational reconstruction.

The criteria require that the core of a world-view is free of contradiction in the sense that not any possible conclusion can be drawn from it. Otherwise it could not fulfil its interpretative and ordering function. Acceptance of this criterion means one would recognise the identification of contradiction in one’s world-view as an objection. A further criterion requires that the world-view is unified or coherent in the sense that it not consist of different, uncoordinated interpretative systems. This would ground an objection for instance against an extreme version of the double truth theory. In regard to the content of life’s experiences, a world-view would obviously fail in its function if it were not facilitating the interpretation and evaluation of the experience. Were it to exclude arbitrarily some domain of experience, and fail to be open in principle to all possible experience it would obviously be deficient in relation to its function. These criteria provide us with a method for (1) the critical discussion of prevalent world-views and for (2) understanding their development as rationally justified.

Muck is modest in his expectations of what might be achieved in this kind of dialogue between world views. The main purpose of argumentation in this area is the enlargement of the shared horizon of understanding, the generation of a more adequate appreciation of one another’s convictions and a discovery of each other’s reasons. The fruit of such efforts is a greater caution and tolerance in one’s personal attitude to the convictions
of others by heightening awareness of the complexity of the factors involved.

2. Dialogue between Catholic Christians and Shi’a Islam

The relationship between religion and politics is an important topic in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims. A core issue is the notion of religious liberty. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran recognises ‘Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranian’ as religious minorities, ‘who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education’ (Article 13). This means that the law allows religious liberty only to those non-Islamic groups who are recognised as being mentioned in the Koran – the Jews, Assyrian Christians, Armenian Christians, and Zoroastrians. Because the Koran is read as acknowledging the existence of these groups and respecting their divine origin, the Constitution carries over the same attitude and these groups enjoy a protected existence as minorities within a predominantly Shi’a population.

Other groups, whether originating within Iran such as the Baha’i or with links to international churches such as the Episcopalians or Roman Catholics do not enjoy the same institutionally secured liberty to exist, even though their presence and practice may be tolerated in fact. Some Christian groups can experience quite a bit of pressure, and indeed persecution, especially to the extent that their membership includes Farsi speaking Iranians.

The permitted religious liberty is restricted to the recognised minorities, but it is restricted in another sense also. The Constitution does not recognise a liberty to choose one’s religion, to convert from one to another, or to abandon religious allegiance altogether. The respected minorities are not simply religious minorities: they are also cultural and ethnic minorities. The Armenian Apostolic Church for instance is a ‘national’ church to which new members can be added only by being born into an Armenian family. The church itself may not receive converts. The same holds for the other groups.

The evangelical Christian groups which typically proselytise are not tolerated because the possibility of a Muslim renouncing his religion and becoming a Christian may not be admitted. The prohibition of conversion includes also the prohibition of apostasy. It is not permissible to become an atheist and remain a citizen of the Islamic Republic. This is a serious quali-
ification on the usual meaning of religious liberty. Here I am relying on my interpretation of the situation, which may not be accurate, and I am happy to be corrected if appropriate. However, on the face of it, it does not conform to the understanding of religious liberty presupposed in Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which proclaims that ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance’.

3. Is Dialogue Possible? Help from Rawls

What are the possibilities for dialogue in this situation? Is dialogue possible at all? What common ground might be found for conducting the dialogue? What structure might analysis and arguments follow so as to allow an exploration of possible development? I have found the work of John Rawls helpful for dealing with these questions. I will explore some lines of thought suggested by John Rawls in his late essay “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited” (Rawls 1999). Here I am applying Rawls’s thought to a situation which he did not envisage, at least in this essay, although he does raise relevant questions in *The Law of Peoples*. What Rawls considered to be a situation of plurality of comprehensive doctrines within a liberal polity is reflected in the international community of peoples. The political agenda today cannot be confined to the horizon of the national state, given the very many structures, problems and ideas which transcend those boundaries. The forms of dialogue which are explored on the assumption of the sovereign state can suggest forms of dialogue in international encounter.

Key ideas in Rawls’s approach are the notion of comprehensive doctrine, and the distinction between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines (Rawls 1996). Given the fact of pluralism in our political systems, the agreement and compliance of citizens cannot be evoked by exclusive reliance on one or other comprehensive doctrine to which many citizens have no access. What can evoke their agreement and compliance is the content of public reason which Rawls describes as the content of an overlapping consensus between reasonable comprehensive doctrines. The overlapping consensus contains a political conception of justice and of reasons for public accountability, summarised by Rawls as public reason. He revisits the idea of public reason in this late article. It represents a constrained form of reasoning because of its political role:
Public reasoning aims for public justification. We appeal to political conceptions of justice, and to ascertainable evidence and facts open to public view, in order to reach conclusion about what we think are the most reasonable political institutions and policies. Public justification is not simply valid reasoning, but argument addressed to others: it proceeds correctly from premises we accept and think others could reasonably accept to conclusions we think they could also reasonably accept’ (Rawls 1999, 155).

The forms of argument which are appropriate within public reason are more generously presented in this late article. For instance, the use of a language and conceptual apparatus generated from a comprehensive religious doctrine is permitted with the proviso that the equivalent argument be presented later in a commonly accessible public language. The possibility of translation from the language of the comprehensive doctrine to the language of the overlapping consensus makes it permissible to allow the comprehensive doctrine into the public space. Still, even with this concession and proviso, the realm of public reason is tightly constricted. Rawls’s ideas concerning the relationship between a religious world-view and the principles which might guide a liberal polity as formulated in Political Liberalism and developed in later articles have proved fruitful for an examination of the admissibility of religious arguments in public discourse (Riordan 2004a). Rawls’s acknowledgment of the reality of religious conviction as sustaining a commitment to maintain a liberal polity is innovative. The later articles (Rawls 1999, 2001) elaborate on this acknowledgment and take it further in the recognition of the contribution of a Catholic tradition of language and criteria which might provide candidates for public reason. He acknowledges for instance how from within the horizon of Catholic Christianity there has been a distinctive attempt to generate a conceptual framework which might function as a candidate for the overlapping consensus. He takes the analysis in terms of natural law, common good and solidarity as providing an alternative candidate to his own proposal of justice as fairness (Rawls 1999).

Rawls sees possible benefits in allowing reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, to be introduced into public political discussion. Commitment to the democratic ideal of public reason is strengthened when citizens’ basis of commitment to the ideal as rooted in their religious world-view is acknowledged. Rawls anticipates a reinforcing dynamic when public officials respond to citizens whose commitment
to the democratic ideal of public reason is supported by the respect shown their religious and secular motivations. These reflections are located in his discussion of broad political culture (Rawls 1999, 153ff.). Admitting religious argumentation into public reason is conditional on the willingness of citizens to translate their contribution from its formulation in terms of their religious world-view into the language of the political conception of justice in the overlapping consensus. This condition Rawls labels the *proviso*.

Rawls stresses one aspect of public reasoning: it is addressed to fellow citizens and proceeds from premises which the speaker thinks they can accept and argues to conclusions which she thinks they can also accept. This concern that arguments be accessible to the other is central to the duty of civility. Introducing world-views into public political debate would seem to violate this duty of civility, since not everyone can be expected to accept premises or conclusions drawn. Hence the requirement of the proviso. Hence also the delineation of the relevant forms of non-public discourse. Rawls distinguishes three such forms: declaration, witnessing, and reasoning from conjecture (Rawls 1999, 155).

In declaration a citizen speaks from her comprehensive doctrine and show how on its basis she can endorse the content of the political conception in the overlapping consensus. This form of non-public reasoning is the one which cashes in the value of allowing reasonable comprehensive doctrines into public political debate, since the mutual understanding of citizens is fostered and the knowledge of and respect for their differing world-views is increased. Note here how this benefit is only derivable from reasonable comprehensive doctrines which in fact function to support the overlapping consensus. Rawls illustrates this style of discourse by referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan, and how a citizen might appeal to it to explain her commitment to the difference principle which includes concern for the worst-off in society (Rawls 1999, 155, & n.55). This principle is part of Rawls’s suggested theory of justice as a political conception, which he labels ‘Justice as Fairness’. Civic friendship between people of different convictions is strengthened by this style of reasoning, and public justification is made easier because greater familiarity allows each to anticipate the thinking of the other.

A citizen may think that her religion does not allow her to endorse some element of the political conception. In that case, a supporter of the overlapping consensus may attempt to argue by conjecture from what he knows of the relevant comprehensive doctrine. Appealing to his fellow citizen’s religious or secular convictions he may try to outline an argument taking her
convictions as premises and drawing conclusions from them which she originally may not have thought possible. Rawls explains it thus: ‘we argue from what we believe, or conjecture, are other people’s basic doctrines, religious or secular, and try to show them that, despite what they might think, they can still endorse a reasonable political conception that can provide a basis for public reasons’ (Rawls 1999, 155-6). Rawls stresses the importance that the use of conjecture be ‘sincere and not manipulative’. ‘We must openly explain our intentions and state that we do not assert the premises from which we argue, but that we proceed as we do to clear up what we take to be a misunderstanding on others’ part, and perhaps equally on ours’.

Both declaration and conjecture are optimistic non-public forms of argument in that they anticipate success in linking the reasonable comprehensive doctrines to the political conception of justice. The third form, which Rawls introduces in a footnote, is applicable in situations in which ‘citizens feel they must express their principled dissent from existing institutions, policies or enacted legislation’ (Rawls 1999, 156, n.57). As examples of such ‘witnessing’ he mentions Quakers’ expression of their pacifism or Catholics’ opposition to abortion. He distinguishes between witnessing and civil disobedience. The significant point of difference is that the latter requires appeal to the principles and values of a liberal political conception of justice to maintain that the objectionable policy offends against these. In witnessing as Rawls characterizes it, those who act on the basis of their deepest beliefs want their fellow citizens to know about their opposition to some policy and their basis in faith for their stance. But they have no grounds for appeal to public reason to seek overturning of the objectionable policy. ‘While they may think the outcome of a vote on which all reasonable citizens have conscientiously followed public reason to be incorrect or not true, they nevertheless recognize it as a legitimate law and accept the obligation not to violate it’ (Rawls 1999, 156, n.57).

Declaration and witnessing can be seen as positive and negative versions of the same stance, the former expressing support for a policy and the latter giving testimony to dissent, but without denying the claims of the conclusions of public reason to compliance. With conjecture, the discrepancy between the world-view and public reason is addressed in the expectation that the reasonable comprehensive doctrine can be so interpreted as to yield support for the overlapping consensus.
4. Applying Rawls to Inter-religious Dialogue

There are various obvious reasons why Rawls’s ideas are not particularly useful for inter-religious dialogue. However, I want to take up the idea of reasoning from conjecture, to explore its possibilities for inter-religious dialogue, which I am considering here as a specific case of dialogue between world-views in Muck’s sense. I will suggest that the criteria elaborated by Muck find a resonance in the operation in practice of reasoning from conjecture. Rawls suggests that people will be able to subscribe both to the political conception of the overlapping consensus and to their own reasonable comprehensive doctrine. But the reasons they have from within their world-view for supporting the content of the overlapping consensus will not be the reasons they can offer to fellow citizens in instances of deliberation within public reason in the narrow sense. Reasoning from conjecture seems useful for such instances where people who hold a comprehensive doctrine which is in principle compatible with the overlapping consensus, but who have not yet acknowledged that they can accept that consensus, can be led to discover its compatibility with their deeply held beliefs, or at least to explore that possibility. This seems to be a benign and very straightforward use of reasoning from conjecture.

Another case might be a debate within public reasoning itself which resists resolution in terms of the very narrow set of resources available within public reason. This is a case where parties in the debate seek to find ways of arguing from premises in their opponents’ comprehensive doctrines which lead to conclusions compatible with their own proposals. Such a use of reasoning from conjecture would be a two way street, with each party appealing to the opponent’s fundamental convictions for the sake of finding a resolution within the overlapping consensus. This situation is contrasted with the previous one, therefore, in which the proponent of the overlapping consensus relied on reasoning from conjecture to guide the holder of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine towards acceptance of a political conception. In this second case, both parties represent the overlapping consensus but seek ways of persuading the other to accept proposals within public reason which they had not been able to accept on the basis of public reason alone. An example might be the debate conducted in the past decade about whether national and international political and legal systems should facilitate pharmaceutical companies in exploiting competitive advantage in selling medicine (especially re AIDS) to developing countries. The resources available from within public reason alone (property rights,
Might a citizen be justified in thinking that whereas her reasonable comprehensive doctrine allows her to subscribe to the overlapping consensus and the political conception in general, but that it generates questions in relation to particular resolutions already arrived at in public reason (acceptance of slavery by the US Constitution in its original adoption, denial by the US Supreme Court at one point of the rights of states to legislate on working hours and conditions), then the dominant consensus might not be justified in terms of public reason. On the basis of such a suspicion, a challenge to accepted opinion might be warranted. This seems to be a case in which ‘civil disobedience’ is justified since the context conforms to what Rawls calls a ‘nearly just, but not fully just, society’ (Rawls, 1999).

But such scenarios lead also to the form of discourse which Rawls calls ‘witnessing’ (Rawls 1999, 155f.). Witnessing ‘typically occurs in an ideal, politically well-ordered, and fully just society in which all votes are the result of citizens’ voting in accordance with their most reasonable conception of political justice. Nevertheless, it may happen that some citizens feel they must express their principled dissent from existing institutions, policies or enacted legislation.’ It is worth emphasising that Rawls here admits that the ideal fully just society is made up of very reasonable citizens who for good reasons on both sides do not always agree on issues. In other words, everyone being reasonable does not guarantee agreement or consensus.

5. Debate on Religious Liberty

In the dialogue about religious liberty, an interesting example of what seems like reasoning from conjecture has emerged. Some Shi’a Muslim scholars are returning to the text of the Koran to investigate if it is being correctly interpreted in denying religious liberty to those religious believers who do not fit in to one of the excepted categories. Some Koranic sources are drawn on to suggest that the silence of the Koran on the religions of others should not be interpreted as disapproval. Instead, phrases and sentences which are respectful of the differences indicate an alternative reading of the Koran. I report here on the presentation by one participant in particular at meetings in London in October 2005 and in Tehran in January 2006. In his talks he listed a whole series of texts in the Koran in which there is mention of other religions and other peoples with different faiths, which might be read in a positive way. These texts, he suggests, allow for
an acceptance of the entitlement of the other to respect, toleration and accordingly recognition of religious liberty.

Surveying these texts, admittedly in translation, and again admittedly without the scholarly competence to provide exegesis, I can recognise the point he is making. In the dialogue, he, as a committed believing Shi’a Muslim, has internalised the question which we from outside Islam would want to raise. He has accepted the question, and is attempting to answer it to his own satisfaction. His attempted answer appeals to his own fundamental principles, rather than to some supposed neutral basis or secular rationality.

His strategy is to look at the kind of text which allows for recognition of the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, and then to compare more generalized texts which do not name only these groups. The former kind of text is exemplified in Koran 2,57; 5,73; 22,17. The argument appeals from these recognised texts usually relied upon for the policy of recognition of the accepted minorities to more general texts in which a divine providence is expressed allowing all peoples and all persons the possibility of salvation. A recurrent theme in the texts cited is the idea that God has sent a messenger to every nation, and that every people has had its companion and helper on the way to finding God’s will. Koran 16,36; 35,24; 10,47: ‘Every nation has its messenger’. Texts with a similar message speaking not of nations but persons are exemplified by Koran 2,137, and 2,143: ‘God guides whomsoever he will’, and ‘every man has his direction to which he turns’.

I am not competent to read these texts and interpret them against the background of their usual reception among Muslims, but it is sufficient to recognise the thrust of the argument proposed by our partner in dialogue. He attempts a form of argument, beginning from accepted texts within the religious world-view, and seeking to elaborate them as warranting a level of tolerance of others and their convictions even though they may disagree with the orthodoxy of Islam. In other words, he is attempting to demonstrate the compatibility of a more broadly understood right to religious liberty with the text of the Koran, than is currently accepted in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is more like conjecture than declaration, since he is facing the task of convincing his fellow believers of the rightness of his reading of the scripture. At the same time it seems unlike conjecture, since the partner is himself pursuing the question posed to him from outside his comprehensive doctrine but which he accepts as valid.
This experience indicates grounds for optimism in the dialogue, which on the face of it does not seem to allow for argumentation. Muck’s analysis of the rationality of world-view dialogue finds a parallel in Rawls’s development from a narrow consideration of the arguments possible within public reason to the non-public forms of argument appropriate to the engagement of comprehensive doctrines which seek to sustain a way of living together. A tentative confirmation of the usefulness of their proposals is found in the experience of dialogue as partners develop their positions. In particular it is to be noted how the criteria formulated by Otto Muck are exemplified in this approach. Insofar as the partner in dialogue is generating a developed interpretation of his sources and the core of his world-view, that development can appear as rational if it moves in the direction of greater coherence and a more adequate guide to dealing with the whole of experience. To that extent it seems that there are possibilities for argumentation in a special sense in dialogue between world-views, argument forms which Rawls places outside of public reason such as conjecture, but which are very helpful in extending the realm of mutual understanding and respect, and possibly, in time, the domain of an overlapping consensus.

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1. Introduction

If April is the most cruel month, what about August? I am stuck in the passport office, it’s hot, there’s a huge crowd (everybody is as disheartened as me) and, as if that wasn’t enough, the take-a-number dispenser is broken. Then the queue is no longer governed by something put down in black and white, but only by memory. And memory of people taking part in such a rite is shaky and it gets often overwhelmed by personal interest, so the queue becomes somewhat problematic. Now, between issuing a passport and the regulation of a queue, there is a connection which is not only de facto, but de jure.

What I’m trying to obtain with the passport is a way of fixing memory, something that can guarantee my identity. Otherwise, I would be forced to travel with a lot of acquaintances and even with some policemen, who would be in charge of safeguarding my rights. And this story would never come to an end. For instance, in a world without documents, money and credit cards would also not exist, and all travelling people should carry with them a huge amount of chattels, like Swift’s Lagado’s Academics.

This fact points out the key-category of social ontology, which I propose to call documentality. And it has simply nothing to do with a technical way of preserving memory. It entails also major consequences on our personal identity. The fact that being “sans papier” amounts to being devoid of citizenship (and of the associated rights) is extremely revealing as to the significance of documents, namely of those things that we shall regard as objects that record social events.

In this paper I will define the nature of social objects, their rule of constitution, and the role of an ontology of documents.

2. Social Objects

Let’s start from the beginning. Research projects, books, lessons, relationships, votes, credits, exam certificates, records, academic degrees, students
and their halls, professors and their chairs, art works and consumer literature, application forms, revolutions, workshops, conferences, firings, unions, parliaments, stock societies, laws, restaurants, money, property, governments, marriages, elections, games, cocktail parties, tribunals, lawyers, wars, humanitarian missions, voting, promises, buying and selling, prosecutors, physicians, perpetrators, medieval soldiers, presidents. What are all these objects made of? And, above all, are they objects? Some philosophers would say they are not objects, because only physical objects exist. Other philosophers would go so far as to say that even physical objects are socially constructed, because they are the results of our theories. Thus, their world would be indeed Prospero’s world: *We are such stuff / As dreams are made on and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.*

This cannot be the case, though: social objects do indeed exist, the proof is that giving a lecture is different from thinking about giving one. And it is in this context that we can find what an American philosopher, John Searle, in 1995 has called “a huge invisible ontology”, the ontology of *social objects.*

What’s it about? Let’s start by making some examples of *non-social objects*: mountains and lakes, trees and atoms exist even if we don’t think about them, and they would still exist even if no human being would have ever inhabited Earth. And the same also holds for numbers and theorems. The objects of the first type are *physical objects* existing in space and time, quite independently from subjects. The objects of the second type are rather *ideal objects* existing out of space and time, but still independently from subjects (if Pythagoras’ theorem would have been discovered by Euclid, we would now know it as “Euclid’s Theorem” but it would be, nonetheless, the very same theorem).

So far, so good. But what’s the place in this classification for such things as this seminar, or our Congress as a whole? The Congress surely occupies portions of space and time; it has an organizer, participants, etc, and depends on subjects not only in the sense that there is an organizer and there are participants, but also in the (more general) sense that if human beings didn’t exist, academies, lunches, conferences and world championships wouldn’t exist either. In different terms, I have no difficulty to imagine that this talk could be completely different, but I can by no means imagine this talk taking place in a world inhabited only by, let’s say, beavers.

This talk, just like a lot of other things (and if you think about it you soon realize that they are the most important ones in our lives) is a *social*
object, that is: an object – this is what I would like to stress – which cannot exist not only without human beings but also without inscriptions. Consider, for instance, the following: would a wedding where all the participants were affected by Alzheimer syndrome be still considered a rightful marriage afterwards?

X counts as Y in C
In order to explain the nature of social objects, Searle has formulated the law “X counts as Y in C”, that means that a social object is a higher-order object supervening upon a physical object. In some context C, a man X is also a prime minister Y and a piece of paper X is a banknote Y. So far, so good. But this theory has several counterexamples.

The best illustration of the fact that the identity of a social object such as a state is not warranted by its physical realization is given by the case of Poland. Consider the extent to which Warsaw “moved”, eastward and westward, northward and southward, given all the changes that characterized the tormented Polish history.
The following map represents Warsaw’s current position, which is in the east of Poland, given that most of the post-war territorial acquisitions were made at the expense of Germany.
The following map portrays Poland in 1941, under German occupation. Warsaw is located in the west, near the border.
The next picture represents Poland in the Twenties. Warsaw is roughly at the center of a very large territory. This was so because Germany and the Soviet Union, the neighbours of Poland, went through, respectively, a lost war and a revolution.
The next picture portrays Poland in Napoleon’s times. Warsaw is located near the eastern border.
However, it is worth noticing that in 1772 Warsaw was located near the northern border.
Confusingly enough, moreover, we cannot determine Warsaw’s position in 1300, simply because at that time there was only Poland in existence but not Warsaw.
It should be clear then, that the identity of Poland is not founded on its molecules. The identity of Poland is founded on treaties, written records, formal agreements, which all have the interesting feature of having signatures at the bottom of their pages.

Where is the being of Fiat? Consider now the case of a heavy industry such as Fiat, namely a social object whose physical realization, though vast, is made of a smaller number of molecules than the physical counterpart of a State. Fiat in the Thirties consisted in the Lingotto factory, its workers, clerks, and managers, including senator Agnelli, and of course its cars. But is this true?

Of course, this cannot be true, as it wasn’t in the case of Poland. The Lingotto factory has recently been turned into a museum, an hotel, a conference building, and, furthermore, Fiat is not its owner anymore; there has been a decreasing number of workers, Agnelli (the old senator, but also his heirs) died or made several bizarre things, but still Fiat continues to exist with many difficulties that however do not affect its identity.

Cars, moreover, constitute Fiat’s being only as long as they are not sold to customers. It looks reasonable to explain what happens when one buys a Fiat car by appealing to the notion of contract, which is just a kind of record, having on it the signatures, respectively, of the seller and the buyer. Contracts are at the foundation (together with account books, stocks, communications, letters, faxes, pay envelopes etc.) of the Fiat’s identity, which, just like Poland’s, does not depend on its physical molecules (all considered, the number of signatures that determines Fiat’s identity may well be smaller than the number of signatures that determines Poland’s identity).

Where is the being of Telecom? Let us examine now the case of a light industry such as Telecom as it was thirty years ago, when it was named Sip (and before Siptel). Which were the molecules that defined its identity? A certain number of employees, buildings and offices, but characteristically its telephones (which the company owned for a long time) and telephone lines.

Of course, many of us remember that fifteen years ago the Italian market of telephony was freed by Telecom’s monopoly on telephone lines, and its telephones were then not the only ones available, to the point that now they are just a tiny minority. Do we have to conclude that Telecom is now something different? In a sense it is, since it is no more the old monopolist company we used to know. But its identity through the successive changes
from Siptel into Sip and finally into Telecom did not depend on its telephones and wires but – as always – on signatures.

Moral: telephones and telephone lines can disappear or can change ownership, but this does not amount to the end of Telecom. To avoid the latter, it will suffice to take care of the signatures.

Where is the being of Vodafone? This case involves a physical realization with a much smaller number of molecules than the previous ones. In fact, Vodafone has never owned telephones and wires, being a mobile communication company. But then where is the being of Vodafone? Which are the molecules that constitute it?

One may be tempted to answer that Vodafone’s being consists in the image of the model Megan Gale, which for several years made Vodafone’s advertising in Italy. But of course it cannot be so. Megan Gale represents Vodafone, she is not Vodafone. And she is not Vodafone’s property (one can rent a car, but not a person).

Where is, then, the being of Vodafone? Well, the answer is easier than expected: in Sim cards (independently of the kind of support); in registered documents (independently of the kind of support); in its stocks (independently of the kind of support). Three elements that are just different kinds of signatures (the registered SIM card code is the essence of a signature, linking somehow the computer blips in a bank, the genetic code and some traces of ink on a sheet of paper)

Where is the being of Parmalat’s Debt? This last case is the hardest one. The molecules involved here are very few, or, better, there seem to be no molecules at all and no physical realization, since we are dealing with something like a “negative entity”. Having no molecules at all, then, a debt is infinitely less dense than Poland, Fiat, Telecom and Vodafone. However, when we come to its identity, things are quite different from how they look like at first sight: a debt has roughly the same number of molecules as the previous examples of social objects.

In his Intervista a un suicida [Interview with a suicide] Vittorio Sereni wrote “The shortage was not in the coffers of the city, but in his heart”, of a Luino accountant who killed himself because of cash shortage. In Parmalat’s times (with all its executives in a “jail meeting”, as noticed by the newspaper Il manifesto), the cash shortage is a topical subject. How did they cause the debt?

On the 4th of January 2004, the newspaper La Repubblica reported the following: “According to the original plan, [the documents] had to be buried in a hole, just like a cumbersome dead body, in the flat country just behind
Parmalat’s buildings. But some judges in Milan came into possession of the documents, commanding the first arrests. The documents amounted to three small sheets in which Parmalat’s accountants, few hours before the case became public, summarized the balance of the “dump” society named “Bonlat” that was meant to collect all the debts (together with its secrets) caused by Tanzi and his associates. Three small sheets, whose content LaRepubblica will soon reveal.”

We must say that the project of hiding the three sheets of paper in a hole is quite imaginative, even if it is partly justified by the idea that some societies may work just like waste disposal sites. However, burning the papers, eating them, tearing them into tiny pieces or even putting them in the closet, they all look like much more practical ways to get rid of three small sheets of paper. But Parmalat’s executives wanted too much: another hole, just behind the factory buildings. A hole takes time, and, what’s worse, it can easily be discovered as it is clear from the fact that the judges and LaRepubblica entered in possession of the documents very soon. They had just to follow the right traces.

The Enron case is very similar. Among the comments that followed the Enron crack, a financial newspaper suggested a list of things that one could have done with an Enron stock, and the first thing on the list was: “Use it for sanitary disposal and other bathroom activities.”

From the previous considerations, then, it seems to follow that Searle is wrong, since even a negative entity requires a physical realization, as in the case of valueless stocks; moreover, what loses its value is not the massive physical counterpart, but the signatures that warrant its exchangeable value, and which – according to my theory - constitute the real essence of such a social object.

3. Object = Written Act

I now try to present my theory. Consider the case of debt. There is also in this case, to speak the truth, a physical object, although it is rather a peculiar one: it is something written on a paper or a computer, or simply in the mind of someone. This is the secret of social objects.

I reckon that we do not need massive physical objects (a territory, a human body, a piece of paper or a coin) to obtain a social object: in many cases a few ink molecules, or some neurons, are enough. If we granted this, we would acknowledge that social objects depend on social acts concerning at least two persons—two persons that should be able to remember
what they do—and an inscription is the only physical thing it takes. The inscription, *viz.* the trace, is a concept on which Derrida (1967) insisted a lot: without inscriptions of some kind, in the head at least, there would not be society, although, obviously, there may be inscriptions (for instance the notches on Robinson’s calendar) without there being a society.

That’s why I have proposed in 2005 the law “*Object = Written Act*”: social objects are social acts (such that they involve at least two persons) characterized by the fact of being written: on paper, in a computer file, or simply in people’s heads.

This is particularly clear in our age, characterized by an explosion of writing, memories and records. IPod was last Christmas’ most popular gift, and this means that the most popular gift was a *tabula rasa*, the waxen tablet on which it is possible to write and to erase at will, or Freud’s Magic Notes, if you prefer. What’s new here, however, is the huge amount of space available for storage, and considering that even the smallest newsstand nowadays contains more writings and registrations than the whole Library of Alexandria, that doesn’t come as a surprise. Now, given that we are not philosophers for nothing, we move from *de facto* to *de jure* considerations.

Twenty years ago, two objects apparently quite different from one another entered in our lives (or, more exactly, in the lives of only a few of us, which I don’t know if I should label as “privileged” or rather “unlucky”). These objects were the *PC* and the *mobile phone*.

The first one was a monumental device, quite modern but still archaic in certain respects, being made out of heavy metallic parts and with a small screen with tiny—almost unreadable, as a matter of fact - green letters shining against a black background. Moreover, in spite of its imposingness, the PC had less memory than the simplest Gameboy nowadays afloat, and a lot of people (including myself) thought that it was not really needed. “A typewriter is more comfortable” they used to say “and, above all, it’s portable, while that cumbersome thing surely isn’t!”

Also the second discovery – the mobile phone – was, in those days, of a very remarkable size. At the beginning, it was a sort of walkie-talkie, an object one would have found only in politicians’ and top-managers’ cars and, I guess, in secret agents’ and police chiefs’ pockets as well. Probably, this is the reason why I can’t clearly remember of these objects in their first appearances (and I think I’m not the only one). Until the end of the past century, it was a tool used only occasionally and especially by people belonging to particular categories, such as the unfaithful husbands, whom the
mobile phone would enable to have secret conversations first and, later, after the divorce, to replace the house phone.

Two brand new objects, I was saying, and completely different from one another. Two species, so to say, incompatible from an ethological point of view: the first was a sort of typewriter, just a bit more sophisticated, the second was a phone, from which the cable – god knows how – had been cut away. The first absolutely didn’t communicate in any way. Just think about it: now it could seem unbelievable, but the earlier IBM computers’ keyboards – the eighties’ ones – used to lack a key. Guess which one? Nothing less than the “@”, the key of e-mail addresses, and this happened simply because at that time there was no e-mail at all. The second neo-object, just like its cabled forerunner, couldn’t write a single letter. And, on reflection, it would have struck us as weird to the least if one had bought a telephone for writing. Wouldn’t it?

Yes, weird indeed. But now something is happening which is even weirder and right in front of our eyes: the two machines are becoming the same machine. And this is not only a matter of functions (even if, of course, it’s true that nowadays we can make low-cost phone calls using computers and that mobile phones have huge and constantly growing amounts of memory, overwhelmingly more powerful than those of the first personal computers) but mostly of physical localization.

In short, the very same object is becoming a computer memory and a mobile phone. And we can be sure that this integration will shortly get total and that the pair computer-mobile phone will eat everything up: cash, credit cards, wallets, ID cards, passports, birth and marriage certificates. This is, no doubt, very practical, but on the other hand loosing your mobile phone now becomes a tragic event: having lost this very one thing you’ve lost everything, and finding a public phone – at least in Italy, the Kingdom of Mobile Phones – to communicate the fact won’t surely be that easy.

So, losing your mobile phone is a little like dying. You become instantly a sans papier, even if in the mobile phone there is no physical paper, but simply a possibility of recording.

4. Documents

After the tale, let’s go back to theory. With the law Object = Written Act we found the necessary (but not, of course, also sufficient) condition for society: without inscriptions of some sort, even just in the head, there would be no society; on the other hand we can obviously find inscriptions
without a society, such as the notches on Robinson’s calendar. Moreover, the condition I have just mentioned holds specifically for social objects: physical objects, like mountains, or ideal objects, like theorems, exist without inscriptions, but social objects don’t (a society without memory is, strictly speaking, unconceivable). It is in this sense that I propose to transform Derrida’s thesis (untenable as it is) “There is nothing outside of the text” into “There is nothing social outside of the text”. Have a look into your wallet or mobile and you’ll understand what I mean.

With all this in place, a theory of documentality can develop in three different directions. The first direction is that of an ontology, which has to answer the question “What is a document?” The second one is that of a technology, whose task is to explain how documents are distributed within a complex society. The last direction is that of a pragmatics (especially legal pragmatics), whose aim is to guarantee an efficient distribution of documents in today’s society, characterized as it is by the explosion of writing.

With regard to the first question – what is a document? – what is needed is a full articulation of the law “Object = Written Act”. Documentality, in fact, embraces a large domain: from human memory and simple written notes (memos don’t have necessarily a social value, but often they acquire one) to international treaties. Moreover, documents can be realized by quite different media (writing on paper, electronic writing, photography…) and they can refer to quite different events and activities (borrowing a book from the library, getting married, giving a name to a child, declaring war…). In the great majority of these realizations, the structure of documentality can be recognized: first of all, a physical support; then an inscription which is, of course, smaller than the physical support but which determines its social value; finally, something idiomatic, typically a signature (and its various variants, such as digital signatures and PIN codes), which guarantee the authenticity of the document.

As to the second question – how is documentality distributed within a complex society? – the queue at the office that I have described doesn’t represent an optimal situation, but, luckily, the number of media suitable for the realization of documentality is now increasing: you can pay fines at the tobacco store, pay for parking by mobile phone, buy tickets or pay taxes on-line. In short: if it’s true that an advanced society has more needs with regard to documentality, it’s true, by the same token, that such a society has more resources, made available by digital supports and technologies (which extend and enhance the law “Object = Written Act”) for pay-
ing bills and taxes, getting certificates, making online purchases and financial transactions.

Let’s turn, finally, to the third question. How can we manage documents in a world characterized by the explosion of writing? The problems related to privacy, constantly increasing in advanced societies, are usually interpreted in the light of the recurrent image of a Big Brother, that is, a big watching eye, according to the model of Bentham’s Panopticon. On one hand, it’s surely true that things like infrared viewers are nowadays widespread as well as cameras that constantly survey every aspect of our lives, in banks, railway-stations, supermarkets, offices and private buildings. On the other hand, however, the power of this big eye would be useless without a registration, which is exactly what transforms a vision in a document. No doubt, the recent debates about phone interceptions are just the tip of an iceberg: the question we are facing here is an important one for democracy, and a complete grasp of the category of documentality is required in order to get a satisfactory answer to it.

5. Conclusions

Now that I’m almost done with my speech I would like to conclude with both a memory and a prophecy.

First comes the memory: this future has a very ancient origin, it has been made possible by writing, which, as we have seen, is what has merged computer and mobile phone and what will certainly lead all the future hybridizations which, in turn, will hugely increase our power of storing, registering and acquiring data, in our mobile phones as well as in our memory sticks or iPods, just like it happened in the past, in libraries and pyramids.

Pyramids, libraries, archives, letters … Here lies the reason why nobody, really nobody except French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his *Grammatology* (1967), in the middle of the twentieth century, had never even imagined that the great revolutions of the following decades would have been grounded on writing, which guarantees the coming alliance of computer and mobile phone. And it won’t take a big deal to verify this claim. Just read at the books from the Fifties: it seemed that writing was deemed to disappear, completely replaced by TV, radio, cinema, what McLuhan labelled as “warm” messages. You could have found not even a trace of e-mail, sms, internet, web, Google, blogs: the spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (which dates from 1968) was equipped with perfectly normal
typewriters and Hal, the big-brain, served to think and not at all to write. But this is simply how it goes with future, it’s supposed to surprise us, that’s why it’s such fun. And it becomes sublime when it really surprises us with something as old as pyramids.

And then the prophecy. Not only is everything converging into the mobile phone, the absolute wallet, but it is also easy to foretell that all differences between private media and public media will vanish, since any private customer (even a soldier now stuck in Iraq) can share his communications on the web and a public agency whatsoever can intercept the communications of a private customer, maybe the pictures that Abu Ghraib American soldiers – if they deserve this name – were sending to their loved ones. Moreover, anyone, public or private, have access to cinemas and television, no matter where you are and usually by using tools suitable for “private” communications as well.

Writing, as I was saying, has always existed. We have always had some papier (unless we were sans papier, of course). But today this papier is surrounding us and creates our identity, protects us to the same extent in which it inspects us. So, it happens that when some officer asks me for documents I would like to answer: “Why ask, if you know it better than I do?” Or, with a small variation, I find myself asking a question (a little disturbing and blasphemous) which can be found in Augustine’s Confessions: “Why confess something to God, who knows everything?”.

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On Place and Space:
The Ontology of the Eruv

BARRY SMITH, BUFFALO

On one walk he ‘gave’ to me each tree that we passed, with the reservation that I was not to cut it down or do anything to it, or prevent the previous owners from doing anything to it: with those reservations it was henceforth mine.1

1. The Eruv is Up!

‘Eruv’ is a Hebrew word meaning literally ‘mixture’ or ‘mingling’. An eruv is an urban region demarcated within a larger urban region by means of a boundary made up of telephone wires or similar markers. Through the creation of the eruv, the smaller region is turned symbolically (‘halachically’ = according to Jewish law) into a private domain. Orthodox Jews may, so long as they remain within the boundaries of the eruv, and so long as these boundaries are undisturbed (the eruv is up!2), engage in activities that would otherwise be prohibited on the Sabbath, such as pushing prams or wheelchairs, carrying walking sticks, books, keys, gloves, or spectacles, wearing jewelry, including watches, and walking dogs.

There are eruvim in many towns and university campuses throughout the world. There are five eruvim in Chicago, five in Brooklyn, twenty three in Queens and Long Island, and at least three in Manhattan. There are also eruvim in Los Angeles, Berkeley, Venice,3 Gibraltar, Melbourne, Sidney, Toronto, and Vancouver. Different eruvim in the same city maintained by different Orthodox communities may intersect in different ways. The US Supreme Court is (like most other major US Federal Government buildings) located within the eruv of Washington DC.

To constitute an eruv, a given area of public space must be demarcated from its surroundings, either by wires or by some sort of wall or fence (or combination thereof), or by virtue of its topography (for example because it is all higher or lower than its surroundings). Because it is typically impractical to build continuous solid walls around a sizeable built-up area within an already existing residential zone, advantage is taken by eruv-

1 Malcolm 1958, 31f.
2 http://laeruv.com/.
3 http://www.ghetto.it/.
builders of the fact that Jewish law places no limits on the number of doorways which are permitted within a wall. This means, in effect, that eruv walls are allowed to consist entirely of doorways, which are themselves seen as consisting of two parts: vertical supports (for example utility poles) on either side, and a lintel, consisting for example of a cable or fishing line strung between them. And to accommodate a rule to the effect that the lintel, to constitute the horizontal completing plane of a doorway, must be positioned above the top of the doorposts, thin rods or tiny plastic strips called *lechis* are used to create surrogate doorposts attached onto the poles.⁴

Certain activities may still not be performed within the boundaries of the eruv because they are seen as not in the spirit of the Sabbath. These include touching a pen, opening or carrying an umbrella, playing ball, riding a bicycle, or swimming. Similarly, there are certain types of location which cannot be included within an eruv, for example cemeteries, so that the outer boundaries of an eruv may surround exclaves which are not themselves private space when considered halachically.

Because of storms and other hazards, the eruv boundary must be inspected each week in order to ensure that it is still complete. This task is carried out, in the case of the University of Maryland eruv (whose website talks of a ‘metaphysical wall’⁵) through the use of laser beam technology.

In many cases, not all of those living within or near the area of an actual or proposed eruv will themselves be Orthodox Jews, and this has sometimes led to protests against the eruv creation. It is such protests which triggered the writing of this essay.

### 2. The Tenafly Eruv

The proposal to establish an eruv in Tenafly (New Jersey) gave rise to protests which culminated in a vote by the Tenafly Council to have the US Supreme Court hear its case against the Tenafly Eruv Association.⁶ Without permission from the borough, the association had attached *lechis* to utility poles, contravening a local ordinance prohibiting the placing of signs or advertisements in the public right of way without permission. (Such items as house numbers, political posters, and church signs had often

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been posted on the same poles without complaint.) In *United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit No. 01-3301, Tenafly Eruv Association, Inc. v. Borough of Tenafly* a brief from the Agudath Israel of America refers to ‘anti-Orthodox paranoia’, which saw what was, after all the creation of a ‘virtually invisible boundary line indistinguishable from the utility poles and telephone wires in the area,’ as variously threatening to destroy Tenafly’s public school system, close its shopping malls on Saturdays, put the butchers at Grand Union out of business, lead to the establishment of many small synagogues and stores that cater to Orthodox Jews, turn all of the eruv-enclosed area into a private Orthodox ghetto, give non-Orthodox Jews an inferiority complex, and impose Orthodox Judaism on all of Tenafly’s residents.

3. The Barnet Eruv

In 1992 the Orthodox Jewish community of Barnet, as part of its project to create an eruv, submitted a request for planning permission to erect some forty pairs of metal poles with strands of nylon fishing line stretched between them at a height of 10 meters. Ten years later, after many protests, permission was granted for the erection of the poles, allowing the creation of an eruv comprehending a six-and-a-half square mile area of North London, in which the portions of fishing line close off gaps in a boundary otherwise composed of already existing telephone lines stretched between wooden poles together with portions of railway fencing and walls of terraced housing.

The importance of this case turns not least on the kinds of objections raised by protesters. Some Orthodox Jews objected because they saw the restrictions on carrying as necessary to maintain social order. More modernist Jews objected because they feared ‘the re-creation of ghettos’. Most intriguing, however, are the arguments of secular liberals, who objected that the eruv impinges on their ‘human rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion’ and who proposed taking these objections to the European Court of Human Rights, which itself lies within the Strasbourg eruv.

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7 Valins 2000.
4. The Outremont Eruv

In 2001 the proposal to establish an eruv in the Montreal neighborhood of Outremont gave rise to considerable public controversy:

A dispute over barely visible fishing line that Orthodox Jews say is vital to the practice of their religion landed in court yesterday as the city of Outremont argued it cannot allow the six-metre-high filament to cross public land.

Opponents of the eruv argued that public property cannot be designated for the use of a particular group, and that Orthodox Jews ‘are able to practise their religion in their homes and do not need use of the streets as well.’ One secular group, the Mouvement Laïque Québécois, opposed the establishment of the eruv on the grounds that it runs counter to the separation of church and state. The group’s president asserted that public space must be kept free of all religious symbols in order to guarantee everyone’s freedom of religion. Establishment of an eruv, he said, ‘amounts to privatizing public space because the Hasidim consider the enclosed space their own.’ One municipal councilor asserted that the string in front of her home is ‘a constant reminder of a religious boundary across public space. Against my will, because of the location of my apartment, I find myself living in a territory identified with a religion that is not my own.’ Another Outremont resident said she feels excluded by the presence of an eruv: ‘I love everybody. I adore eating Jewish food. I love matzo … But I want to live in peace.’

5. Ways of Worldmarking

Such liberal opponents perceive the eruv to be a challenge to ideas of secularism, the public–private divide, and enlightenment rationality. For them, the eruv seems to ‘symbolically stain space’:

Eruv-believers would happily pass through their symbolic gateways in the streets, but everyone else would be compelled to do so without such a benefit, even if the compulsory passage through the Eruv structures is offensive to a person’s beliefs. (Letter to the Editor, Local London, December 5, 2000)

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9 http://www.mlq.qc.ca/
10 Cooper 1996.
Recall that the creation of an eruv consists, in the worst case, in the erection of poles connected by a fishing line at a height which makes the fishing line itself invisible to passers by. Or it consists in the affixing of small plastic strips at a similar height to existing telephone poles. In many cases such creation consists in no more than the fact that certain existing items of street furniture are deemed by one group of residents to constitute the boundaries of a certain space. The protests by non-believers to these deemings and/or to the tiny adjustments to the physical landscape made by believers in order to bring about slight enhancements in their convenience in following religious laws seem, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the objectors’ own belief-systems, to rest on some sort of mistake. But what is the nature of this mistake?

First, and most neutrally, let us address the question as to the real reason for these protests. Two potentially attractive answers to this question we shall, for different reasons, dismiss from the very start. A first answer would be that some of the protests derive from property owners within the vicinity of the eruv. A tempting practical argument is the fear that the creation of the eruv would lead to a decline in property value. In fact, however, the creation of an eruv is more likely to have a positive effect on property value, since it attracts potential Orthodox Jewish homebuyers to move into a given area (and the numbers of non-Orthodox who are even aware of the existence of an eruv is, outside the immediate circle of the protestors, typically very small). This may in the long term have the effect of bringing more Jewish residents into a given area, which leads us to a second set of arguments, which turn on the hypothetical presence of strains of antisemitism on the part of the protesters.

Analogous protests, as far as we know, were never directed against comparable deemings involved where Catholic or Protestant diocesan or parish boundaries are at issue. This is so, even in spite of the fact that such boundaries often ride roughshod over established political boundaries (as when, for example, the diocese of the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar is deemed to comprehend not only the area of Gibraltar but also all of mainland Europe, Morocco, Iceland, and the territory of the former Soviet Union11). Antisemitic beliefs may themselves give a special (symbolic, irrational) significance to the inserted lechis. Some might even go so far as to see the creation of an eruv as just the first step in bringing about a real

11 While the see is in the City of Gibraltar, the seat is located at the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity in Crawley, West Sussex. See: http://www.europe.anglican.org.
physical enclosure, rather than a purely symbolic boundary. (From Sydney: “My wife and I were stunned to discover we were now living in a real, fair-dinkum Jewish Ghetto.”\textsuperscript{12})

We think, however, that there is a further common reason for the other kinds of protests, which turns on the presence of intellectual errors of a spatio-ontological sort.

\textit{X counts as Y in context C}

Since the \textit{lechis} and associated boundaries are for all practical purposes invisible, why is their presence disturbing to some non-Jewish residents of the relevant areas? Not, we presume, because the boundaries of the eruv are perceived by the latter as possessing any special halachical powers, but rather (if we interpret the protesters’ reasoning correctly) because the \textit{lechis} and the associated connectors are \textit{believed by others} to have such special powers. But how, then, should the existence of such beliefs bring it about that the relevant spatial regions are seen by non-believers as becoming transformed in such a way that ‘the compulsory passage through the Eruv structures is offensive to [a non-religious] person’s beliefs’.

In \textit{The Construction of Social Reality} John Searle develops a sophisticated account of institutional facts as resting on special sorts of ‘status functions’ which certain physical objects (for example buildings, a region within a residential area) acquire in virtue of cognitive acts or states which are directed towards them in certain contexts.\textsuperscript{13} To this end Searle employs the formula \textit{X counts as Y in C} (\textit{X} = the physical object or region, \textit{Y} = what it counts as, e.g. an eruv, \textit{C} = the ontologically relevant context). He even applies this formula to a case which comes very close to that of the eruv:

Consider for example a primitive tribe that initially builds a wall around its territory. ... suppose the wall gradually evolves from being a physical barrier to being a symbolic barrier. Imagine that the wall gradually decays so that the only thing left is a line of stones. But imagine that the inhabitants and their neighbors continue to \textit{recognize} the line of stones as marking the boundary of the territory in such a way that it affects their behavior. ... The line of stones now has a \textit{function} that is not performed in virtue of sheer physics but in virtue of collective intentionality. ... The line of stones performs the same function as a physical barrier but it does not do so

\textsuperscript{12} “Jews show the way forward towards racial/cultural/ethnic/religious/economic/social apartheid in Australia”, http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/Australia/eruv.htm.

\textsuperscript{13} Searle 1995.
in virtue of its physical construction, but because it has been collectively assigned a new status, the status of a boundary marker. (Searle 1995, 40)

The crucial phrase for our purposes here is: ‘imagine that the inhabitants and their neighbors continue to recognize the line of stones’ as marking a boundary. For the Tenafly and Barnet eruv cases reveal that the collectivity of those living in the vicinity of an eruv may associate divergent beliefs with such recognition, so that there is no common context \( C \) and no common set of status-function-imputing beliefs in relation to which we are able to understand the eruv and its boundary from the perspective of those involved. This problem is addressed in “The Construction of Social Reality: An Exchange”,\(^{14}\) which addresses the problems for the \( X \) counts as \( Y \) in context \( C \) formula which may be seen as arising through the existence of such conflicting belief systems.

The contested eruv is a case of the form:

\[
X \text{ counts as } Y \text{ in context } C \text{ and } X \text{ counts as } Y_1 \text{ in context } C_1,
\]

where neither \( C \) nor \( C_1 \) has priority over the other. Thus it is comparable to the case of an area \( X \) on the Indo-Chinese border that is claimed by India as Indian and by China as Chinese. \( X \) counts as Indian territory in India-friendly contexts, and as Chinese territory in China-friendly contexts. What is the correct account of the ontology of this piece of territory, on Searle’s account?

In his response to this question, Searle insists that the \( X \) counts as \( Y \) is ‘merely a useful mnemonic’ that is intended to remind us that institutional facts only exist because people are prepared to regard things or treat them as having a certain status and with that status a function that those things cannot perform solely in virtue of their physical structure. The creation of institutional facts requires that people be able to count something as being more than just what its physical structure indicates.

Searle’s idea is that the ‘counts as’ formula is in the end ontologically misleading, since it suggests that there are social objects in addition to the physical objects which serve as the targets of acts of status function imputation. In my “John Searle: From Speech Acts to Social Reality”\(^{15}\) I respond to this charge by arguing that we need, in fact, to distinguish two cases: the first, which receives almost all of Searle’s attention, is illustrated

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\(^{14}\) Smith and Searle 2003a.

\(^{15}\) Smith and Searle 2003b.
by the examples of president, cathedral, dollar bill, where physical object and social object are indeed one and the same – exactly in keeping with Searle’s naturalistic inclinations. For these cases, certainly, talk of ‘social objects’ or ‘institutional objects’ is misleading to the degree that, as Searle fears, it would imply that there may be multiple social objects in addition to the physical object which serves as their ontological basis. The second case, however, is one in which there is no physical object to serve in this way as basis. These objects, which I have proposed to call ‘free-standing $Y$ terms’ are illustrated by examples such as debts, permissions, rights, and so forth – examples which certainly fall within the scope of Searle’s theory of institutional reality, indeed they form its very heart, but to which he has addressed too little careful attention.

6. Cognitive Geometry

When Searle addresses the issue of disputes concerning institutional facts, for example disputes about the ownership of a piece of property, he points out, correctly,

that in order for us to even have an analysis of the nature of the dispute we have to understand that what is in dispute is the assignment of status functions. That is, disputes about the Nazi expropriation of property, or disputes about the ownership of a painting, or about the boundary line between two countries, are real life disputes among people competing for the right to assign status functions to objects. (Searle, in: Smith and Searle 2003)

Searle insists that such disputes ‘are not problems for philosophical analysis of the ontology of institutional facts, they are real life problems to be settled by judges and lawyers, and in the end perhaps by armies and political movements.’

Not so, however. For the very idea of competing for the right to assign status functions itself presupposes that this right – which is itself (presumably) a status function – would somehow have to have become assigned (presumably on some lower level in the counts as hierarchy). And then the question arises once more: by whom, and under what auspices? The respective roles of judges and political authorities on the one hand and of armies on the other in effectuating such lower-level assignments would itself therefore seem precisely to be a matter for philosophical analysis. Indeed, as concerns judges and political authorities, precisely the same problems will arise as in the mentioned cases as concerns their contested juris-
dictions; and if, as a last resort, we fall back on the role of armies in resolving such contests then we seem to be left only with a version of the formula *might is right*.

The eruv disputes are marked by some further philosophically significant differences from the disputes about ownership or sovereignty mentioned above, differences which seem to be significant even where eruv disputes were indeed settled, in the end, by judges and lawyers. For while one group is here indeed competing for the right to assign status functions to objects (more specifically to a certain region of space), the protest groups are competing for the right to prevent such assignment.

And so again the question arises: Why, given that the highly esoteric status functions in question pertain to matters which lie entirely outside the world in which the protestors live, do they protest so much? One answer to this question turns on what we might call the *confusion of space and place*.

An eruv, like a parish, a village, a neighborhood, a legal jurisdiction, and a military district, occupies space. But it is not identical with any region of space, and in particular it is not identical to the region of space through which non-eruv-believers pass when going about their daily business. The source of the confusion (the ontological running together of space and place) is associated with a deeply rooted assumption to the effect that there is one single division of space into subregions, corresponding to the standard geopolitical division, for example of a continent into countries, countries into states, states into counties, and counties into towns or communes, in a simple hierarchical nesting. Departures from such hierarchical nesting, even when we consider only the restricted dimension of political-administrative sovereignty, are more common than we are disposed to think. There are non-contiguous nations (including the United States) whose sovereign territory is broken up into separate pieces by the interspersed territory of other sovereign nations. The Belgian village of Baarle-Hertog, lying some 5 kilometers North of the Dutch-Belgian border in the region of Turnhout (and thus entirely surrounded by Dutch territory) is a conglomeration of 20 small parcels of land lying interspersed with the small parcels of land which form the Dutch village of Baarle-Nassau. Some parts of Baarle-Nassau are counter-exclaves, which is to say ex-claves of the Netherlands surrounded by Belgian territory which is in turn surrounded by territory of the Netherlands. In the region of Cooch Behar in West Bengal, where India and Bangla Desh are topologically intertwined

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16 Bittner and Smith 2003.
17 http://ontology.buffalo.edu smith/ baarle.htm.
in almost miraculously complex ways, we find examples of counter-counter-exclaves.¹⁸

There is, however, a powerful force in history which manifests itself in a desire by human groups for exclusive control over topologically compact and connected regions, so that, ideally at least, the world would be subject to a jointly exhaustive and pairwise disjoint partition into separate regions, with each one of which there would be associated one single ethnic (and religious and linguistic) group and within each of which there would reign one single sovereign.¹⁹ Traces of this force underlie the suspicion of gypsies in Western societies. It is manifested also in the still common political use of phrases such as ‘rape’ or ‘mutilation’ or ‘dismemberment of the motherland’, and in the willingness of people to give their lives in the cause of establishing borders having certain favored shapes or features (for example that they coincide with rivers or coastlines).

The ideal of a mathematically perfect tessellation is given concrete form for example in the rectangular shape of the boundaries of Colorado and Wyoming. It serves as one philosophico-ontological basis of the Peace of Westphalia and of Napoleon’s and Woodrow Wilson’s successive attempts to rearrange the map of Europe, and in its most extreme form it manifests itself in the doctrine of Dar al-Islam (literally: house of submission), through the realization of which the whole world will fall under the dominion of Islam.

The Treaty of Westphalia asserts that ‘the governments of sovereign states are free to structure their relationships with their citizens independent of all external interference’. The king has ‘all Rights…without any reserve…with all manner of Jurisdiction and Sovereignty,’ rights which are to obtain for all eternity. Yet even today, where nearly all national boundaries have been precisely demarcated along Westphalian lines, there remain a variety of overlapping jurisdictions, including the exclaves and counter-exclaves referred to above, and as well as a variety of temporary departures from the ideal of perfect tessellation (as for example when Camp Zeist in the Netherlands was declared from 1999 to 2002 a Scottish enclave, in order to allow the UK authorities to bring two Libyans accused of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing to trial on Scottish soil). But the latter are treated as exceptions. The intricate intervolvement of Belgium and the Netherlands in Baarle is impossible to detect on maps of the Low Countries – in part, we

¹⁸ Whyte, 2002.
¹⁹ Smith 1997.
may suppose, because it represents so considerable a departure from the post-Westphalian expectations of map-makers.

7. The Arguments Surveyed

Some of the objections brought forward by protestors are not addressed, or are touched upon only partially, by such spatio-ontological considerations. This applies in particular to the objections of the Orthodox Jews who see restrictions on carrying as necessary to maintain social order, and to the argument which sees the eruv as a ‘first step towards the re-creation of ghettos’, and which thus forecasts a causal effect from eruv creation. But we believe that all of the other objections rest in one way or another on the presupposition that multiple places cannot be associated with a single region of space, so that eruv creation would imply somehow exclusive use over a public region of space by one single privileged group.

These objections can be summarized as follows:

a) the eruv impinges on the ‘human rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ of the protestors,

b) the creation of an eruv ‘runs counter to the separation of church and state’ (because it involves local council administrations in the approval process),

c) public property cannot be designated for the use of a particular group,

d) eruv creation ‘amounts to privatizing public space because the Hasidim consider the enclosed space their own.’

e) public space must be kept free of all religious symbols in order to guarantee everyone’s freedom of religion,

f) newly erected portions of the eruv boundary (strands of fishing line) are ‘a constant reminder of a religious boundary across public space.’

As to a), whence the impingement, if multiple activities can take place side by side within a single region of space? As to b) and c), the eruv does not, of course, restrict use of any region of public space to a single group. As to d), the deemings of the Hasidim have no causal powers (though they may be believed to have such powers except against the background of certain strange spatial-ontological views) and thus such deemings can (rationally) influence outsiders only if they share the beliefs which underlie them. As to e) and f), many church steeples are more prominent (and more conspicuously religious) than tiny strands of fishing line. Perhaps, then, the
crucial issue has to do with the fact that the church steeple is itself erected on private land. (One wonders what would be the likely reaction of our objectors to a proposal to buy a narrow circular strip of land around a given residential area, and to create a private eruv boundary, made of strands of fishing line, encircling the included region of public space.)

8. Appendix on Virtual Philadelphia

To see why we resist overlapping, interpenetrating segmentations of space, it is useful to imagine, finally, a Nozickian virtual reality machine\textsuperscript{20} which generates three-dimensional visual and tactual simulations of landscapes and architectural works. So impressive is the illusion, that those inside the machine feel that they are experiencing ordinary reality.

We could even imagine a community of individuals connected to a single machine that coordinates their experiences in such a way that they seem to be moving around together, meeting in, say, Philadelphia, walking hand-in-hand along the sidewalk. A travel agent might advertise trips to Virtual Philadelphia. A real estate agent might offer to sell land there. Virtual Philadelphia might in all sorts of ways be \textit{better than real Philadelphia}.

But if we discovered at some later point that we were living not in real Philadelphia but in Virtual Philadelphia, then we would be disappointed. Why? In Virtual Philadelphia you can live in the same building with Madonna. But so can one million other people. They can all show photographs of themselves in the elevator with Madonna and chatting with her baby.

And it is precisely this possibility which tells us what is missing from Virtual Philadelphia as opposed to its real counterpart. Living in the same building with Madonna, \textit{really} living in the same building with Madonna – which means exerting real control on a quite specific region of space – is an achievement. It is something highly valued precisely because not everyone can do it. What space, the real space we share in common, provides is the possibility of such achievement, because it provides the presupposition of competition, and thus of economizing, of taking responsibility, and of overcoming the legal, political and physical obstacles which stand in the way of our manifesting our personality in \textit{free acts which leave traces on reality}.

\textsuperscript{20} Nozick 1974.
It is such acts which provide our lives with meaning,\(^{21}\) and the (to some) disturbing effect of the eruv comes about in part, I believe, because it seems to interfere with our freedom to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the region of space in which we live.

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\(^{21}\) Brogaard and Smith 2005.
On Power, Conventions, and the Varieties of Normativity

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In the last few years, philosophers have paid much needed attention to social ontology (Gilbert 1989; Tuomela 1995, 2002). Broadly constructed, social ontology is an attempt to apply the traditional, rigorous methods familiar to metaphysicians to the analysis of entities not traditionally approached metaphysically: the State, its authority, and a host of other social institutions and phenomena, from contracts to credit cards. Of course, these sorts of themes are abundantly discussed by political philosophers (and by historians, sociologists, etc.), but not in the ways that contemporary social ontologists do this. Paraphrasing John R. Searle, part of the impetus behind social ontology is an attempt to see social philosophy as something other than a wholly owned subsidiary of political philosophy. As it turns out, one of the most influential theories about the ontological structure of social reality is Searle’s own, as he develops it in his The Construction of Social Reality (Searle 1995). I will here raise one criticism to Searle’s social ontology, but some of what I have to say applies to other approaches to social ontology as well.

A brief summary of the problem I shall discuss is the following: (Searle’s) social ontology does not take normativity seriously; important types of normative phenomena have no place within (his) social ontology. I am opposing the normative to the descriptive: to say that your shirt is blue is to offer a descriptive claim, to say that your shirt ought to be blue is to present a normative claim. Searle’s disregard for normativity in his social ontology is particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that it is precisely in the social world where most normative phenomena arise. Notice, however, that I am not challenging the impetus which seeks to separate social philosophy from political philosophy: it is in fact salutary to attempt to analyze, say, the institution of marriage, independently of the normative position one takes regarding marriage (i.e., whether one thinks it is morally defensible, and so on). But, some social phenomena, as a sheer analytical

*With thanks to Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and to Maurizio Ferraris, Ingvar Johansson, Anna Schur, and Barry Smith.
point, are drenched in normativity in ways which (Searle’s) social ontology neglects.

1. Institutional Logic

A good way of introducing Searle’s social ontology is by taking a look at what he calls “institutional logic” (which is a modified version of deontic logic). There is exactly one primitive logical operation by which institutional reality is created and constituted. It has the form:

We collectively accept, acknowledge, recognize, go along with, etc., that (S has the power (S does A)).

We can abbreviate this formula as:

We accept (S has power (S does A)) (Searle 1995, 111).

This last sentence expresses what Searle calls “the basic structure” of institutional reality; the rest of institutional reality being merely a matter of “Boolean operations” on this basic structure. There is one crucial concept underlying institutional logic, and thereby the whole of Searle’s social ontology is “exactly” one. By Searle’s own admission, all institutional reality revolves around it. And yet, in spite of the colossal importance this concept has for Searle’s social ontology, Searle has very little to say about it.

This is the concept of power, and what follows from Searle’s scant remarks is that he uses the expression in a narrow way. By ‘power’ Searle means ‘conventional power’. By ‘conventional power’, we are to understand a power that a group or an individual contingently grants to other groups or individuals. These powers are modeled after (legal) rights; they flow from what Searle calls constitutive rules (rules which bear resemblance to Rawls’ practice rules and to Hart’s secondary rules) (Zaibert and Smith 2007). Constitutive rules, usually opposed to regulative rules, create the very possibility of a certain practice, whereas regulative rules merely indicate how independently existing activities are more graciously carried out. For example, in football (soccer), that a player should kick the ball out when a player in the other team is injured is a regulative rule; but that a player (other than the goalie) should not touch the ball with his hands is a constitutive rule. If a player violated a regulative rule of football, he would
still be playing football, if he ‘violated’ a constitutive rule, then he would simply not be playing football.

It is not coincidental that I have used a game in order to illustrate constitutive rules, since Searle’s social ontology is modeled after games. (I shall return to this point.) Now, within the context of social reality, a driver’s license is an instrument through which a government authorizes a person to drive a vehicle, a credit card is an instrument through which a bank authorizes someone to buy things using the bank as creditor, etc., in accordance with the formula presented above, and in accordance with various, overlapping sets of constitutive rules.

Independently of the merits of this “basic structure” of institutional reality vis-à-vis the explanation of some social phenomena, it surely fails to account for important aspects of social reality. And this failure is in part the result of the two interconnected theses presupposed by Searle’s narrow account of power already sketched: first, that normativity is wholly a matter of constitutive rules; and second, that these rules are always a matter of conventional agreements.

Searle’s “basic structure” of institutional reality can be traced back to his earlier work. (Searle distinguishes institutional from social phenomena. The latter is a subset of the former, and it is characterized by the fact that powers are much more clearly visible in these sorts of phenomena. Searle admits, however, that the difference is a matter of degrees (Searle 1995, 88 ff.).) It was precisely in virtue of the appeal to constitutive rules that Searle, famously, allegedly derived an ‘ought’ from an ‘is’. His social ontology inherits both the felicities and the infelicities of a contribution which appeared first in a very early article entitled “How to Derive ‘Ought’ from ‘Is’” Searle 1964). By appealing to the institution of promising (and its constitutive rules), Searle derived an ought from an is – thus casting doubt over whether what most philosophers had for centuries taken to be a very difficult problem was a problem at all.

A simplification of Searle’s famous argument runs as follows: from the purely descriptive statement that “A promises to give B five dollars”, a normative statement can be derived: “A ought to give B five dollars”. (I omit here the intervening steps.) The constitutive rules of promising entail that, if one promises, then one ought to do what one promised to do. And this is to say that someone has the power to demand that we do what we promised to do, etc. This ‘ought’, that is, this normative statement which Searle allegedly derived from a purely descriptive statement, follows solely from the meaning of promising.
Searle admitted, however, that whatever relevance this derivation of an ‘ought’ from an ‘is’ might have regarding specifically moral normativity, it would be a mere side-effect of his concern with a logical problem about the illocutionary force of certain utterances. According to Searle: we must avoid “lapsing into talk about ethics or morals. We are concerned with ‘ought’, not with ‘morally ought’” (Searle 1969, 176). Yet Searle also, and inconsistently, suggested that this derivation of an ‘ought’ from an ‘is’ “solved” the naturalistic fallacy (which he dubbed the naturalistic fallacy fallacy) – a central problem for ethics or morals. This and other suggestions of a similar tenor may have led scores of commentators into erroneously believing that Searle had accomplished something of great relevance for ethics or morals.

The relevance of Searle’s early derivation of ‘ought’ from ‘is’ for my current purposes is that this gambit, i.e., the appeal to constitutive rules in order to “solve” age-old problems having to do with normativity, remains the central maneuver in Searle’s social ontology. To a great extent, Searle’s social ontology is just an extension of his seminal views on the nature of promising. Promises, Searle tells us, are present in “all” or “virtually all” speech acts, and these, in turn, are the building blocks of social reality, as they are the conduits through which power is conveyed, created, extinguished, etc. But then, the ‘oughts’ of Searle’s social ontology are as humble as the ‘ought’ of his early derivation of ‘ought’ from ‘is’. They are all the result of the constitutive rules of phenomena which we ourselves create in this or that way, but that we could have chosen to create differently. A batter who swings at a third strike ought to leave the field all right, insofar as those are the constitutive rules of baseball, but we could change the constitutive rules of baseball (as baseball officials indeed more or less regularly do). There are, then, no robust, ‘moral oughts’ in Searle’s social ontology.

This explains, then, the close connection between Searle’s social ontology and games: since he is in fact interested only in non-moral normativity, the normativity of social institutions is just the same normativity of games. The only normativity which is of concern to Searle when he discusses social institutions is on a par with the normativity of games: someone summoned to appear in court, ought to appear in court in quite the same sense that, in chess, bishops ought to move diagonally, or that a footballer must leave the field after being shown a red card, etc.
2. Honor

Surely, however, there is more to social reality than this rather jejune sense of ‘ought’. And Searle himself comes close to tackling at least one complication regarding the different types of normativity that are relevant for social ontology which, I believe, find no room within his social ontology. Searle admits that there exists an “interesting exception” to his overarching “only power matters” view of social ontology. The “interesting exception” is what Searle calls “purely honorific” institutional facts. These are institutional facts which do not involve the transmission, creation, cessation, etc. of any power. These are Searle’s examples: “receiving a medal, receiving an honorary degree, being voted the most popular person in your class, being elected Miss Alameda County” (Searle 1995, 96). There are also, for Searle, phenomena which are a matter of pure “negative honors” and as such, they are somehow opposed to the sorts of cases just mentioned (though they still are purely honorific); his examples: “being censured for your bad behavior, being reprimanded by your superiors, voted the least popular in your class” (Searle 1995, 97).

These phenomena (both positive and negative honors) do indeed constitute an exception to the central thesis of Searle’s social ontology, for they do not conform to the formula containing the “basic structure” of institutional reality. Rather than addressing this exception, however, Searle merely notes it just to summarily dismiss it, suggesting that the exception is in fact merely apparent. For Searle also refers to these purely honorific phenomena as: “limiting cases of the deontic” (Searle 1995, 109), and as “degenerate cases of the deontic” (Searle 1995, 110). By ‘deontic’, in this context, Searle simply means the paradigmatically institutional, i.e., cases in which powers are transmitted, created, destroyed, etc. Recall that the power we are talking about here is narrow (modeled after legal powers) in the sense explained above. The ‘power’ to brag about your Miss Alameda County status, for example, is not a power in Searle’s social ontology. Moreover, the ‘power’ that you may have to censure me after I break my promise is not a power either. It is of course not clear at all whether being a “limiting case” is the same as being a “degenerate case”, nor whether either (or both) of these two characterizations of the purely honorific are consistent with the claim that they are an exception the basic structure of institutional reality. In any case, these labels are a way of evading the problem that purely honorific (social) phenomena do pose to Searle’s social ontology, and thus they render Searle’s treatment of purely honorific phenom-
ena both superficial and obscure. But the problem upon which I wish to fo-
cus goes beyond this peculiar amalgam of superficiality and obscurity, 
since it concerns issues about which Searle is straightforward.

What Searle has in mind, in any case, is the following: the purely hon-
orific cases were in his opinion, at some point, “normal” deontic cases, but 
with the passing of time, the powers initially associated with them dwin-
dled down, in such a way that now all that remains is the honor, with no 
attached power. Receiving a medal, for example, at some point involved 
the transmission (creation, cessation, etc.) of powers (‘powers’ in the nar-
row sense explained already), just as becoming Miss Alameda County did, 
or as being censured did, etc.; now the same phenomenon just has ceased 
to involve power. While surely this sort of dwindling down may be true in 
some cases, it is problematic to assert the thesis – à la Searle – as if it held 
generally for all honorific phenomena. Sometimes censuring someone does 
involve the transmission (etc.) of some power (even in Searle’s narrow 
sense); so Searle should at the very least tell us why some instances of cen-
suring degenerate into purely honorific institutional facts and others do not. 
But the crucial objection upon which I wish to focus, again, is that to uni-
versalize this explanation seems to entail (or suggest) a denial the existence 
of the notion of intrinsic value. And, I wish to argue, that any social ontol-
ogy which ignores intrinsic value (as Searle’s does) is deficient.

3. The Campus War and The Construction of Social Reality

Very early in his career, Searle wrote a book, *The Campus War*, in which 
he discussed the student revolts of the 1960s in the United States (Searle 
1971). While in a sense the book is the least philosophical of Searle’s ma-
JOR works, the paucity of discussions connecting this book with the main 
tenets of Searle’s social ontology is still surprising. For after all, *The Cam-
pus War* is a far-reaching analysis of concrete social and institutional phe-
nomena, of the sorts which, one would have imagined, would be supported 
by Searle’s more theoretical writings. And yet, some of the central theses 
and insights which Searle espoused as he discussed the student revolts of 
the 1960s are not easily discernible in the later *The Construction of Social 
Reality*.

I would like to begin this section by commenting on a common theme 
found in the two books: Searle’s gloss over La Rochefoucauld’s dictum 
whereby “falling in love” would not be possible without pre-existing liter-
ary treatments of “falling in love”. I do not now wish to discuss whether La
Rochefoucauld is right about this. Searle seems to believe that La Rochefoucauld is right, and right in virtue of a concept which plays a much more prominent role in *The Campus War* than in *The Construction of Social Reality*: dramatic categories. These categories which make falling in love possible have been afforded to us by literature; without Shakespeare’s work, for example, your falling in love would either not be possible, or, at least, it would be different from what it is. In his eloquent explanation of student revolts in the United States in the sixties, Searle makes abundant use of these categories. And yet, they are almost totally absent in his recent technical work on social ontology.

In Searle’s view, that someone was a “pig” (i.e., a police officer), was by itself a reason to hate him, and, in some cases this fact alone mobilized students to action. Similarly, opposing the “whites’ oppression of blacks” was another popular dramatic category, just as being a “radical”, or a “revolutionary” were dramatic categories, and, again, these categories were perfectly capable, by themselves, of mobilizing the parties involved in these revolts.

As Searle analyzed the mobilizing force that these dramatic categories had within the context of the student revolts, he suggested that this force was in fact immense. For some of these dramatic categories sacralize (Searle himself appeals to the sacred) some states of affairs, some roles, some activities, etc., and once these categories become sacred, their pull is all the more impressive. This explains Searle’s response to his rhetorical question, “why is it easier to believe mythology rather than fact?” (Searle believes that many of the views endorsed by the participants in the conflicts he studied were veritable cases of mythology – with only the most tenuous connection to reality.) Searle responded that “where the sacred is concerned, people’s perceptions are rigidly shaped by their dramatic categories” (Searle 1971, 74). That is, the sacralization of the dramatic categories makes them much more determinant of behavior – and, to that same extent, then their relative absence in Searle’s later social ontology is all the more noteworthy.

For Searle, part of the “anatomy of student revolts” (i.e., part of his early analysis of the social and institutional reality in which these revolts took place) is the following:
a) Perception is a function of expectation.
b) In extreme social situations, expectations of both observers and participants are a function of their dramatic categories.
c) Where the dramatic categories have a sacred status, they have an especially strong effect on both perceptions and action.

d) In the three stages of student revolt [which are irrelevant for my purposes here], the movement from one stage to the next is brought about by triggering a sacred dramatic category (Searle 1971, 77f).

Quite significantly, we can see that Searle’s of notion of power seems to play no prominent role (and at any rate, it is not the only thing that matters) in his account of the anatomy of student revolts. What seems to matter most are the dramatic categories. Conversely, Searle’s own account of dramatic categories plays no prominent role in his theoretical social ontology.

While I cannot here undertake a full-blown investigation of these dramatic categories, one of their features is salient enough, and also enough for my sketching an objection to Searle’s social ontology. Dramatic categories are, at least sometimes (though presumably always if they have been sacralized) appealing in themselves, i.e. they are intrinsically valuable. Sometimes their value is not merely a trace; not merely a result of the degeneration of other phenomena. The fact that dramatic categories can be socially constructed, does not affect my claim that their value is intrinsic. Something is valued intrinsically, if it is valued for its own sake; whether the reason why it is valued in the first place is the result of social constructions or not being a different issue.

In The Campus War, Searle presented five interesting “subcultures” which he suggested could be used in order to understand student revolts: i.e., the fraternity-sorority culture, the professional culture, the intellectual culture, the hippie culture, and the radical (political-activist) culture (Searle 1971, 45ff). These subcultures were to no small extent valued (or disvalued) in virtue of all sorts of dramatic categories; moreover, Searle believed that sometimes the adoption of one of these subcultures as one’s own “is akin to a religious conversion”. Searle was rather emphatic about this “religious quality”, and about the “liturgical and ritualistic style” of the dramatic categories which help explain, in his estimation, the student revolts which he analyzed (Searle 1971, 59).

Searle further described the sort of attitude of many students at the time: rather than saying “here is our platform and here is how we intend to achieve our objectives,”, they said: “here is our style and it is itself the objective, for it offers you meaning, fulfillment, and community, a chance, in short, to find yourself and a meaning in your life, a chance to avoid the hideous and bankrupt materialism of the world around you” (Searle 1971,
Now, inventing or reinventing oneself as a representative of any of the cultural categories that Searle discussed in the context of his analysis of student revolts need not be disconnected from the attainment of powers (in the narrow sense of his social ontology). There is, however, no necessary connection between the dramatic categories and the attainment of powers: one may wish to personify this or that cultural category, without any interest in any power (in the narrow sense) whatsoever. That is, sometimes, at least, these sacred, liturgical, ritualistic, etc., phenomena, are valued in themselves. And sometimes mere places, titles, names, etc., can exhibit this sort of sacredness, and thus they are sometimes valued in themselves.

4. Intrinsic Value and Society

Early in his career Searle admitted, albeit tacitly, that some judgments of intrinsic value (at least those associated with dramatic categories) were terribly important in explaining the host of social and institutional phenomena associated with student revolts, and yet his explicit social ontology can hardly accommodate these phenomena. Interestingly, then, the young Searle’s explanations of the student revolts in the United States in the sixties are not supported by his theoretical views on social ontology. In fact, to the extent that the only sort of normativity that Searle seems to admit enters into social and institutional phenomena is that arising from constitutive rules, it could be argued that Searle’s social ontology not only ignores, but in effect excludes intrinsic value.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that intrinsic value is far from being just a matter of explaining aberrant behavior, as my appeal to The Campus War (in the sense that this book is concerned with problems in the working of societal institutions) may, perhaps, be taken to suggest. Recognizing, say via a medal, a hero’s heroism, is valuable in itself. Recognizing heroism (with medals, say) is not merely the remnant of the powers which at an earlier time used to be associated with medals, as Searle claims. And this value is not the result of any interesting set of constitutive rules. The recognition of the hero, is not only morally appropriate, but arguably aesthetically appropriate as well. And these two types of normativity differ from the normativity of games and constitutive rules.

Consider, in contrast, the sorts of normative consequences that flow from that unique sort of normativity with which Searle is explicitly concerned. Just as some practices could not (logically) exist without some constitutive rules, the existence of constitutive rules, in Searle’s opinion,
endow social phenomena with “normative status”. “This is shown”, Searle continues, “by the fact that the general rule creates the possibility of abuses that could not exist without the rule, such as counterfeit money” (Searle 1971, 48, emphasis added). True, without some constitutive rules in place the very idea of counterfeiting would lose part, maybe an essential part, of its meaning; without a clear rule as to what is to count as money, the idea of counterfeit money does lose something. And this rule indeed brings in a normative dimension. But it is not the end of the story of normativity. Think of phenomena related to counterfeiting: faking, feigning, imposturing, and so on; some of them are sometimes criticizable, independently of any constitutive rules. But myriad of other moral phenomena exhibit a sort of intrinsic value which is independent of the sorts of considerations that matter to Searle: cruelty and envy, for example, are intrinsically bad; kindness and generosity are intrinsically good, and so on.

As G. E. Moore famously noted, moreover, the question of intrinsic value, is “the primary ethical question”, and all other ethical questions are, in a sense, of lesser importance (Moore 1993, 53 ff, 232 ff, and passim). And it is precisely an engagement with this question which is absent from Searle’s social ontology, and insofar as ethical questions are a part of society, then this is a major problem facing any plausible social ontology.

Consider, as one last example (amongst many) of the importance of intrinsic value, the famous debate regarding the justification of punishment, which distinguishes between retributivism and consequentialism. As recent contributions to this age-old debate show, the best way of understanding retributivism (both its essence and its appeal) is to understand it as asserting that deserved punishment is intrinsically good (Zaibert 2006, 155 ff, and 202 ff).

That is, unlike more problematic forms of retributivism which assert that the fact that a wrongdoer deserves punishment makes it obligatory for us (the State, etc.) to punish her, what this fact entails is rather that, other things being equal, if the wrongdoer were to be punished, this punishment would be intrinsically good. The difference between these two forms of retributivism can hardly be overestimated. For the thesis which asserts the intrinsic goodness of deserved punishment does not create a duty to punish the deserving – and it does not reduce either to the toothless assertion that punishing the undeserving is a bad thing. That a given state of affairs is intrinsically good does not entail that we should bring it about; its goodness is defeasible – but it is still goodness
This way of understanding retributivism dispels the much-discussed mystery or unintelligibility which supposedly surrounds retributive justifications of punishment, and it explains, too, how utilitarians can be retributivists (as G. E. Moore himself was). In some ways (the details of which are immensely complicated), the opposition between retributivism and consequentialism can be seen as one manifestation of a general problem between deontological and teleological normative theories. But, at bottom, one of the central aspects of these sorts of oppositions is simply the opposition between two types of normativity: the normativity associated to intrinsic value, and the normativity associated to constitutive rules and games.

Independently of the position that one may adopt regarding the justification of punishment or regarding any of the thorny debates belonging to axiology, Searle’s social ontology, predicated upon an idiosyncratically narrow understanding of power, seems to endorse a comprehensive teleological outlook, without even acknowledging the opposition in which it stands to deontology. As long as Searle sees all normativity as a matter of constitutive rules, and all power as matter of grantings of prerogatives, he is prone to continue insisting on the implausible thesis that the value of all social phenomena is the mere trace of some long-lost power-related value.

Our (collective) recognition of, say, heroism, as well as our (collective) censure of, say, cruelty, are not only based on considerations of intrinsic value, but they are not the result of constitutive rules of any phenomena, nor do they stem from the meaning of any terms. It is incumbent upon a good social ontology to give an account of these phenomena, and Searle’s social ontology fails to do this in a satisfactory manner.

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Time and History presents the invited papers of the 28th International Wittgenstein Symposium 2005 in Kirchberg/W. (Austria). Renowned scientists and scholars address the issue of time from a variety of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary perspectives in four sections: philosophy of time, time in the physical sciences, time in the social and cultural sciences, temporal logic, time in history/history of time, and Wittgenstein on time. Questions discussed include general relativity and cosmology, the physical basis of the arrow of time, the linguistics of temporal expressions, temporal logic, time in the social sciences, time in culture and the arts. Outside the natural sciences, time typically appears as history and in historiography in different forms, like a history of our conceptions of time. The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the major positions in contemporary philosophy of time. Is there a real sense of past, present, and future, or is time just a special coordinate among others? What does it mean that identity persists over time? The importance of Wittgenstein for present-day philosophy notwithstanding, his ideas about time have hitherto received only little attention. The final chapter, for the first time, provides an extensive discussion of his respective views.

This wide-ranging collection of essays contains eighteen original articles by authors representing some of the most important recent work on Wittgenstein. It deals with questions pertaining to both the interpretation and application of Wittgenstein's thought and the editing of his works. Regarding the latter, it also addresses issues concerning scholarly electronic publishing. The collection is accompanied by a comprehensive introduction which lays out the content and arguments of each contribution.