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© 2015 “Towards Reconciling Two Heroes: Habermas and Hegel”, Robert B. Brandom

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Argumenta is the official journal of the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy (SIFA). It was founded in 2014 in response to a common demand for the creation of an Italian journal explicitly devoted to the publication of high quality research in analytic philosophy. From the beginning *Argumenta* was conceived as an international journal, and has benefitted from the cooperation of some of the most distinguished Italian and non-Italian scholars in all areas of analytic philosophy.

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Editorial

This is the first issue of the inaugural volume of *Argumenta*, an online half-yearly journal freely accessible and freely downloadable. As the Latin name of the journal suggests, our goal is to publish papers characterized by good argumentation and systematic reasoning, in the tradition of the best analytic philosophy.

Indeed, *Argumenta* is the official journal of the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy (SIFA), founded in 1992 in close collaboration with the European Society for Analytic Philosophy (ESAP). On a par with the other European Societies constituting the ESAP's network, SIFA promotes the collaboration and exchange of ideas among scholars in analytic philosophy from the whole of Europe and the rest of the world. Accordingly, *Argumenta* warmly encourages submissions from analytic philosophers everywhere.

It is certainly not a simple task to say what analytic philosophy amounts to nowadays. Over more than a century much water has flowed under the bridge, and perhaps only a few thinkers would now subscribe to the central theses with which that trend in philosophy was first identified. However, what we deem of everlasting importance is the stress laid by that school of thought on the clarity and structure of the arguments supporting claims, hypotheses, and theories—again, the stress revealed by this journal's name.

The purpose of the journal is to publish philosophical articles of current interest and to encourage the exchange of ideas, especially the exploration of borderline themes with respect to classic topics in analytic philosophy, as well as themes intersecting different fields of inquiry. All submissions will undergo a standard double blind refereeing procedure.

In order to launch *Argumenta* we invited a number of distinguished colleagues to submit papers for the inaugural issue. Since the number of submissions was considerably greater than we expected, we have decided to spread those papers that passed the review process over the two issues of the first volume, arranged in alphabetical order. We heartily thank all the authors who submitted their papers in response to our request: we take this as an important mark of encouragement. Likewise, we are very grateful to the Government of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (RAS), whose generous funding made it possible to launch this enterprise, the colleagues and friends who have agreed to become members of the Advisory Board, and the colleagues who acted as referees.

Buona lettura!

Massimo Dell'Utri

Editor

Moral Perception Defended

Robert Audi

University of Notre Dame

Abstract

This paper outlines my theory of moral perception, extends the theory beyond its previous statements, and defends it from a number of objections posed in the literature. The paper distinguishes the perceptible from the perceptual; develops a structural analogy between perception and action; explains how moral perception, despite its normative status, can be causal in the way appropriate to genuine perception; clarifies the respects in which moral perception is representational; and indicates how it provides an objective basis for moral knowledge. In the light of this account of moral perception, its presentational character is described, particularly the phenomenological integration between our moral sensibility and our non-moral perception of the various kinds of natural properties that ground moral properties. The complexity of this integration raises the question whether moral perception is inferential and thereby quite different from ordinary perception. This question is answered by clarifying the notion of inference and by pursuing an analogy between moral perception and perception of emotion. Aesthetic perception is also considered as, within limits, instructively analogous to moral perception. The final parts of the paper explore the role of cognitive penetration and cognitive attitudes such as belief and judgment in relation to moral perception; the conceptual and developmental aspects of moral perception; and the latitude my overall account of it allows in the epistemology and ontology of ethics.

Keywords: action-perception analogy, cognitive penetration, consequentiality, inference, moral knowledge, moral phenomenology, observability, perceptibility, phenomenological integration, representation.

The topic of perception is crucial for many fields of philosophy. Epistemology, philosophy of mind, and aesthetics are obvious cases, but metaphysics, too, concerns the nature of perceived objects and, of course, what it implies about the constitution of perceivers. In ethics, by contrast, most major writers have taken for granted that there is perceptual knowledge and have considered any moral knowledge we possess to be largely dependent on perceptual knowledge but quite different in kind. In recent years, however, philosophers have been exploring the analogy between singular moral cognitions and non-moral perceptions, and some have argued—as I have in considerable detail—that moral phenomena are genuinely perceptible and that moral perception can ground percep-

tual moral knowledge of its objects.¹ This paper will both summarize some essentials of my account and extend it by responding to some problems that have not yet been given the scrutiny they deserve.

1. Outline of a Theory of Moral Perception

Moral philosophers have not doubted that we can perceive—say, see or hear—phenomena that are moral in nature, such as a bombing of non-combatants or a brutal stabbing. But it is essential to distinguish between *moral perception* and mere *perception of a moral phenomenon*. The latter may be simply perception of a deed that has moral properties—something possible for a dog. Seeing a deed that has a moral property—for example the property of being wrong—does not entail seeing its wrongness, any more than seeing a beautiful painting entails seeing its beauty. We can hear a lie, as where, just after we see A receive change for a hundred-dollar bill, A tells B (who needs a small loan) that A has no more cash. Can we, however, also morally perceive the lie—thereby perceiving *the wrong* that such a lie implies?

The perceptible and the observable

I have argued in detail that such moral perception is possible and apparently not uncommon. If so, we may take literally discourse that represents moral properties—or apparent moral properties—as perceptible. One objection to taking such discourse literally is that we do not see or in any sense perceive moral properties, but only non-moral properties or non-moral events that evidence their presence. Skeptics and noncognitivists may go further: they might say that, at best, we perceive natural properties that cause us to tend to ascribe moral properties (or apply moral predicates) to their possessors or to express moral judgments about the acts, persons, or other things that are objects of moral appraisal. I grant that much of what I say about moral perception does not preclude a certain skepticism about achieving moral knowledge and also leaves open the possibility of noncognitivist or other anti-realist reinterpretations on which there are no moral properties but instead moral attitudes and moral language appropriate to them. In *Moral Perception* (especially chapters 1-3) my response to this view and to skepticism is indirect, and it will be here: I simply aim to present a more plausible alternative.

Suppose the causal hypothesis just mentioned is true and that it is because we perceive certain non-moral properties that we tend to ascribe moral properties—and we tend to say that we see, for instance, wrongdoing. Philosophers should still ask what relations hold between the two sorts of properties² and, correspondingly, between non-moral cognitions and moral ones, such as moral judgments. Second, we should ask whether these relations differ importantly from relations common outside the moral realm. Third, if the two kinds of rela-

¹ The most detailed statement of my theory of moral perception is presented in Audi 2013, which, in the opening section of this paper and in a few later passages, I draw on heavily, though with some revisions.

² As suggested in the text, I assume here that there are moral properties. If my position on moral perception is plausible, that in itself provides reason to favor cognitivism in ethics. For one thing, perceptual beliefs are paradigms of cognition.

tion do differ importantly, does the difference show that we do not acquire moral knowledge or moral justification through moral perceptions of the kinds I have illustrated?

To begin with, we should set aside certain unwarranted assumptions that may seem plausible. Above all, we should not expect moral perception to be exactly like physical perception, at least exactly like perceiving everyday visible objects seen in normal light (I take vision as paradigmatic for perception, as is common in philosophy). First, moral properties are not easily conceived as *observable*, in what seems the most elementary way: no sensory phenomenal representation is possible for them, as opposed to intellectual representation, though sensory representations, especially of actions, may be integrated with phenomenal elements, including certain moral emotions, that are distinctive of moral experience. Second, even the perceptible properties on which the possession of certain moral properties is based may not be strictly speaking observable, at least in this elementary way. On my view, you can see one person do a wrong to another by, for example, seeing the first slashing the tires of the other's car. The slashing is uncontroversially observable. It is an "observable fact." But what we may be properly said to observe here may be not just a matter of what we visually perceive; it may also reflect what we already know, such as that the car belongs to the second person, not the first. We must grant, however, that even though you can visually observe the basis of the wrongdoing, your seeing the wrongdoing depends on your understanding, to at least some degree, the normative significance of the destruction of someone else's property. Moral perception presupposes both non-moral perception and a certain background understanding of interpersonal relations that, even if quite unsophisticated, enables the moral character of what is perceived to affect the perceiver's sensibility.

The analogy between perception and action

At this point we can learn much from considering the analogy between perception and action. Conceived in terms of what might be called success conditions, action and perception have different "directions of fit" to the world. Action succeeds (at least in an agent-relative sense appropriate to intentional action) when it changes the world to fit the relevant aim(s) of the agent; perception succeeds when it represents a change (or state) in a perceived object, where the perception fits—i.e., in some sense correctly represents—the world. There is a sense in which action goes from the inside out, and perception goes from the outside in. These are rough formulations; but they are a good starting point, and good theories of action and perception should enable us to refine them in illuminating ways.³

A second aspect of the analogy between perception and action is important for understanding moral perception. Just as we do not do anything at all without doing something *basically*, i.e., by doing it other than *by* doing something else, and, in that way, "at will," we do not perceive anything at all other than by perceiving something basically, say by simply seeing its colors and shapes, as with visual perception of a tree. Now consider a counterpart case of action: my greet-

³ A recent example of theorizing that focuses significantly on parallels between perception and action is Sosa 2015.

ing you. I cannot do this without, for instance, raising my hand. I greet you *by* raising my hand. But for me, as for most people, that is a basic act: I do not do it by doing anything else. *Someone* might be able to move the relevant muscles at will; I cannot: I can move them only by moving my hand. This shows that there is a difference between a movement I make as an action and a movement of or in my body necessary for the action. Similarly, I see a tree by seeing its colored foliage and its shape, but I do not see these by seeing anything else. Granted, I cannot in fact see them without their conveying light to my visual system, but *that* set of events is not my basic perception. Moreover, neither the visual system's reception of the light nor my seeing the colors and shapes is a kind of doing, conceived as a volitional phenomenon, much as neither my raising my arm nor my muscle movements underlying that action are perceptual phenomena. The structural parallels between action and perception do not undermine the ontological differences between them.

We can now see how basic perceptions reveal *the perceptible*, something we can be perceptually aware of *by* (say) seeing. Some perceptible entities are not perceived basically but only by perceiving something else—in the sense of something distinct from it even if intimately connected with it in the way that raising a hand can be intimately connected with greeting. We can see this point more clearly by considering whether the kind of perceptibility in question is a matter of being, for us, *observable*, where the object is constituted roughly by what is, for us, perceivable basically. The 'for us' reveals a species-relativity, but not the subjectivism implied by taking the 'for' to be doxastic, say entailing that what we observe depends on what we believe in the situation. The relativity view here is that a given species or subspecies tends to have a characteristic basic level of perception; it is not that the concept of perception requires positing an absolutely basic level across all species capable of perception. More generally, for any perceiving being and any time, there is a perceptually basic level for that perceiver at that time; but it does not follow, and I believe is not true, that there is some "ultimate" perceptual level that is basic for every perceiver at every time.

Now consider injustice as a major moral phenomenon. Is it ever observable, in the most basic sense, which apparently goes with perceptual properties, roughly the kind basic for us? Is seeing injustice, for example, observational in the sense corresponding to the perceptual properties of color, shape, and motion? Or is such moral perception equivalent to seeing—in a distinctive way that is at least not narrowly observational—a set of "base properties" for injustice, such as a patently unequal distribution of needed food to starving children, where these properties are seen in a way that makes it obvious, upon seeing them, that an injustice is done? The second alternative points in the right direction, and the remainder of this section will clarify the distinctive way in which moral perception may be visual and thereby a case of seeing. We should begin with some further points about the consequentiality of moral properties.

In asking about the relation between moral perception and seeing the relevant base properties, i.e., properties on which injustice is *consequential*, I assume something widely held: that actions and other bearers of moral properties do not have those properties *brutely*, but on the *basis* of (consequentially on) having "descriptive" properties. Consequential properties may also be called *grounded* or *resultant*, terms that also indicate that a thing possesses the consequential (grounded) properties *because* it possesses the base properties. An act is not simply wrong, in the way in which an act can be simply a moving of one's hand

(though in certain underlying ways even such basic acts are not simple). It is essential to the wrongness of an act that is wrong that it be wrong *on the basis of* being a lie, or *because* it is a promise-breaking, or *as* a stabbing, and so forth. Similarly, a person is not simply good, but good *on the basis of*, or *because of*, or *as*, having good governing motives together with beliefs appropriate to guide one toward constructive ends.⁴

If, however, we see moral properties on the basis of seeing non-moral properties, the question arises—or at any rate philosophers will ask—whether one ever really sees a moral phenomenon, such as an injustice. Recall the distinction between seeing an action that is wrong and seeing its wrongness. It is not controversial that one can see a deed that *is* wrong (unjust, a violation of a moral right, and so forth); this requires simply seeing the deed and its in fact being wrong. We can also see *that* a wrong is done. But do we even in the former case literally see such properties as wrongness or injustice? Consider seeing a babysitter consuming the last piece of chocolate cake and then later accusing a child of eating it. Do we not, given what we know, see and hear wrongdoing in the accusation? We do, but the moral perception this illustrates is not the elementary kind of perception illustrated by seeing the shape of a tree.

It would be a mistake, then, to think that the phenomenal elements in perception properly so called must be sensory in the representational way that characterizes paradigms of seeing and some of the exercises of the other senses among the five ordinary senses. But why should we expect perception of injustice, which is not a basic perception for us and has a normative, non-sensory phenomenon as object, to be just like perceptions of color, shape, motion, flavor, or sound, which are physical or in any case sensory, non-normative, and, in typical cases, basic for us? Why should there not be, for instance, a phenomenal sense of injustice that is—appropriately, on my view—not “pictorial” in the way exemplified by the visual impression of a tree or a painting? Here it is well worth considering non-visual perception. Where a moral perception is auditory, as with hearing a lie, or tactual, as with feeling a stab in the back, we are not tempted to expect it to be pictorial, at least in the way visual experience of many kinds of things may be taken to be.

One might still think that genuine perceptual experience must be cartographic, having content that provides a “mapping” from phenomenal properties, such as a tactual impression of a shape one can feel in darkness, to physical properties causing the impression. From sensations of touch one can “map” the shape and size of a box felt in the dark. But wrongdoing and, on the positive side, justice, do not admit of mapping, even when they can be seen in a mappable distribution of boxes, as where a supply of food from the United Nations is placed symmetrically on the ground for equal distribution to needy families waiting for help. What we see must be perceptible; but even if *perceptible proper-*

⁴ That moral properties are consequential is a view articulated in Moore 1903 and Ross 1930, esp. ch. 2. It is developed further in ch. 2 of Audi 2004. I here presuppose that certain properties, such as, on the negative side, killing and, on the positive side, promising are a priori grounds of moral properties, but my theory of the nature of moral properties does not require a particular list of such grounds or indeed a particular list of moral properties.

ties, such as being wrong or unjust,⁵ must be seen by seeing *perceptual properties* (often called observable or considered to be expressed by “observations terms”) such as bodily movements, not all perceptible properties are perceptual. The senses can yield the base by which we see certain perceptible properties without their being on the same level as the perceptual properties pictured or mapped by the senses. To make the relevant notion of perceptibility clearer, we must explore the sense which moral perception is representational.

2. The Representational Character of Moral Perception

Given what we have seen so far, we should distinguish two kinds of demands one might make on a theory of moral perception. One demand requires the theory to provide a phenomenal—and especially, a cartographic—representation of, say, injustice. The second, more plausible demand centers on a phenomenal representation constituted by a (richer) perceptual *response* to injustice. The sense of injustice, then, a kind of impression of it, *as* based on, and as phenomenally integrated with, a suitable ordinary perception of the properties on which injustice is consequential—on which it is *grounded*, in a main use of that term—might serve as the experiential element in moral perception. Let me develop this view—call it an *integration theory of moral perception*.

Sensing physically versus sensing morally

An important constituent in this phenomenal integration is the perceiver’s felt sense of connection between, on the one hand, the impression of, say, injustice or (on the positive side) beneficence and, on the other hand, the properties that ground the moral phenomena. This felt connection is at least akin to what some have called the sense of fittingness. The sense of connection I am describing normally produces, moreover, a non-inferential disposition to attribute the moral property of the action (or other phenomenon in question) on the basis the property or set of properties (of that action) on which the moral property is grounded. Suppose, for instance, that I see injustice in a distribution, say, a larger box of food for a family smaller than the other families standing in line for the distribution of one per family. My sense of injustice normally yields a disposition to believe that distribution to be wrong *because* it is (on the ground that it is), say, giving more to one family in the same needy position. My awareness of injustice, however, if perceptual, is non-inferential.⁶ It is not based on any premise but is a direct response to what I see. The directness is, of course, epistemic and not causal—philosophical analysis places no restrictions on what causal processes may occur in the brain. A related point is that the perception is not and certainly need not be tied to the term ‘injustice’ or any synonym. Any of a range of terms may be appropriate, and we may indeed leave open the extent to which the property-attribution depends of the perceiver’s use of language at all.

⁵ Perceptibility here is relative to circumstances: the perceptibility (for us) of wrongness does not entail that every kind of wrongness is perceptible (say plagiarism); but same holds for heat, which is perceptible (for us) only within a certain range.

⁶ More is said later to explain why many moral attributions can be non-inferential.

Any kind of perception, on my view, is experiential in having *some* appearance in consciousness—though (apart from self-perception) not entailing *self*-consciousness or any internally directed attitude. *Moral* perception in some way embodies a phenomenal sense—which may (but need not) be in some way emotional—of the moral character of the act. This sense may, for instance, be felt disapproval, or even a kind of revulsion, as where we see a man deliberately spill hot tea on his wife’s hand in retaliation for her embarrassing him. The sense need not be highly specific; it may, for instance, be a felt *unfittingness* between the deed and the context, as where we see male and female children treated unequally in a distribution of medical supplies for patients with the same infectious disease. Similarly, but on the positive, approbative side, a felt *fittingness* may play a positive phenomenal role in moral perception. Think of the sense of moral rebalancing if one sees the unequal distribution of medicine rectified by a health professional who takes over the case. The equality of treatment befits the equality of need.

In each instance of moral perception, the moral sense of wrongness, injustice or, in the positive case, of welcome rebalancing is essentially connected to perception of non-moral properties on which the moral properties are grounded. In cases like these, we might be said to *sense morally*, rather as someone who hears a melody in a howling wind blowing through open drain pipes might be said to sense musically. This is not because moral properties (or comparable aesthetic ones) are sensory—they are not—nor because there is a special moral faculty dedicated to the ethical realm, but because there is a kind of perceptual experience that manifests moral sensibility and appropriately incorporates a response to the properties that ground the moral property that we sense.⁷ Perceptibility through our moral sensibility is wider than, though it depends on, perceptuality at the level of observable properties accessible to the five senses.

Consider the vivid description we find in the parable of the Good Samaritan:

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the [injured] man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite . . . passed by on the other side. A Samaritan . . . came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him’, he said . . .’ (Luke 10: 34-37).

The wounded man is a pitiful sight to which even a child might respond with a kind of distress. We are to see the priest and Levite as either lacking moral perception or, if not, responding instead to contrary motivation, whereas the

⁷ This is not to say that “Moral perception is a form of pattern recognition”, as does Max Harris Siegel in setting out my view in his generally clear and quite informative review of my *Moral Perception* (Siegel 2014: 239). Some moral perceptions may be cases of pattern recognition, but not all are—even if each case *has* some pattern—since the grounding relations essential for moral perceptions need not yield a familiar pattern. But I do cite pattern recognition, e.g., with faces, as an example in which perception may require information-processing, yet need not entail inference.

Samaritan has a strong sense of what he ought to do. Granted, pity alone could yield the action, but the continuation of the story suggests a perception of the kind manifesting a sensitivity to the obligation of beneficence. Phenomenologically, seeing the wounded man as wronged or seeing what one ought to do, or both, may have experiential elements blended with pity. Indeed, the moral perception here may be *bi-modal*, with sounds of pain emanating from the wounded man combining with the visual spectacle. Perception is not limited to receptivity by only one sense at a time. Just as the sense of harmony in music or of gracefulness in dance depends on both one's aesthetic sensibility and what is directly perceived through both sight and hearing, moral perceptions depend on both one's moral sensibility and what one perceives. Moral perception achieves an integration of elements that come from the constitution of one's sensibility with elements perceived on the occasion of its stimulation.⁸

The multi-leveled character of perception

One way to view the theory of perception I have outlined is to consider it *layered*. We can accommodate moral perception by incorporating into our theory of perception a distinction between perceptual representations of an ordinary sensory kind that are low-level and perceptual representations that are of a richer kind and are higher-level, being based in part on ordinary sensory representations. Can this layered, multi-level theory of perception, however, explain how moral perception can have a causal character? It can. To see how in a familiar kind of non-moral case, consider recognizing a person in an airport. The property of being Rosaria (construed as including at least her essential characteristics) does not cause my recognition of her; the causal work is done mainly by the properties of color and shape (or their instances) that identify her to me as Rosaria. Similarly, moral perception should not—and I think need not—be taken to be causal by treating (moral) perceptual property instances, such as seeing injustice, as causally produced or sustained by instances of moral properties. The causal work is done mainly by the base properties.

The theory of moral perception developed here is neutral regarding the possibility that moral properties themselves are causal. It does, however, construe seeing certain subsets of base properties for, say, injustice as—at least given appropriate understanding of their connection to moral properties—a kind of perception of a moral property; and this kind includes, as elements, such ordinary perceptions as seeing a violent seizure of woman's purse and hearing a loud cat-call aimed at preventing a priest from saying a prayer. Depending on our psychological constitution, we may be unable to witness these things without a phenomenal sense of wrongdoing integrated with our perceptual representation of the wrong-making facts.⁹ For many people, certain perceptible wrongs perpetrated in their presence are morally salient and unignorable. For many of us,

⁸ Here one might recall the element of felt demand cited by Maurice Mandelbaum (1955). See, e.g., pp. 48-49, where he speaks of situations of acute human need as "extorting" action from us.

⁹ For related work developing a partial phenomenology of moral perception see Horgan and Timmons 2008. They also explore phenomenological aspects of fittingness.

then, moral perceptions of certain salient moral wrongs committed in our field of vision or hearing are virtually unavoidable.

So far, the relation between moral perception and moral knowledge has been left implicit. More must be said about this. It is one thing to hold that there are genuine moral perceptions and another to take them to ground *knowledge* or justification regarding the moral phenomenon perceived. I defend both views but do not take the epistemic power of moral perception to depend, in a way it might seem to, on the perceiver's possessing a priori knowledge. One might think

[T]hat the epistemic credentials of moral phenomenal responses are derivative of subject's grasping ostensibly synthetic a priori entailments between moral properties and their non-moral grounds, which will presumably be a non-empirical matter. Hence, moral 'perceptual' knowledge looks to be crucially dependent upon substantive non-empirical knowledge (Cowan 2014: 1169).

Four points are crucial here. First, a sensitivity to the properties on which moral properties are grounded does not require believing the conceptually high-level propositions that link the former properties to the latter or grasping the relations that provide this link. Second, even if it did, my view of moral perception allows that these linking propositions and relations be empirical. Thirdly, regarding moral judgments, the ability of moral perception to justify these judgments does not depend on the modality of the underlying process by which the perception arises: the important thing is that the process be sufficiently justificatory or adequately evidential (say, reliable) and that the perceptual content (understood in terms of properties one is perceptually aware of) be relevant to that of the judgment. Fourth, sufficiency of justification or evidence here need not be taken to imply that the relevant grounds are "conclusive" evidence for the moral properties they indicate. The notion of moral perception leaves open just how tight a connection is required, though a merely accidental connection is ruled out. Viewing a stabbing may give even a child a basis for taking the assailant to be doing wrong, even if the child does not yet have the general belief that stabbings are wrong and even if their wrongness should be only empirically implied by their harmful character and the relevant probability is below 1.

Moral perception as a basis for moral knowledge

We have seen the difference between a moral perception of wrongdoing and a perception that is merely of an act that *is* wrong. We have also seen that moral perception does not entail the formation of moral belief or moral judgment. Still, although moral perception is not belief-entailing, it remains true that given how—if we understand moral phenomena—we see certain base properties that are sufficient for injustice, we sometimes perceptually know, and are perceptually justified in believing, that, for instance, one person is doing an injustice to another. We are thus justified in seeing the deed *as* an injustice. When we have such perceptual knowledge or perceptual justification, we are often properly describable as *seeing that* the first is doing an injustice to the second and, indeed, as knowing this.

This point does not imply that seeing *an injustice* is intrinsically conceptual, even for someone who has the relevant concepts. But seeing *that* an injustice is

done *is* conceptual. By contrast, merely seeing a deed that constitutes an injustice is possible for a dog or a prelingual child lacking moral concepts. Once the child acquires moral concepts, of course, the same physical perception might immediately yield a moral conceptualization of the act or indeed moral knowledge thereof. Even before developing of moral concepts, however, the child may be disturbed at seeing an injustice in the kind of act in question, say giving medicine to a fevered shivering male but not to a female in the same condition.

It seems quite possible and, from a developmental point of view, important that the sense of unfittingness in such unjust action may occur prior to conceptualization: the disparity in treatment might, in the relevant way, disturb the child. This sense of unfittingness might be a factor in moral development (a speculation I cannot pursue here). It is certainly possible that in many children there is a perception of disparity that, together with the sense of its unfittingness, reflects a discriminative sensitivity to differential treatment of persons—especially when it is, in Aristotelian terms, dissimilar treatment of similars—and this sense of unfittingness puts such children in a good position to develop the concept of injustice. If this picture is correct, moral perception may precede moral concept-formation and indeed may lie on a normal developmental route to it.

Where there is perception, one would think it should make sense to speak of possible misperception and even hallucination. Nothing said here implies that what perceptually seems to have a property actually has it, nor need every perceptual or intuitive seeming regarding a proposition—a (conscious) perceptual or intuitive impression of its truth—yield belief of the proposition it supports. A preplanned vigorous exchange between friends could be misperceived as intimidation. This might lead to a false moral belief. One might also hallucinate a brutal stabbing and thereby have a moral experience that is quasi-perceptual.

Moreover, even where one sees a wrong, such as a lie, and so might believe the perceptually knowable proposition that A lied to B, one might not initially have a sense that the action is wrong or, especially, see *that* it is wrong. Here seeing a wrong done may not even be a moral perception and certainly need not yield a propositional perception that the deed is wrong. Consider a different example. We might see a man we view as domineering shake the hand of another, smaller man of lower social status before a meeting and notice a hard squeeze, with the result of redness in the other's hand. It might not seem to us until later that we have witnessed an intimidation, though we could have been more alert and seen at the time that the former was wrongfully intimidating the latter. Moral perceptual seemings, moreover, may or may not be partly emotional, as where indignation is an element in them.

One way to explain such phenomena is to say that initially, one does not see the squeezing of the hand *as* domineering. If we take seeing *as* to be essential for moral perception, it is essential to distinguish at least three cases. First, one may see the act (or other thing) as having a property, where this is *ascriptive* and not conceptual: roughly taking the thing to have the property in a way that reflects the information that it has that property but does not require conceptualizing that property as such (if at all). Perhaps seeing an approaching dog as dangerous can be like this for a very young child, yielding perceptually guided avoidance behavior but not depending on any conceptualization of danger as implying possible harm. Second, there is conceptual seeing *as*; this would be il-

illustrated by viewing the hand-squeezing under a description such as ‘intimidating’ (though no verbalization is required). Third, seeing *as* may be doxastic, as where I say, to someone who took the hand squeezing to be intimidation, that I saw it as—roughly, viewed it as—intended to express enthusiasm. Doxastic seeing *as* is of course not factive, and even seeing an actual, inexcusable wrong is compatible with mistakenly seeing it as, say, justified self-defense. If moral perception entails seeing *as* at all (say, a kind of taking *as*), then in the simplest cases it requires only ascriptive seeing *as* and neither conceptual nor doxastic seeing *as*. Perhaps one way to describe sensing morally is to call it a special case of ascriptive seeing *as*.

To recapitulate what has been said so far, on my view of perception, it is a kind of experiential information-bearing relation between the object perceived (which may be an action or other event) and the perceiver. I have not offered a full analysis of this perceptual relation but have said enough to indicate how, even if moral properties are not themselves causal, they can be perceptible. We perceive them by perceiving properties that ground them, which, in turn, may or may not be perceived in the basic way in which we perceive some properties other than by perceiving still others. But the dependence of moral perception on non-moral perception does not imply an inferential dependence of all moral belief or moral judgment on non-moral belief or non-moral judgment (a counterpart point also applies in the aesthetic domain). Indeed, although perceiving moral properties, as where we see an injustice, commonly evokes belief, it need not. When it does, it may do so in a way that grounds that belief in perception of the properties of (say) the unjust act in virtue of which it *is* unjust. This kind of grounding explains how a moral belief arising in perception can constitute perceptual knowledge and can do so on grounds that are publicly accessible and, though not a guarantee of ethical agreement, a basis for it.

3. The Phenomenological Problem

The phenomenology of perception poses challenges for even the simplest cases of moral perception. One concern is representationality. I have stressed that the sense in which a moral perception represents, say, wrongdoing, is not cartographic. But ‘represent’ can still mislead. Consider this worry: “What we are trying to achieve here is a conception of a state that is genuinely perceptual, but has a moral content. The phenomenal properties of outrage [say, outrage upon viewing a brutal stabbing], even when added to a perception of the base properties, don’t seem to generate a content of that sort” (Dancy 2010: 102).¹⁰ A crucial issue here is what counts as “content.” In one sense, the percept represents the wrongdoing by virtue of representing the properties on which it is grounded: their presence a priori entails, by a kind of constitutive relation, the wrongdoing. But suppose content must be propositional. Then, on the natural assumption that one is acquainted with the content of one’s perception, some may take this propositional view of content to imply that the content must be believed or at least conceptualized by the perceiver. The demand for moral content taken to have this doxastic or conceptualistic implication is unreasonable: one can have a moral perception yet fail to believe or otherwise conceptualize a proposition that

¹⁰ A detailed and helpful response to my preceding paper of the same title.

is the (or a) content appropriate to what is perceived, such as that an act like the discriminatory delivery of injections to children is unjust.

The presentational aspect of perception

The idea I have proposed to account for the representative element in moral perception is not the view that, in moral perception, a proposition is believed or even conceptualized by the perceiver. Rather, (morally) perceiving (say) an injustice yields an experiential sense of it that is integrated with—not merely added to, as Dancy apparently imagines—perception of the base properties for this injustice. The integration may or may not involve emotion, but it must go beyond the phenomenology of merely perceiving the moral phenomenon or of that merely conjoined with a moral belief concerning that phenomenon. The integration must also appropriately reflect a relation between the felt moral element, such as injustice, and the properties grounding that element, such as patently unequal treatment.

A moral perception has its own phenomenology. It is not “neutral” for the perceiver. As I have stressed, a *moral perception* is not merely a *perception of a moral phenomenon*, such as injustice. I have even left open what (if any) conceptual sophistication—as opposed to discriminative sensitivity—is needed for moral perception, but even if, for normal moral agents, forming a belief is typical in seeing such a blatant case of wrongdoing as the brutal stabbing, conceptualization is not required for every case of moral perception. (I will return to this matter in the final two sections).

As to the question of how my account reflects the presentational element in perception,¹¹ I have answered this concern in part by noting that representation need be neither cartographic nor doxastic nor even conceptual. This is not to deny that *having* moral concepts might be needed for the discriminative phenomenal responses crucial in moral perception or indeed for the moral sensibility required for having moral perceptions. But even if, as I leave open, a measure of moral *conceptuality* is needed *to be* a moral perceiver, it does not follow that moral *conceptualization* is needed for every instance of moral perception. A necessary condition for achieving an ability need not be present on every occasion of its exercise. In any case, it is not at all obvious that experiencing a *presentation* of a moral phenomenon entails having a cartographic or, especially, a conceptual *representation* of it, and I do not think that it does.

Perception of emotion as an analogous case

Perceptions of emotions in others are a good analogy to moral perception. Here it is helpful to compare moral perception with seeing an angry outburst that warrants comments like ‘He’s furious!’ Shall we say that the anger is not really perceived because it is seen through perceiving constitutive manifestations of it, such as redness of countenance, screaming, and puffing? Granted, these can be mimicked by a good actor; but a well-made manikin may similarly mimic a liv-

¹¹ Terence Cuneo has raised this problem (for both me and for Thomas Reid) in his critical commentary on *Moral Perception* given at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association in 2014.

ing clothes model in a static pose. We should not conclude that living clothes models are never seen, or never seen directly. Why, then, may some injustices not be as perceptible as anger?

It is true that whereas anger is seen by its manifestations, moral wrongs are seen by seeing their grounds. But why should moral perception be conceived as limited to responses to effects rather than causes or grounds? More broadly, why should perception not be possible as a phenomenologically realized, often rich response to a variety of other reliable indicators or determinants of the perceived phenomenon? Let me develop this suggestion.

Suppose we think of perception as—in part—a kind of reception and processing of information that reaches one by a causal path from an information source to the mind, where the processing, as distinct from its resulting perceptual product in the mind, need not imply events in consciousness.¹² This conception certainly comports well with the role perception plays in providing everyday empirical knowledge of the natural world. On this conception, it should not matter whether the information impinging on the senses is determined by what is perceived, such as a flash of light, or, instead, by determiners or evidences of that. We can know a thing either by its effects that mark it or by its causes that guarantee it. Perceptual knowledge, like much other variety of routes by which the truth of its object is guaranteed.

4. Perception and Inference

I have taken the perception of emotion to illustrate how perception is possible when its object is perceived not by directly seeing it but by perceiving properties reliably related to it. Such cases also bear on the objection that moral perception is at least tacitly inferential, an objection posed to my view (if with qualifications) by Pekka Väyrynen.¹³ Imagine a context in which someone receives news of a setback due to someone else's surprising incompetence in their joint project. Then recall the example of seeing an angry outburst, which might be a response to such news. I have suggested that some moral phenomena, such as injustices, can be as perceptible as anger. More broadly, why should perception not be possible as a non-inferential response to a variety of other reliable indicators or determinants of the perceived phenomenon? The "function" of perception, one might plausibly suppose, is to enable us to navigate the world safely and skillfully.¹⁴ Fulfilling that function leaves open many ways in which information needed for such navigation can reach the mind and guide the agent.

A further concern of some philosophers is how much we represent, and can thereby know, perceptually. Väyrynen refers, for instance, to a debate concern-

¹² For discussion of the sense in which perception is information processing, Dretske 1981 is a good source. Processing information is more than its mere reception; see Burge 2010, e.g. pp. 299-301, for discussion of the both notions and points concerning Dretske's view.

¹³ In his critical commentary on *Moral Perception* at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association symposium on the book in 2014.

¹⁴ For a view of perception that has some similarities to mine but is more "practically" oriented and provides a conception of the navigation metaphor, see Bengson (forthcoming). He conceives perception as "fundamentally practical" in the sense that it renders perceivers "poised for action."

ing whether natural kind properties, such as water, can be “perceptually represented” and, apparently thinking that moral perceptual kinds would be similar, writes:

By Audi's own lights, for my response to what Harman's hoodlums [who are seen burning a cat] are doing to count as a *moral* perception, it should be appropriately causally grounded in *both* perceiving the hoodlums setting the cat on fire *and* suitable background beliefs relating those properties to moral wrongness. So the relevant responses should be construed as “theory-laden,” in that what background beliefs one holds can causally affect what experiences one has.¹⁵

I have three points here. First, granting that “background beliefs” may be essential for *possessing* at least certain of the moral concepts that may be needed to *have* the moral perceptions in question, it does not follow that either a moral perception or a belief it elicits need be “causally grounded in” or—especially, *justificationally* based on, such beliefs. I doubt both claims. Second, I grant that the beliefs one holds can “causally affect” what experiences one has, but this is consistent with my first point. Third, supposing that in some way perception, including certain instances of moral perception, can be *conceptually* laden, this does not entail that perception is specifically “theory-laden” if that term implies either that it *inferentially* depends on some belief or conception or that perception is distorted (or even biased) as a result of a theory or view accepted by the perceiver.

One might now wonder whether my case “relies on a fairly narrow notion of inference, on which a belief counts as being based on inference only if it is consciously drawn from premises that are explicitly noted as premises or evidence.”¹⁶ That notion is too narrow, and I do not rely on it. I have long held that a belief can be inferential, in the epistemic sense that it is *based on* another belief, even if the person does not episodically infer the propositional object of the former from that of the latter. A belief held *for* a reason, hence inferential in its basis, need not be a reasoned belief—one arrived at by reasoning. Moreover, my view is not that perceptual beliefs are non-inferential because they are not *elicited* by other beliefs, such as background beliefs, or by an episode of inference. Nor do I hold that perceptual beliefs must be *uninfluenced* by other beliefs. These are causal possibilities. My point is epistemic: perceptual beliefs are neither inferentially nor justificationally *based* on other beliefs and hence their *justification* does not rest on that of other beliefs.¹⁷ This is important for understanding their normative status. It is also part of what supports their role in grounding the objectivity of ethics. Perceptual beliefs are in a sense ground-level. Some grounds are firmer than others, and some people find solid grounds more readily than others do, say in constructing a justification of their views. But perceptual grounds are normally at least objective in being intersubjectively available.

¹⁵ Pekka Väyrynen, commentary on a draft of my “Moral Perception and Moral Knowledge,” Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, 2009, ms. p. 4.

¹⁶ Väyrynen, *op. cit.*, ms p. 4.

¹⁷ This point does not entail that perceptual justification is indefeasible, or even that it cannot be *negatively* dependent, in the way defeasibility implies, on the perceiver's beliefs. This point is explained in chs. 8-9 of Audi 2010.

It is also essential to see here that a belief, and especially a perceptual one, need not arise from inference just because the believer *has* premises for it among the person's beliefs. When we do infer a proposition or engage in reasoning that leads to our inferring something from one or more premises, the inference takes us mentally along a path from what is represented by one or more psychological elements to what is represented by another such element.¹⁸ It is true that we can traverse such a path without noticing it, but the mind also has its shortcuts. The territory may be familiar; our destination may be in plain view; and through the power of the imagination or some other informationally sensitive faculty we can sometimes go directly to places we would ordinarily have to reach by many steps. Perception is often like imagination in this and, without bypassing consciousness entirely, can take us from information acquired directly by vision to a belief that might, under studied conditions—or less favorable conditions—also have been reached by inference.

One source, then, of a tendency to posit inferences underlying the formation of perceptual belief is assimilating information processing that does not require inference to propositional processing that does. Another source of the tendency to posit inferences in perception is the resistance to foundationalism of one kind of another. On any plausible conception of a foundation, an inferential belief is not foundational, whereas perceptions and perceptual beliefs may be.

One manifestation of resistance to seeing the import of this moderate foundationalist conception is rejection (e.g. by Dancy) of the view that “the primary, or basic object of perceptual awareness must be things for the sensing of which no training, knowledge or experience is necessary” (Dancy 2010: 111). I agree that at least in that unqualified form this view is a mistake. But I do not hold it, nor need any moderate foundationalist. Moderate foundationalism in the theory of perception implies that in every perception there are some elements basic (so in a sense “foundational”) on the occasion; it does not imply that there are some elements basic in every perception. Moreover, in some perceptions, such as moral ones, the perceptible property—such as wrongness—is simply not accessible except through base elements that are partly constitutive of the property. It is surprising that Dancy says, e.g., that “one can perceive a resultant property, the dangerousness of the cliff ... without perceiving the features that make the cliff dangerous” (105). Surely one must see the steep slope or smooth, slippery-looking texture to *perceive* the dangerousness. Again, we have *constitutive* base properties. A perception of the dangerousness of a cliff, as opposed to one mere-

¹⁸ This metaphorical statement does not entail that inference (in the process sense) is propositional and roughly equivalent to ‘reasoning’: a kind of mental tokening of an argument. A detailed statement of my broadly propositional view of inference is provided in chs. 5 and 7-8 of Audi 2006. Some philosophers and psychologists use ‘inference’ more broadly. See, e.g., Green 2010: “The inferences I speak of here will not in general consist of the derivation of one proposition from a set of others. Rather... they will more commonly take the form of a positioning of an object in egocentric space, an attribution of absolute and relative trajectories, and so forth” (49). On this view, inferences need not be drawn, or figure in consciousness as reasoning does, or be valid or invalid, or voluntary; indeed they need not constitute *doings* at all. I am not arguing that perception cannot involve inference if the term is used in a technical sense with the suggested breadth.

ly of a dangerous cliff, might be analogous to a moral perception of wrongdoing, as opposed to a perception that is merely of an action that is wrong.

5. Perception and Cognition

That perception is in some way entwined with cognition, at least in normal adults, is rarely questioned. But the intimacy of the relation in some cases, such as seeing that one person wronged another, does not entail that perception is intrinsically cognitive. How, in broad terms, should the relation between perception and cognition be conceived in the moral case?

Object perception, aesthetic perception, and moral seemings

In exploring the relation between perception and cognition, we might recall the presentationality question. In considering this relation, Cuneo says, “When I perceive that the cup before me is black, the presentational character is presumably... explained by the cup and its blackness presenting itself to me... there would be a worrisome disanalogy between paradigm cases of perception, on the one hand, and moral perception...”¹⁹

The first thing to be said here is that Cuneo’s example is misleading: cups are physical objects. Perception of them can be, in my terms, cartographic and even pictorial: from one’s percepts (roughly, the internal, sensory elements in perception) one could reproduce their shape, extension, color, and so forth. Perceiving them is like perceiving visible base properties for moral phenomena such as stabbings. The problem is not that the perception is *objectual*, being of a “thing” rather than a property or proposition; the problem is that the thing is of the wrong kind to sustain the objection.

Second, a better analogy for moral perception is aesthetic perception, such as seeing delicacy in a drawing or gracefulness in a sculpture. Think of the delicacy of a finely inked drawing of a bird on a limb. We see its delicacy in good part by seeing, in a certain way, its lines, design, and coloration. Now think of the violent backstabbing of an old man in a dimly lit parking lot just as he opens his car’s door. We see the wrong in good part by seeing the violent stabbing. In the language of presentation, we might say the wrong presents itself to us, in a certain way, as the violent-stabbing-in-non-threatening-circumstances—a property that partly constitutes the wrong; and the full presentation of that wrong is this percept integrated with our disapprobative shock or distress as reflecting our moral sensibility.

A third point of disanalogy between the case of the coffee cup and that of a basic moral perception turns on the differing forms of the two cases. I have repeatedly stressed that simply perceiving an object does not entail having beliefs about it—as opposed to dispositions to form them. But the coffee cup example ignores this in a way that may obscure the kind of presentation I have sought to capture. I reject Cuneo’s unqualified view that “When I perceive the black coffee cup... I *have the impression* that there is a black coffee cup on my desk.” This view reflects a tendency of many philosophers to *propositionalize* perceptual ex-

¹⁹ Terence Cuneo, commentary on *Moral Perception*, Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association (2014), ms p. 4.

perience. I would grant here that one has the impression *of* a black coffee cup; but—as where we are intently looking for something else—we may *not* have an accompanying belief *that* there is a cup. Note, moreover, that the propositional impression Cuneo reports is not even appropriate to the case in which (a) I see the cup, (b) it presents itself to me in a normal way, but (c) I *take* it to be a short vase. Yet that is a still clear case of my seeing the cup—even of clearly seeing it. Clarity of our vision of an object does not entail recognition of it.

In the moral case, we could speak of *perceptual moral seemings*, thus using a terminology familiar in epistemological literature. These are usually conceived as *propositional* but still not belief-entailing impressions that something is so, but I have left room for them to be *property impressions*, as with a sense of A's wronging B—say, where there is a subtle intimidation. It is quite open to me to say here (what is implicit in *Moral Perception*) that a moral phenomenon can present itself either non-propositionally as a phenomenally definite, normally valenced, seeming *of* wrongdoing or, less basically, as a propositional impression *that* (say) one person is wronging another. Even when such a propositional impression occurs, however, the subject need only be disposed to believe the proposition in question. The impression is conceptual, but not necessarily doxastic.

“Cognitive penetration”

Another aspect of the relation between perception and cognition should be considered here:

[C]ognitive penetration. . . [is] very roughly, the modification of perceptual representational content by states in the subject's cognitive system, where this can include, e.g., beliefs, desires, emotions, and intuitions. Nothing that Audi says in *Moral Perception* rules out this interpretation of the integration that distinguishes moral perception from mere perception of a moral phenomenon (Cowan 2014: 1170).²⁰

In considering both ethics and aesthetics, I have presupposed some basic perceptual capacities, and it is true that I leave open the possibility of some kind of cognitive penetration in either moral or aesthetic perception. I see no serious difficulty presented by this openness, provided it is not taken to imply that moral perception *must* be conceptual or must entail some constituent belief. Consider the aesthetic case first.

Suppose that perception is subject to cognitive penetration, which, in aesthetics, has been described as the view that “cognitive states like beliefs or concepts about art causally influence experiences of art.” The influence is thought to be deep, in the sense that “what you know or think about art may affect how an artwork perceptually appears to you” (Stokes 2014: 27),²¹ and this may be manifested in at least two ways: “expertise affects the supervenience base [presumably the grounding properties] of aesthetic properties by affecting low-level phenomenal content. Or, if one admits high-level content, expertise causes the

²⁰ Here he cites McPherson 2012. Cf. Siegel 2010, e.g. p. 10.

²¹ See also Stokes forthcoming.

perceptual representation of high-level aesthetic properties” (Stokes 2014: 29).²² Several questions should be distinguished here if we are to see whether the same kind of cognitive influence undermines my view of moral perception.²³

First, is “expertise”—or moral sensitivity, to take the more common counterpart in ethics—exhausted by “what one knows or thinks about art” (or morality), or does it require familiarity with artworks at the level required for experiencing them in an aesthetically sensitive way? Second, does affecting the base involve changing the consequentiality relation or, instead, changing what base properties for an aesthetic property are perceived? Third, does the main question we must address concern causing or, by contrast, *enabling* the perception of “high-level aesthetic properties”? These questions should be taken in turn, and what we find will facilitate a further comparison between aesthetic and moral properties.

In both art and ethics, expertise is in part a matter of familiarity with the relevant phenomena and, related to this, of *knowing how*—how to appreciate, view, interpret, evaluate, and the like. Expertise is not purely cognitive. Given this fact, the evidences of expertise affecting experience of art and moral phenomena—even ordinary perceptual experience—are not in themselves evidences of purely cognitive effects. Suppose, however, that cognitive elements (or other intentional elements, including conative ones embodying or entailing desires) affect *what* elements in the scope of one’s sensory experience are actually perceived. Perhaps, e.g., I believe that melodic inversion is an element in some of Mozart’s piano works. I may then listen for it or simply be more likely to notice and respond to it when I hear these works. This suggests at least two possibilities. One is hearing something without noticing or, more important, responding to it. A second is not hearing something at all. Overcoming the first condition is a kind of perceptual enrichment; overcoming the second might be called perceptual enabling. In relation to either possibility, cognitive and other intentional elements may make one more aesthetically responsive. The parallel point apparently applies in the moral case. There might, to be sure, be a biasing influence of certain beliefs (or other intentional elements), but there need not be.

Consider also viewing a painting, where one knows one is viewing an original by Leonardo. This may intensify one’s attention to expected features, perhaps with the result of perceptual enrichment, say finer perceptual discrimination in a sense implying actually seeing more. But the aesthetic experience one then has is as such no different from what it would be without the cognitive “cause.” It might, however, differ—or at least its interpretation by the viewer might differ—in being biased by preoccupation with the thought of the master’s technique. The question of bias brings us to the matter of consequentiality of aesthetic (and moral properties) on other kinds of properties. At least in the moral case, these grounding properties are “natural” properties or at any rate non-moral ones, and they are at a lower level. Now compare the Leonardo case with one in which we observe someone we know is thoroughly immoral interacting with another person. This knowledge will affect our attention and our ex-

²² Supervenience is a weaker relation than grounding (consequentiality) but the term is often used for the latter, as I assume it is here. An explanatory, determination relation is likely intended, but is not strictly speaking entailed even by strong supervenience.

²³ In this paragraph and the next few I draw on Audi 2014.

pectations regarding the person. We may then form beliefs we would not otherwise have formed, but our perception might not be different. Attention, however, is crucial in, for instance, *how much* we see. Thus, one possibility is that our knowledge of a person or thing results in our having more or sharper perceptions than we would otherwise have. This is a contingent matter. It appears, then, that cognitive penetration and similar external influences on perceptual experience may or may not imply that aesthetic or moral perception is *necessarily* biased by certain kinds of beliefs (perhaps not kinds held by everyone) or, as is well known, contingently and, one would hope, remedially biased.

Examples like the kind I have cited show that one's beliefs may, in certain cases, influence what one perceives, whether objects or properties. The examples suggest that, for some aesthetic or moral perceptions, certain experiences or indeed cognitions are needed to have those perceptions at all. But the examples do not show that moral perceptions *must* be influenced by one's beliefs or that moral perceptions are inferential. They also do not show that such perceptions are necessarily biased, in the sense that one would not, for instance, see wrongdoing if one did not *antecedently* believe that the kind of behavior one is viewing is wrong. Even if that should be true for some cases, however, if there can be perception and, through it, perceptual knowledge, of a moral proposition that confirms a general moral belief, the possibility of moral objectivity and of general moral knowledge receives support.

The support that the possibility of moral perception provides for the objectivity of ethics is perhaps clearest when a moral perception is a response to an a priori and, in some sense, basic ground of a moral property, such as a stabbing or a lie or, on the positive side, the bleeding of an injured child which yields a perception of a moral obligation to help. But suppose one perceives a wrong by hearing an insult of a friend. It may be only because one knows the conventions of the culture in which the insult is delivered that one is perceptually sensitive to the insult-property as a kind of injury or degradation and so, by virtue of a reliable connection between the insult-property and harm as a basic ground of prima facie wrongness, one can hear the wrong. Granted, one could in such a case infer that a wrong was done; but given a sensibility informed by relevant knowledge or experience, moral perception is possible and may provide non-inferential moral knowledge of wrongdoing. This seems to me a kind of *cognitive empowerment* affecting moral sensibility rather than a "cognitive penetration" of perception, but the latter phenomenon has been described with a considerable breadth that may imply its applicability to the former. In any case, perception may yield directly for some observers what is available to others only by inference.

Perception may also be a response to perceptible elements that are themselves manifestations of basic grounds of moral properties, such as injuries, rather than *instances* of basic grounds. Familiarity with conventions is not necessarily required to respond to these manifestations. The higher the level of the perception, the greater the number of layers it may embody, and conventions need not provide the connections that make possible a high-level perception. Seeing a forest fire approaching a child may yield a perception of obligation to rescue; the fire indicates a probability of a kind of suffering—an endangerment—but it is the projected suffering that, as intrinsically *reason-providing*, is a basic (or more basic) ground of the obligation of beneficence. If one saw someone lighting a cigarette near a haystack on which the child was playing, the per-

ception of obligation—for instance, sensing immediately the need to intervene—would likely be still higher level, being one remove further in discerned endangerment of the child than with the threatening forest fire; but it could have the same ultimate basis, and one could non-inferentially see that one must help.

6. Moral Perception, Realism, and Rationalism

Given that perception is factive, it would be at best implausible to hold that one can see, for instance, A's wrongdoing toward B, if there is no wrongdoing. To be sure, noncognitivists could argue that the locution 'S sees A's wrongdoing' simply expresses a higher-order moral attitude: a kind of negative attitude toward the behavior one takes S to see, which in turn S would "describe" by expressing a negative moral attitude through the sentence 'A wronged B'. With enough ingenuity, noncognitivism can be defended for the realm of moral perception as for other domains in which apparent moral facts are expressed. I make no attempt here to refute noncognitivism, but simply seek to provide a more plausible view. Moral realism, then, is presupposed by my theory.

Realism, however, need not be naturalistic, and I do not presuppose naturalism. My view is that moral properties are not natural properties, but if they should be, my overall theory of moral perception is easier, not more difficult, to defend. For if moral properties are natural, I doubt that it need even be argued that they have explanatory power or that moral perception is in part causally constituted. It is difficult to think of any natural properties of spatiotemporal entities, and especially of actions, that even appear to lack causal power. To reiterate part of my view of moral perception, I have argued that the "process" of morally perceiving something is causal in the way perception must be, but the causal work (insofar as it is done by properties) is apparently done by the properties (possibly tropes) on which moral properties are grounded, not by those properties themselves.

One might object to countenancing even the reality of non-causal properties—or at least non-causal properties that do not characterize abstract entities—on the ground that there are none among natural properties. It may well seem that it is only normative properties, for instance moral, aesthetic, and epistemic properties such as being justified, that are supposed to be real, non-natural, and non-causal. I do not see the objection as decisive even if it is true. But is it true? Consider shape, which is a natural property. A thing has shape not brutally, but on the basis of such causal properties as being spherical, which affects, for instance, its movement tendencies; yet shape itself does not seem causal. If it is, that is on the basis of its grounding properties, but if a property can be causal only on the basis of the causal power of its grounding properties, this would presumably hold for moral properties as well.

The case of shape in relation to particular shapes suggests the question whether we might perhaps say that wrongness, obligatoriness, and other normative properties are determinables. I am not arguing for this, though it is well worth pursuing. There is some analogy (as well as disanalogy) between moral properties and, say, shape and color; but my main point here is that there seem to be real properties even in the natural realm that do not have causal power yet figure in causal relations much as moral properties do. This does not require taking moral properties to have causal power or, if one does attribute it to them, conceiving them as determinables.

It is also true that my overall ethical theory incorporates rationalism, and I have appealed to the a priori and necessary connection between the grounds of moral properties and those properties themselves to explain the reliability of the process connecting, say, wrongdoing with the perception of it. But I would stress here that such a high level of reliability is not required for perception. Similarly, anger does not entail, much less self-evidently entail, the occurrence of the behavioral manifestations by which we know that someone else is angry, but this does not (for non-skeptics) prevent there being a reliable enough connection to make possible perceptual knowledge of anger. I deny, then, that “that the epistemic credentials of moral phenomenal responses [their ability to evidence, e.g., wrongdoing] are derivative of subject’s grasping ostensibly synthetic a priori entailments between moral properties and their non-moral grounds” (Cowan 2014: 1169). It is a determination relation that moral perception must appropriately respond to; the modality of the relation is not crucial for the response.

Suppose, for the sake of argument that there is only an empirical and contingent connection between moral grounding properties and the moral properties they ground. Why should this undermine my view that moral perception is non-inferential?²⁴ I see no good reason to claim that it would. But should we consider knowledge of anger inferential in the kinds of cases I have noted, in which the occasion on which perception occurs makes anger expectable and the person observed blows up with words and gestures appropriate to the occasion, say, a tipsy guest’s carelessly breaking a valuable platter? Surely not. Indeed, we recognize platters, vases, and even trees by properties such as color and shape that do not a priori entail their presence. We need not posit inference here, rather than simply grant that some perceptions occur on the basis of others that might be called (relatively) elementary constitutive perceptions.

7. Perception, Conception, and Perceptual Belief

It should be obvious that I do not take perception of objects and events to be intrinsically conceptual. This is not to deny that, for normal adults in many situations, perception of objects is not in general possible without conceptualizing the objects in question. I myself cannot see a china platter on a dining table in full view at dinner hour without conceiving it in some way that is appropriate to its character as dinnerware. Most of us could not see a man slapping his wife’s face upon her smiling at a deft and well-dressed waiter without conceiving of it as wrong. But the commonness of such perceptual patterns does not require concluding that perception can never be non-conceptual. It is indeed at best difficult to explain how conceptualization arises in human life in the first place if perception without it is impossible. Must we, for instance, posit innate concepts of platters, which are as visible to animals and to children just learning a language as they are to adults? And if the couple’s three-year-old child, seeing the incident, bursts into tears and blurts out ‘Daddy, don’t do that!’, must we deny that this could be an indication of the inchoate moral sensibility that presumably lays important groundwork for development of moral concepts?

It is a contingent matter how *conceptually entwined* a person’s perceptual experience is. I grant that for some of us moral perception tends to be entwined—

²⁴ This is suggested by Cowan (2014: 1169).

or *suffused*, one might say—with moral conceptions: for some of us, human life, or at least human relations, occur as if in a morally constituted framework. This is perhaps not unexpected in those who approach most human relations with standing moral concerns. Is justice being done? Is there an undertone of racism? Is the man condescending to the woman? But perception itself does not have to occur within the constraints created by such questions. There is clear sunlight as well as the colored light that puts us on guard against distortion. Speaking without metaphor, we might say that there are ways of progressively freeing ourselves of the necessity to bring what we see (hear, touch, etc.) under any concepts. Some ways are more successful than others, but the possibility confirms my view that conceptuality should not figure in the analysis of perception, however likely it is for certain persons or certain kinds of occasions of perception.

It is worth reiterating that the non-conceptuality of simple perception does nothing to undermine the view that perceptual belief—at least propositional belief—is conceptual. We cannot see (and thereby believe) *that* the platter shattered upon hitting the floor without a concept of a platter and of shattering. This point must be taken in relation to another: much of what we see—and certainly much of what philosophers find worth discussing in the visible domain—is such that we do in fact form perceptual beliefs about it. This helps to explain why philosophers so often, if only implicitly, take perception to be conceptual. Still, although perceptual beliefs are intrinsically conceptual, perception is not.

Let me apply these points to moral perception. It is appropriate that we be interested in and sensitive to moral phenomena in our lives. We should be indignant at the violent husband, pleased on seeing someone resist telling what would be a self-serving lie, and relieved when someone chairing a meeting makes a sincere-sounding apology after overlooking a hand raised to ask a question. These may all be cases of moral perception and so have an appropriate phenomenology, but they are likely to yield some cognition and, accordingly, to embody or, in some intimate way, yield conceptualization. For normal morally constituted adults, it would be rare that the kinds of perceptions just illustrated do not yield conceptualization, but I have given other examples in which the perception precedes conceptualization, as where a kind of activation of our sensibility yields a moral response before the perceiver recognizes what is seen under some moral concept. Another illustration is subtle intimidation, which seems a too frequently encountered case in which the perceptual sense of wrongdoing precedes the judgment that it is occurring. Another kind of case can occur with tiny children. Seeing cruelty by a babysitter may frighten a child and create a sense of something that should not be done. It is at least possible that fear and aversion can develop into a discriminative distress that represents a sense of wrongdoing. The child can be upset by the babysitter's causing a tearful outburst by slapping a sibling, in a way the child is not upset by a qualitatively similar outburst when the toddler is comparably pained and equally distressed by stubbing its toe. It is an empirical question just when and how such moral development occurs, but it is at least possible that a child's moral sensibility develops to some degree before—and paves the way for—acquisition of moral concepts.

Conclusion

Moral perception is an element in much human experience. It is possible for any normal person but, like aesthetic experience, occurs less in some people than in others, even when they have highly similar perceptions of morally significant phenomena. It is not inferential, but facilitates inference; it is not doxastic, but creates, in those with sufficient understanding, dispositions to believe moral propositions that it justifies; and it is not necessarily biased by beliefs of perceivers even if it is also not immune to influence by their cognitions and other elements in their psychology. It may or may not yield emotion or be caused by emotion; it may or may not yield intuition or judgment or be caused by them; and it may or may not motivate action or be caused by action. But it often yields moral knowledge and thereby grounds an element of objectivity in ethics. It is not the only route to moral knowledge, but it is a route that different people can traverse in the search for mutual understanding and in the hope of agreement on the moral questions that are central for coexistence.²⁵

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²⁵ This paper is dedicated to Rosaria Egidi, a founder of the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy and a philosopher whose work and conversations have been among the elements inspiring this paper. For valuable comments and stimulating discussion of the issues (since the publication of *Moral Perception*—which acknowledges many others), I also want to thank Fabio Bacchini, who, for the Journal, commented in detail on the paper, Carla Bagnoli, Daniel Crowe, Terence Cuneo, Scott Hagaman, David Killoren, Justin McBrayer, Sabine Roeser, Dennis Whitcomb, and Pekka Väyrynen. The paper also benefited from many comments by John Crosby when an early version was presented at Franciscan University and by Cheshire Calloun, Frank Jackson, and Nicholas Southwood when a later version was presented at the Australian National University.

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Towards Reconciling Two Heroes: Habermas and Hegel

Robert B. Brandom

University of Pittsburgh

Abstract

I describe my engagement with Habermas's ideas, and sketch a way of reading of Hegel that I take to be consonant with the deepest lessons I have learned from Habermas. I read Hegel as having a social, linguistic theory of normativity, and an exclusively retrospective conception of progress and the sense in which history exhibits teleological normativity.

Keywords: Habermas, Hegel, normativity, discourse ethics, history.

Part One

I first heard Jürgen Habermas's name more than 30 years ago, in the Spring of 1979, when I had just arrived at the University of Pittsburgh as a new Assistant Professor. Those who know my Doktorvater Richard Rorty will not be surprised to hear that, although his own masterpiece *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* had just appeared, rather than talking about that, at the time he was much more interested in passing on his enthusiasm for Habermas's book *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Following his recommendation, I read that work—with mounting excitement. It did wonderful, original things with lines of thought I had always been interested in, but had never seen how to integrate with my central interest in the nature of language and its role in our lives. It was able to do so in part by offering a reading of huge swathes of the philosophical tradition since Kant. The ambition and sheer power of the work exhilarated and inspired me then—as they still do today. More than anything else, I think it was the invigorating prospect of a new way of thinking about how philosophy of language could legitimately be thought of as “first philosophy” that caught my imagination.

The familiar starting-point is the conviction that the most important event in human history—simply the biggest thing that ever happened to us (or, alternatively, that we ever did)—is the rolling and still on-going transition from traditional to modern societies, practices, and modes of thought. (If someone wants to hold out instead for the antecedent advent of civilization—large-scale cities, organized agriculture, the accompanying specialization and division of labor,

along with the elicitation of labor surplus to the requirements of subsistence—I won't insist that we choose between these contenders.) The early modern philosophers from Descartes to Kant all contributed to the development of the theoretical, ideological fighting-faith of modernity. But no-one before Hegel explicitly took that titanic transformation and the unity of its various aspects as his central, organizing philosophical topic.¹

The principal aim of the Enlightenment was not only to begin to articulate the new sort of understanding characteristic of modernity, but also to say why the whole business is, or at least would be, on the whole a Good Thing, a progressive step in our development. In this regard, the Anglophone analytic philosophical tradition has been, to its credit, a loyal heir of the Enlightenment: a cheerleader for modernity, at least in its intellectual guise as empirical (paradigmatically natural) science, and (though perhaps to a lesser extent) its political guise as liberal political democracy. So was Hegel. But he took a different branch of the paths that diverge here. For he takes seriously not only the Enlightenment, but also its Romantic critics. (In a telling letter written while he was still a student at the Tübingen Stift, he expresses his enthusiastic endorsement of Kant's *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, which he and Hölderlin and Schelling had just read, but ends his account with a caution: "Still, Phantasie, Herz, and Sinnlichkeit must not be sent empty away.") Of course he does not, as the Romantics did, yearn for a return to premodern ways of life (in spite of his admiration of Greek *Sittlichkeit*). Modernity for him always represented the only way forward. And he was a ferocious critic of the anti-intellectualist side of Romanticism. He was, if you like, a romantic rationalist, but a rationalist nonetheless. His synthetic rationalism had to find a place for art, as well as science, for desire, feeling, and power, as well as reason, for the value of individuality as well as that of universality. But it could not allow thought to be displaced in favor of "a warm mist of incense and a distant jangling of bells," as he saw the Romantics as prone to do. In the end, for him, "on he who looks rationally on the world, the world looks rationally back."

Four related commitments distinguish the road Hegel pioneered from that which leads from Kant's Enlightenment to that of Russell, Carnap, and Quine. First, he was determined to understand the *unity* that emerges from the interrelations between the various aspects of incipient modernity: not only the intellectual (including scientific), but also the economic, political, bureaucratic-institutional, civic, and literary-and-artistic dimensions. Second, he was convinced that *philosophy* had something special to say about the unity the process of modernity exhibits across those various aspects. Third, he was concerned to understand also the shadows cast by the newly dawning light of the modern—some of which had been seen already, however indistinctly, by the Romantics. The shiny new apple came complete with worms, and the worms were not merely contingent interlopers, but an integral part of the ecology of the apple. Fourth, he embraced the challenge of describing the essential play of light and dark in the chiaroscuro of modernity, of diagnosing the ineluctable pathologies that accompanied its new-found health, in such a way as to lead to a therapy. This is the challenge of limning the shape of a second progressive transformation, of the same order of magnitude as that from traditional to modern society and thought. It is the challenge of making visible the outlines of a third, post-

¹ On this topic, see Pippin 1997.

modern age, forged in the fires of lessons learned from what was gained and what was lost in the transition to the second. (Rejecting the reactionary irrationalist strands of Romantic nay-saying to Enlightenment, while accepting many of their accompanying more positive critiques, Hegel sees the task as requiring a vision of the post-modern that is also post-romantic—a criterion of adequacy that the later Heidegger and Derrida, for instance, might well be taken not to satisfy.) None of these projects and commitments finds a place in the philosophical problematic characteristic of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. ('Modernity' is not one of its words.)

Already in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas showed, it seemed to me, the way to a reconciliation of these traditions. Two of the ideas he develops there provide the key. The first is the thought that the distinctively modern form of power consists in systematically distorted structures of communication and reflection—the discursive practices within which we both articulate our self-understandings and legitimate and appraise our practices and institutions. The second is the thought that, perversely intimate, invisible, and (so) insidious as these deformations of the practices of giving and asking for reasons are, they nonetheless open up the possibility of new forms of opposition to power that is so encoded. For they make room for *critical* discourses with an *emancipatory* potential. These are idioms or vocabularies that make explicit the implicit commitments, permissions, and prohibitions (including, but not limited to inferential ones) that give normative, purportedly rational, force to various structures of power. As explicit claims, those commitments, permissions, and prohibitions emerge from the shadowy background into the rational light of day, where they can be challenged and need to be defended—where reasons for them can be asked for, offered, and assessed. Emancipatory critical discourses hold out the prospect of giving concrete content, and so real force to the biblical injunction: "Know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

Hegel invents the notion of (though not the term for) 'ideology' that initiates this tradition. Especially in the *Phenomenology*, he explores the interplay between the power-laden asymmetric recognitive relations that articulate various modern social practices (residual structures of mastery, aspiring to independence, which is to say authority, without correlative dependence, which is to say responsibility), on the one hand, and the expressive inadequacies of the fundamental concepts in terms of which the self-conscious individual selves who stand in such recognitive relations and deploy those concepts understand themselves and those practices and institutions, on the other. The other great unmaskers of the nineteenth century, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud principal among them, built on his ideas to expose the extent to which modernity, whose self-conception essentially turned on putting reason where power had been, just as essentially expressed itself by making reason a mere form power can take: the modern mask it wears.

One natural response to such critical discourses is to find in them grounds for suspicion of the very concept of 'reason' the Enlightenment had put at the center of the ideology it crafted for the project of modernity. Perhaps the Platonic distinction between persuasion and verbal coercion—the very idea of a normative "force of the better reason" to be distinguished in principle from lower, merely rhetorical forms of inducing conviction—is itself an illusion. Perhaps what we are pleased to call 'reason' is *just* the distinctively modern form of power relations: politer, but no less coercive, and both less honest (in denying that

power is being exercised at all) and more all-encompassing (because penetrating and permeating the discursive core of what the self-conscious modern selves who are subjected to that power are) than premodern forms. A great deal of Foucault's work can be read as developing such a line of thought.² Thought of this way, diagnosing ideological functions of various modern discourses, practices, and institutions shows up as a distinctive form of the Romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism.

Besides this romantic use of the idea of 'ideology', though, there is also a post-romantic, rationalist use of it. Adorno and Horkheimer, for instance, offered an account of the modern ideological consequences that result from identifying reason exclusively with its *instrumental* species. The problem is taken to lie not in reason as such, but in a stunted and contracted conception of it. That thought in turn opened up a space within which one might hope to carry forward the Enlightenment vision of reason as a countervailing force to mere power, hence not as simply one more form among others that such power can assume, provided a sufficiently rich and comprehensive conception of 'reason' can be crafted. That is the virgin territory Habermas has committed his labors to improve, and in which he has erected his theoretical edifice.

A central pillar of that edifice is his transposition of the issue raised by the unmaskers of ideology into a thoroughly *linguistic* key. (The twentieth century has justly been called the century of language in philosophy—no less in the continental than in the analytic tradition.) The appraisal and legitimation of social practices and institutions has become in the modern era a wholly discursive affair. That entails that unmasking an ideology is a metadiscursive matter of diagnosing systematic distortions in discursive structures: deformations of communicative action. These will have, to be sure, broadly pragmatic as well as narrowly semantic manifestations. But it is principally to the *language* we speak, the *concepts* we use, and the social-practical context in which we do so that we must look to understand distinctively modern forms of unfreedom, as well as for the tools to combat them.

One of Habermas's most basic contributions, it seems to me, is his idea that this insight presents a point of contact between these large, weighty cultural issues and the sort of detailed, painstaking work in the philosophy of language that has been pursued with single-minded precision by the analytic tradition. Here ground-level concerns, of the sort that have relatively clear-cut criteria of success and failure, can be pursued by technical means with the realistic expectation that they can do important work (in the strict sense physics gives that term: force applied through distance) in addressing heavy-duty philosophical and more broadly cultural concerns. If understanding the relations between reason and ideology is one of the principal philosophical tasks of our age, then there is indeed a case to be made for a suitably broadened (especially along the pragmatic dimension) philosophy of language as "first philosophy." And it is a case that is very different from and more comprehensive than the much narrower defense Michael Dummett offers for that claim.³ While Dummett's brief is

² I think there is reason to believe that by the end of his life, Foucault had come around to acknowledging that, for all its defects, the modern form of power masquerading as reason was still a signal advance on premodern forms.

³ Originally, in Dummett 1973.

addressed exclusively to philosophical researchers, Habermas's makes a claim on contemporary intellectuals more generally.

This approach provides a much-needed bridge between traditions that are motivated by different perceptions of the principal philosophic issues that center on understanding us as rational animals.⁴ The analytic tradition has been substantially focused on—some would say obsessed with—the issue of naturalism: the relations between reasons and causes, between rational norms and causal compulsion. The tradition that Hegel initiated has been worried instead (*inter alia*, to be sure) about the issue of ideology: whether and how there is a distinction to be drawn between genuinely *rational* norms and those that express various power relations in the guise of rational ones, the distinction between reason and interests, between rational persuasion and strategic manipulation. The one tradition is concerned to understand *logos* by means of its relation to *physis*, while the other is concerned to understand *logos* by means of its relation to *mythos*.⁵ (Putting things this way underscores, I hope, that there is no underlying conceptual necessity to choose between the sort of illumination to be gained from considering the one contrast and that to be gained by considering the other.)

Kant had the idea (and Hegel follows him down this path) that a post-theological conception of distinctively *moral* reasons could be built out of the idea that (to put the point in my terms rather than his) certain principles of conduct make *explicit*, in the form of rules, normative commitments that are *implicit* in our engaging in discursive practices at all—simply in our talking and thinking, judging and acting intentionally. The bindingness of any commitments discovered to have that status would be unconditional for us *as* ones who judge and act. (Of course, in another sense these are hypothetical, merely contingent commitments, since we could renounce our discursiveness and revert to merely animal sentience. As Sellars says: “One could always, of course, simply *not speak*—but only at the cost of having nothing to say.” Sapience-suicide is not, for deep reasons ultimately of *semantics*, an option one can ever have a *reason* to adopt.) One of the central ideas that binds the various German Idealists together is that the implicit structural *pragmatic* commitments that form the necessary background against which any *semantically* significant ground-level commitments (whether cognitive or practical) can be undertaken form in principle the basis for a philosophical ethics and a corresponding politics. It has been one of Habermas's tasks in our own time to transpose that thought into a *linguistic* key, and to develop it in the light of the results of philosophy's more than century-long fascination with language. This is his *discourse ethics*, and his idea for founding political theory on an account of the nature of communicative action.

Already in the seventies, then, I saw Habermas as putting on the table three big, interlocking ideas that significantly raised the philosophical stakes and the potential payoff, and set substantial new criteria of adequacy for the philosophy of language as it had been pursued in Anglophone analytic circles. These are:

- The idea that modernity both brings out into the light of explicit day the issue of the need to *legitimate* claims to authority, and pioneers a distinctively modern form of power—which is exercised precisely through sys-

⁴ The topic addressed by Brandom 2009.

⁵ This way of drawing the distinction was suggested to me by Gilles Bouche.

tematically distorted structures of communication and legitimation. Those distortions are revealed by *genealogies*, which explain our attitudes in terms of *causes* that do not provide *reasons* for them.

- The idea that while realizing that fact undercuts some of the Enlightenment's claims for the possibility of achieving freedom through reason, it need not, *pace* the conclusions that Romanticism drew, be understood as showing that idea to be wrong root and branch. For when relations of power and domination adopt that new, more occult guise, they become liable to new forms of resistance, via the development of *emancipatory critical* discourses. And
- The idea of discourse ethics, and of a kind of political theory that is derived from thought about us as essentially discursive beings.

Now the topic I want to address in the rest of this paper is this. Once Habermas had given me the eyes to see these ideas, I came to see them above all in Hegel. Only the third of them seemed present already in Kant, and there without the crucial connection to *linguistic* practice that Hegel had introduced and exploited. Yet Habermas himself keeps a wary, careful distance from the Hegel of 1806 and after, and is far more comfortable associating himself with Kant when the "Kant oder Hegel?" question arises. This is an issue we have talked and written some about, and it has come to seem to me that our differences here turn more on differences in how we read Hegel than they do in what philosophical ideas we think are worth pursuing and which not. So I want to say something about those issues of interpretation.

But before turning to that topic, I cannot resist an excursus on the first of the three ideas I just adverted to. I doubt that I can adequately convey how exciting and enlightening it was for me to read what Habermas made of what Lacan made of Freud, in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. The key interpretive point Habermas attributes to Lacan is that Freud's 'unconscious' refers to aspects of the language one speaks of which one is unaware—as I would put: commitments implicit in what one says that one is not currently able to make explicit in the form of claims one endorses. Lacan's Freud focuses on commitments that arise out of one's childhood experiences, but which take the form not of claims one would endorse if confronted on the issue, but rather of dispositions to talk one way rather than another. Neurosis does not just *manifest* itself in, but actually *consists* in the recalcitrance of such dispositions to rational confrontation by commitments one is disposed explicitly to avow and acknowledge. (Though Habermas is too polite to say this, Lacan's own neuroses, in this technical sense, make it a hermeneutic challenge to extract this insight from his extravagant prose—but that just underlines Habermas's interpretive achievement here.) Analytic philosophers had distinguished what Dennett (1983) had called "two norms attributions of belief answer to," namely, those one is disposed to avow explicitly, and those one manifests implicitly, in what one does, rather than in what one says. *That* is not a specifically Freudian insight. In order to be able to talk at all, one must distinguish between these two different kinds of consideration involved in attributing commitments.⁶ Freud's peculiar hydraulic psychokinetics, and still more the Family Romance psychodynamics it is at some points

⁶ As I argue explicitly in Chapter Eight of Brandom 1998 and Chapter Five of Brandom 2000.

allied to, show up as speculative theories of some individual-specific patterns of disparities between the deliverances of these two sorts of evidence. The suggestion I took from Habermas's characterization of what Lacan made of Freud is that a suitable topic for the philosophy of language (in its broader guise) to address is the class of individual-specific, relatively long-term patterns of disparity between commitments one explicitly acknowledges and those that are only implicit in what one does (including what else one acknowledges) that might be addressed as explanatory targets by psychological theories (for instance of stages of development and botanizations of kinds of disruption and their consequences). I had never seen psychoanalytic vocabularies in this light before. The possibility of telling such a story seemed to me at the time as a paradigm of how research in a relatively narrow area (analytic philosophy of language) could be made to serve more general cultural and intellectual interests.

Part Two

The route that Habermas establishes from a theory of communicative action in general to political theory turns on the assertion within that base theory of a necessary and essential connection between discursive *meaningfulness* and the making of *validity claims* that must under various circumstances be redeemed, vindicated, or justified in order to achieve their effect. The distinctive kind of *authority* speech acts claim comes with a correlative justificatory *responsibility*. The idea is that the notion of 'meaning' that is a principal topic of *semantics* cannot be understood apart from practices of justifying, of asking for and offering justifications or reasons, which are a principal topic of *pragmatics*. Though I am not sure how comfortable Habermas would be with this way of putting things, we might think of semantic contents or meanings as theoretically posited in order to explain, or at least codify, various otherwise disparate aspects of the practices of redeeming and challenging the validity claims undertaken by using expressions that have or express those contents or meanings to perform various kinds of speech act. Such an approach would have the advantage of emphasizing the central role that Habermas's idea of organizing an account of the *use* of language ("communicative action") around the notion of 'validity claim' plays within his overall system.

Habermas has shown how much can be done with these two ideas: Thinking of discursive practice in terms of a distinctive kind of *normative* practical significance characteristic of speech acts as such, and thinking of semantics methodologically as a kind of explanatory auxiliary in the service of an account of the proprieties of the *use* of linguistic expressions, which is pragmatics. (I have called this latter sort of commitment "methodological pragmatism.") These points arise naturally within the theory of discourse. But Habermas has shown that they have resonances and consequences that reach far beyond that limited sphere.

Although he does not emphasize the point, I think it is important to realize that the first point is a lesson we owe ultimately to Kant. Kant's deepest and most original idea is that what distinguishes judging and intentional doing from the activities of non-sapient creatures is not that they involve some special sort of mental processes, but that they are things knowers and agents are in a distinctive way *responsible* for. Judging and acting involve *commitments*. They are *endorsements*, exercises of *authority*. 'Responsibility', 'commitment', 'endorsement',

‘authority’—these are all *normative* notions. Judgments and actions make knowers and agents liable to characteristic kinds of *normative* assessment. Kant’s most basic idea is that minded creatures are to be distinguished from un-minded ones not by a matter-of-fact ontological distinction (the presence of mind-stuff), but by a normative *deontological* one. This is his *normative characterization* of the mental.

Our *freedom* for Kant consists in our *authority* to make ourselves *responsible* for judgments and actions (thinkings and doings). This is a normative characterization of freedom. The philosophical tradition, especially its empiricist limb, had understood the issues clustering around the notion of ‘human freedom’ in alethic modal terms. Determinism asserted the *necessity* of intentional performances, given non-intentionally specified antecedent conditions. The freedom of an intentional action was thought of in terms of the *possibility* of the agent’s having done otherwise. The question was how to construe the subjection of human conduct to *laws* of the sort that govern the natural world. For Kant, though, these categories apply to the *objective* side of the intentional nexus: the domain of represented objects. Practical freedom is an aspect of the spontaneity of discursive activity on the *subjective* side: the domain of representing subjects. The modality that characterizes and articulates this dimension is not alethic but deontic.

The kind of responsibility that we as knowers and agents have the authority to undertake is a distinctively *rational* responsibility, and in that sense judging and acting are *rational* capacities. Rationality in this sense does not consist in knowers and agents generally, or even often, having good reasons for what they believe and do. It consists rather just in being in the space of reasons, in the sense that knowers and agents count as such insofar as they exercise their normative authority to bind themselves by norms, undertake discursive commitments and responsibilities, and so make themselves liable to distinctive kinds of normative *assessment*. In particular, they are liable to assessment as to the goodness of their *reasons* for exercising their authority as they do, for taking on *those* specific commitments and responsibilities. Whatever the actual causal antecedents of their judgments and intentional doings, Kantian knowers and agents are *obliged* (committed) to have *reasons* for their judgments and actions.

All that is to say that Kant already endorses the two principle theoretical commitments that stand at the foundation of Habermas’s systematic philosophical edifice: a normative characterization of discursive activity in terms of validity claims, and the pragmatist methodological strategy of understanding semantic content in terms of what we are doing when we use language (apply concepts). Identifying the common influence of Kant makes it clear that it is not just a happy coincidence that these fundamental Habermasian claims are also at the center of the account of discursive practice and semantic content developed in *Making It Explicit*. I think there are good reasons—reasons that I take it Habermas and I largely agree about, even though he does not draw this conclusion—to prefer the Hegelian to the Kantian way of working out these ideas.

First, Hegel takes it that normative statuses such as authority and responsibility (what show up in the *Phenomenology* as ‘independence’ and ‘dependence’) are *socially* instituted statuses. The attitudes and practices that institute them are *recognitive* attitudes and practices: taking or treating each other in practice *as* authoritative and responsible. Further, authority and responsibility are co-ordinate statuses. Authority and responsibility come together. (There is no independence

that does not incorporate a moment of dependence—essentially, and not just accidentally.) For the context in which such statuses are non-defectively instituted is one of *reciprocal* or *mutual* [gegenseitig] recognition. Each attempted exercise of authority is at the same time implicitly a petitioning for recognition of it as valid, legitimate, or warranted, as one the author is entitled to. And that is to say that attempting to exercise authority is always also making oneself responsible to those one recognizes as authorized (entitled, perhaps obliged) to validate it by recognizing it in turn. Correspondingly, an attempt to *make* oneself responsible, even in judgment and intentional action, is authorizing others to *hold* one responsible. Hegel's fundamental idea that self-conscious individual subjects and their communities ("social substance") are alike synthesized by reciprocal recognition. This is Hegel's way of making sense of the connection between meaningful speech acts and validity claims, between discursive authority and discursive responsibility that is at the center of Habermas's account of communicative action and discursive practice. Seen the other way around, Habermas's theory of communicative action is his account of the practices Hegel talks about under the heading of "reciprocal recognition."

Hegelian Geist is the normative realm of all our normatively articulated performances, practices, and institutions, and everything that makes them possible and that they make possible. (This is the sense in which Nature is intelligible as the body of Geist.) It is socially instituted by reciprocal recognition. In particular cases, asymmetric recognitive relations are intelligible: I can recognize someone as having the distinctive bundle of authorities and responsibilities characteristic of an ambassador without having myself to be recognized by her in the same respect. But these are in principle derivative cases, parasitic on the universal normative medium of *discursive* practices. "Sprache is the Dasein of Geist" Hegel (1807: § 652) says in the *Phenomenology*. That is, the medium that gives *conceptual* shape to our norms, making judgment and agency possible in the first place. And that conceptual shape is a *rational* shape, since it is relations of *rational* authority and responsibility that articulate it. They are *rational* normative relations because of how they depend on *inferential*, *justificatory* relations between the *conceptual contents* the attitudes and statuses are intelligible as possessing and expressing, just in virtue of standing in those inferential relations to one another and to various nonlinguistic situations and performances. That normative discursive realm in which we live, and move, and have our being is itself instituted by recognitive relations that *are* constitutively mutual, reciprocal, and symmetric. Denizens of this realm, the speakers and agents who are the only candidates for exhibiting more specialized, derivative, institutional normative statuses, are, once again, rational in the normative sense of exercising rational authority and taking on rational responsibility—being permanently liable to distinctive kinds of assessment and appraisal—rather than in the descriptive sense that addresses how good they are doing what they are responsible for doing or vindicating the sorts of authority they claim.

When it is described in these terms, I hope it is clear that Habermas is the foremost contemporary theorist of Hegelian Geist, the one who has taught us the most about its fine structure, the theorist who has best found an idiom for making explicit the commitments that are implicit in our being discursive normative creatures. So, what is not to like about Hegel's version of these ideas? There are a lot of possible answers to that question, and I can only address one possible worry here.

One issue arises from what I take to be a misreading of Hegel that is evident in some recent German interpretations that understand Hegelian Geist as kind of divine mind, a social subject that is self-conscious in something like a Cartesian sense. It is a development of the right-wing Hegelian picture of the Absolute as a kind of super-individual thinker (an interpretation propounded already by Hegel's student Gabler). This reading was very influential for the British Idealist admirers of Hegel, and remains part of the popular conception of Hegel's thought among non-philosophers. Some of Henrich's students (Kramer, Düsing) seem to have drawn the conclusion from his brilliant reading of Fichte that Hegel must take as a central theme the self-reflective structure of individual self-consciousness. But one of Hegel's decisive insights is expressed in his non-mentalistic, indeed non-psychological, normative conception of self-consciousness as a social achievement that takes place largely outside the skull of the particular organism who becomes a self-conscious individual by entering into recognitive relations with others whose practical attitudes are equally essential to the institution of that status. (Already in the 1920's the neo-Kantian Hartmann (1974: 364) had emphasized that "The founding intuition of German Idealism is: 'The Absolute is reason. It is not consciousness'.")⁷ This Hegel is Habermasian; the Hegel who is a "philosopher of consciousness" in the sense of Fichte's or Schelling's "absolute subjectivity" is not.

A standard complaint is that Hegel offers us a teleological picture, according to which the end of our conceptual development is fixed in advance, independently of our decisions and activity. History is seen as a process that unfolds according to an iron necessity, marching to its fore-ordained conclusion and completion. Hegel does, of course, say some things that invite such a reading—though it still owes more to what some Marxists made of Hegel than to his own texts. I think such a view depends on two mistakes. First, one ought to distinguish Hegel's views about speculative, philosophical, and logical concepts, on the one hand, from his view about ordinary ground-level empirical and practical concepts, on the other. As I understand them, the point of the former is to provide the expressive tools needed to make explicit what is implicit in the process of development of the latter. Hegel *does* think that there can be a fully adequate, final set of logical, metasemantic, metaphysical concepts—the organ of a distinctive kind of philosophical self-consciousness that permits us to *say* and think what it is we are *doing* when we say or think anything about ourselves and our world. But he does *not* think that bringing those concept-determining activities and structures out into the daylight of explicitness—achieving the alarmingly titled state of "Absolute Knowing" that both the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic* aim to produce—settles what ground-level concepts we ought to have, or the conceptual commitments, theoretical and practical, that we ought to adopt. Inquiry and deliberation must go on as before, with the sole difference that now we know what it is we are doing when we inquire and deliberate. Explicitly, that is conceptually, understanding the way we and our concepts mutually develop and determine ourselves through our concept-using activities and practices is a unique and valuable sort of self-consciousness, the culmination of a distinctive evolutionary process. But it does not at all relieve us of the responsibility to deal

⁷ My remarks in this paragraph are informed by a fascinating (and much more sophisticated) unpublished discussion by Franz Knappik, to which I am indebted.

with unforeseen and unforeseeable contingencies as we find out more about our world and deliberate about what we ought to do and who we ought to be.

Indeed, as I read him, Hegel denies the intelligibility of the idea of a set of *determinate* concepts (that is, the ground-level concepts we apply in empirical and practical judgment) that is ultimately adequate in the sense that by correctly applying those concepts one will never be led to commitments that are incompatible according to the contents of those concepts. This claim about the in-principle *instability* of determinate concepts, the way in which they *must* collectively incorporate the forces that demand their alteration and further development, is the radically new form Hegel gives to the idea of the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy. Not only is there no fore-ordained “end of history” as far as ordinary concept-application in our cognitive and practical deliberations is concerned, the very idea that such a thing makes sense is for Hegel a relic of thinking according to metacategories of *Verstand* rather than of *Vernunft*.⁸ All that he thinks the system of logical concepts he has uncovered and expounded does for us is let us continue to do out in the open, in the full light of self-conscious explicitness that lets us *say* what we are doing, what we have been doing all along *without* being able to say what was implicit in those doings.

The other mistake that I see in attributing to Hegel this sort of fatalistic teleological view concerns the misunderstanding of the notion of ‘necessity’ that it seems to me to depend on. For this view understands Hegelian necessity as *prospective*, and the modality involved as *alethic*. And I think his notion is rather essentially *retrospective*, and the modality involved is *deontic* or normative. Here, too, I think the view I take Hegel to be developing is one that should be entirely congenial to Habermas. On the first point, “the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk.” What it is for us to “look rationally on the world,” the condition of “its looking rationally back,” is that one of the commitments that turns out to be implicit in our discursive activities generally, a commitment that is constitutive of “reason’s march through history,” is the commitment to “give contingency the form of necessity.” The way we do that is to look back over the process by which our concepts (whether determinate-empirical or logical-philosophical) have developed, and retrospectively select an expressively progressive trajectory that culminates in our current position. This sort of rational reconstruction of a tradition exhibits each of the developments on which it focuses as the making explicit of commitments that can then retrospectively be seen as having been all along implicit in prior practice. This is discerning at each point a rule that would have rationalized the concept-applications that were actually made along the trajectory that has been carved out of what actually happened.

I have urged that a good model for the process Hegel is concerned to theorize about is the process by which the contents of the concepts of common law are developed and determined in Anglo-American jurisprudence. By contrast to statute-law, the *only* source of content for these legal concepts is the decisions of judges, who apply them in the particular cases that contingently arise. Common law is judge-made law. The form of a rationale for a particular decision is the extraction of a principle from prior precedent and practice. The current judge makes explicit a rule that he claims is implicit in the prior decisions he selects as authoritative. Genealogical explanations of those decisions are always in principle available. That is, one can find causal explanations that do not cite norms,

⁸ I have pursued this line of thought in greater detail in Brandom 2005.

rules, or principles, appealing instead to “what the judge ate for breakfast” in the jurisprudential shorthand for factors such as collateral political concerns, contingencies of class background or training in one school rather than another, and so on. But if the later judge can find a principle implicit in prior decisions that is brought out into the light of day in further refinement by the decision, that decision can nonetheless be seen as governed by that authoritative norm. ‘Necessary’ [notwendig] for Hegel, as for Kant, means “according to a rule or norm.” Placing a prior decision as an episode in a rationally reconstructed tradition of precedents that is expressively progressive in having the form of the gradual unfolding into explicitness of a principle that can be seen to emerge over the course of development of that tradition is at once turning a past into a history and giving contingency the form of necessity.

There is no thought that any particular development is necessary in the alethic sense of being inevitable or unavoidable, or even predictable. It is rather that once it has occurred, we can retrospectively exhibit it as *proper*, as a development that *ought* to have occurred, because it is the *correct* application and determination of a conceptual norm that we can now see, from our present vantage-point, as having been all along part of what we were implicitly committed to by prior decisions. This normative sort of necessity is not only compatible with freedom, it is constitutive of it. That is what distinguishes the normative notion of ‘freedom’ Kant introduces from the elusive alethic notion Hume worried about. Commitment to the sort of retrospective rational reconstruction that finds norms governing contingent applications of concepts (the process of reason) turns out to be implicit in engaging in discursive practices at all because it is only in the context of discerning such expressively progressive traditions that concepts are intelligible as having determinate contents at all. Coming to realize this, and so explicitly to *acknowledge* the commitment to being an agent of reason’s march through history, is achieving the distinctive sort of self-consciousness Hegel calls “Absolute knowing.”

Of course, no retrospective story one tells can succeed in rationalizing *all* of the actual contingent applications of determinate concepts that it inherits. (That is what in the final form of reciprocal recognition, we must *confess*, and trust that subsequent judges/concept-apppliers can *forgive* us for, by finding the line we drew between what could and what could not be rationalized as itself the valid expression of a prior norm.) And no such story is final, because the norms it discerns must inevitably, when *correctly* applied, lead to incompatible commitments, which can only be reconciled by attributing *different* contents to the concepts. Doing that is telling a *different* retrospective story, drawing a different line between past applications of the concept that were correct and precedential, and those that were incorrect and expressively not progressive. So the content of ground-level concepts develops and is determined not only according to each retrospective recollection [Erinnerung]⁹ of it, but also between successive stories.

It is expressively progressive recollective narratives of this sort that form the background necessary to diagnose systematic distortions in discursive practices. Such distortions are not found by comparison with some abstract, utopian ideal, but with respect to a principle discovered as immanent in a tradition. What I have been outlining is Hegel’s way of characterizing the process by which we distinguish *reason-constitutive* norms from adventitious, contingent, or merely

⁹ Cf. Hegel 1807: § 808.

strategic ones, and hence distinguish *logos* from *mythos*, genuine reason from ideological commitments masquerading in the guise of reasons.

Consider the lessons we might draw from looking retrospectively at the history of the extension of the voting franchise in modern times. A progressive trajectory can be discerned, in which various supposedly essential qualifications are gradually shed: noble birth, property-ownership, being the male head of a household, not being a member of a despised minority.... We might construe this tradition as the gradual emergence into explicitness of the principle that those who are *subject* (responsible) to laws should exercise some authority in determining their content. But if *that* is the norm implicit in this development, then it seems our current practices are still only distorted expressions of it. Are we sure that excluding teenagers, resident aliens, or ex-felons aren't restrictions that belong in a box with excluding women, blacks, or those who do not own property? Reconstructing the tradition around an expressively progressive trajectory and trying to formulate a principle that makes explicit the norm that is implicit in it gives us a *critical* grip on where we are now. It opens up the possibility of seeing ourselves as still making versions of old mistakes. This Hegelian structure of "reason's march through history" underwrites Rorty's sage (if incendiary) advice that it is better for us to be politically motivated by fear than by hope—fear of making new versions of old mistakes, rather than utopian hopes not rooted in a reading of the tradition.

All this is to say that retelling bits of our history "Whiggishly"—as a progressive story about the gradual revealing, through concrete experience, of the contents of norms that we can then be seen to have been implicitly committed to all along—by no means has exclusively conservative consequences. On the contrary, it is the engine of criticism, and so of emancipation from the distortions of our conceptions of the contents of the commitments we come to acknowledge ourselves as undertaking. Notice, too, that in this example an important progressive part of what we come to see is that concepts such as 'citizenship' and 'voting franchise' are bundles of kinds of responsibility and authority that are socially instituted, and that, like 'property' have no *natural* unity or integrity that we are obliged to respect. It is open to us to repackage those kinds of authority and responsibility in accord with the best lessons we can draw from the history and tradition we are able to discern. This is an instance of the fundamental Hegelian lesson about the ultimately social character of normative statuses, which are understood as instituted by recognitive practices and articulated by recognitive relations. This insight marks a fundamental advance over Kant's understanding of the normativity he rightly saw as constitutive of our sapience. And it is an insight as fundamental to Habermas's thought as it is to Hegel's.

In this paper I have begun to point to some of the themes that, as it seems to me, unite in a common cause two of my greatest intellectual heroes and philosophical inspirations: Habermas and Hegel. I read Hegel as taking over Kant's normative theory of conceptual activity and giving it a social, and ultimately a linguistic turn. The particular way he understands discursive normative statuses as social statuses, namely in terms of practices of reciprocal recognition, provides an account of the deep conceptual connection between the claim to discursive authority constitutive of speech acts and a corresponding justificatory responsibility. When that view is combined with a pragmatist order of semantic explanation—one that appeals to features of discursive practice to explain conceptual, cognitive, and discursive contentfulness—the result is an endorsement

precisely of the fundamental link between meaningfulness and validity claims that stands at the center of Habermas's systematic edifice. As I read Hegel, he offers a powerful model for the way the contents of ground-level concepts develop and are progressively determined by incorporating contingencies that are retrospectively rationalized. Viewed prospectively, conceptual contents are made; viewed retrospectively, they are found. Both temporal perspectives are essential to understanding both the sense in which conceptual norms are determinate, and the sense in which they are rational. The way this sophisticated account integrates an acknowledgement of the sense in which discursive practices are at base and in principle *rational* practices and the sense in which they are nonetheless unavoidably *distorted* in expressing also non-rational interests and contingencies (the residue in every retrospective discerning of a tradition that is *not* rationally reconstructable as expressively progressive) seems to me to be both valuable in its own right and altogether in the spirit of Habermas's approach to communicative action. So much of my own work takes place against the background of a conversation between these two towering figures that I am very glad to have had this opportunity to begin to conduct some of it more publicly.

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Some Remarks on Philosophy and on Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy and its Misinterpretation

P. M. S. Hacker

University of Kent at Canterbury

St John's College, Oxford

Abstract

The paper advances a broadly Wittgensteinian conception of the nature and limits of philosophy. It differs from Wittgenstein over the claims that (i) philosophical problems arise only when language is idling; (ii) that philosophy does not result in new knowledge: it does. But the new knowledge does not concern the nature of the world, but the character of our forms of description of the world, and its form is not discovery but realisation. (iii) in the domain of practical philosophy further considerations come into play that are not budgeted for in Wittgenstein's conception. A variety of criticisms of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, in particular some advanced recently by Diego Marconi and Timothy Williamson, are examined and shown to rest on misunderstandings and ignorance.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, philosophy, private language arguments, Diego Marconi, Timothy Williamson.

1. Philosophy: some reminders

Philosophy is not a natural science. There is no body of philosophical facts, on the model of facts of physics. There is no body of well-established philosophical truths, on the model of the truths of chemistry. There are no philosophical theories on the model of theories in the natural sciences that can be or have been confirmed by experiment and observation. Philosophy, unlike the hard sciences, issues no predictions. Philosophical reasoning, unlike scientific reasoning, involves no idealizations of observable phenomena for theoretical purposes and formulations of laws of nature. There are no hypotheses in philosophy that may be confirmed or disconfirmed by an experiment. Nor can philosophy tolerate approximations to the facts. For philosophy is not concerned with discovering laws of nature or with determining the facts. It is concerned with plotting the bounds of sense. And a mere approximation to sense is one form or another of nonsense.

Philosophy is not an a priori science either. The a priori sciences are mathematics and logic. Mathematics is concept-formation by means of proofs. Philosophy too is a priori. But philosophy is not concerned with concept-formation for the purposes of the sciences or for the transactions of daily life. Nor is it concerned with the construction of new rules of representation or rules of inference. Metaphysics, of course, purports to be an a priori discipline that investigates the necessary structures of reality. By contrast with physicists, who investigate contingent truths about the world, meta-physicists purport to investigate the necessary scaffolding of all possible worlds. But it is a bogus science. There are no possible worlds, only possibilities for things to be or to have been otherwise in this, one and only, world. The world has no scaffolding. What, to the blinkered eye, appears to be the necessary scaffolding of all possible worlds is no more than the shadow cast upon the world by our forms of representation. What appear to be statements of *de re* necessities are in fact expressions of norms of representations. *Red is darker than pink* is actually an inference rule to the effect that if A is red and B is pink, then one can infer without more ado, and without looking afresh, that A is darker than B. *Red is more like orange than it is like yellow* looks like a description of an adamant necessity in nature. But in fact it is the expression of an inference rule in the misleading guise of a description. What it says is that if A is red, B is orange and C is yellow, then one can infer without looking that A is more like B in colour than it is like C. The principle that every event has a cause is a norm of representation of Newtonian science, not a generalization about events but a determination of what is to count as an event.

If philosophy is neither an empirical science nor an a priori one, what then is it? What, if anything, is a philosophical proposition? Are there any philosophical truths? Do we know any? Is there any such thing as philosophical knowledge? The natural, social and a priori sciences all have a subject matter of their own. Physics studies the laws of matter, energy and motion. Chemistry studies the constitution of stuffs and the methods of combining or isolating them. Biology studies living things and their environment. History studies the recorded sufferings, crimes and follies of mankind throughout the ages. What is the subject matter of philosophy? Meta-physicists held it to have as its primary subject matter the *de re* necessities of the world. But that is an illusion. Descartes held philosophy to be a quest for the ultimate certainties upon which all knowledge rests, and a system for the construction of the tree of knowledge. But there is no such tree of knowledge, and there are no such certainties. Hume held that philosophy was the science of the mind—but that task was taken over by psychology (without any slimming down of philosophy). The quest for a special subject matter for philosophy continued well into the twentieth century: Russell held that the subject matter of philosophy consisted of the most general facts in the universe and the description of their logical forms. Husserl held that the subject matter of philosophy was the discovery and description of the unique phenomenological features of experience. And so on, each such chimera lasting for awhile before succumbing to the next illusion. Philosophy seems to be a subject in perennial search of a subject matter (its latest being possible worlds—if the scientists have evicted us from the actual world, we may find solace and a subject matter in the infinite number of possible worlds).

Enlightenment on the nature and proper tasks of philosophy in the twentieth-century had to await Wittgenstein. In his post-1933 writings he avers that:

- (i) Philosophy has no subject matter of its own—in the manner in which the natural, social, and human sciences have a subject matter of their own.
- (ii) There are no philosophical propositions—in the sense that there are propositions of physics or chemistry, economics or history.
- (iii) There are no theses in philosophy.
- (iv) There are no theories in philosophy—in the sense in which there are theories in the sciences of nature and of man.
- (v) There is no philosophical knowledge—comparable to the knowledge achieved in the sciences.
Philosophy is not part of the quest for knowledge of the world. The philosopher is not a citizen of any republic of ideas.
- (vi) Philosophy is an activity of conceptual clarification the purpose of which is to resolve philosophical problems.

Philosophical problems are a priori. No empirical discoveries can solve or dissolve them, *any more than discoveries in physics can solve problems in mathematics*. Whereas mathematics is concept-formation by means of proof construction, philosophy is concept-clarification by means of description. What philosophy describes are the logical relations of implication, exclusion, compatibility, presupposition, point and purpose, role and function among propositions in which a given problematic expression occurs. Philosophy describes the uses of expressions in our language for the purpose of resolving or dissolving conceptual entanglements. The descriptive task, like the description of the mores of a society or of the laws of the land, is a normative one.¹ It is not a legislative project. It is not the task of philosophy to reform language or to construct artificial languages. It leaves everything (in grammar) alone. One might say, and Wittgenstein did say, that its task is logical cartography. Its purpose is that we be able to find our way around the landscape of grammar without getting lost in the jungles and marshes created, *among other things*, by similarities of form that mask differences of use, and differences of form that conceal similarities of function.

2. Going beyond Wittgenstein

Thus far Wittgenstein. I should like to go somewhat further, but in a direction that I think he would find unobjectionable. I shall disagree with him on one point. I shall also point out a limitation in his account.

I suggest that *philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge, but rather to human understanding*. The object of this understanding is our conceptual scheme—the grammar of our language. By ‘grammar’ here I mean, as did Wittgenstein, everything that has to be settled in order for an expression to have sense. It is obvious that we already know the grammar of our language—that is what it is to be a competent speaker of the language. We know how to use expressions correctly, and we are able to explain what is meant by their use in sentences we understand. For correct use and correct explanations of use are criteria for knowing what expressions mean. We need no new information about the uses of words. What we come to understand is the way in which the web of our

¹ By ‘normative’ I mean no more than ‘pertaining to a rule’.

conceptual scheme is woven. We competent language users know how to use the net of language to catch empirical fish. But we have the greatest of difficulties in describing the net. And it is virtually unavoidable that the net become entangled and knotted. The task of philosophy is to disentangle the net, and to show the confused fishermen that a tangle in the net is not a new kind of fish. There are no metaphysical fish in the seas of philosophy, only metaphysical knots in the net.

It is a striking fact that no new knowledge of facts is relevant to the solution or dissolution of philosophical problems. Unlike scientists, the philosopher can never say that he is waiting on the result of further experiments and observations, although, to be sure, new experiments and observations may give rise to new scientific theories that in turn may provide grist for philosophical mills. A philosopher cannot licitly hold that he does not yet have enough information or sufficient knowledge. Everything he needs to know, he already knows. For what he needs to know is the conceptual scheme with which he operates daily. If he is a philosopher of one of the special sciences, what he needs to know is the technical conceptual scheme daily employed by scientists in their technical discourse. If we fail to solve or resolve the problems of philosophy, it is not for lack of information. It is our fault. For we then fail to select and marshal the familiar rules for the uses of expressions—no matter whether ordinary expressions familiar to competent speakers or technical expressions in science and mathematics familiar to scientists and mathematicians—in such a manner that the problem dissolves.

‘Philosophy is a contribution not to human knowledge, but to human understanding’ is a slogan. It is, I believe, an insightful one. But like all slogans it needs qualification and explanation. The upshot of philosophical investigations is not that one will speak one’s native tongue *better* than hitherto—although one may be more careful. One will have an overview of the logical grammar of expressions in the domain one has been investigating. So one will be able to find one’s way about. Nevertheless, *one will come to know things one had not previously known*. Wittgenstein would surely concede that after having studied his work one will know that mathematics is a system or better: a motley, of norms of representation. That is something no one ever knew, ever *realized*, prior to Wittgenstein’s investigations. It was commonly asserted by philosophers and unreflectively assumed by physicists and psychologists that we learn names of sensible qualities by introspective scrutiny of the contents of sensible experience, and that we learn the name of psychological attributes by association of name and experience. Prior to Wittgenstein’s investigations no one ever realized that these are incoherent suppositions. So we surely learnt something new!

I think this is correct, but only with the strict proviso that what we learn about is not facts or super-facts about the world, but features of our means of representation. We learn about the net, not about the catch. We gain an overview of a segment of the grammar of our language, the grammar we, as competent speakers, have all mastered. But to master a language does not imply gaining an overview of the way it hangs together. Mastery of the use of an expression does not require mastery of its comparative use, or an ability to describe its deceptive similarities to expressions with which it is commonly confounded. One may indeed have mastered the use of ‘almost’ and ‘nearly’ without being able to say how they differ. One may likewise have mastered the use of ‘know’ and ‘believe’, but be unable to describe how they are related. One may know

how to use the phrase ‘mental state’ but still not realize that knowing and believing are not mental states.

The term ‘realize’ is crucial here. For insofar as we *can* speak here of the acquisition of knowledge as the upshot of philosophical investigation, the form of knowledge is not observation or discovery, but *realization*. We realize features of our conceptual scheme that we had not apprehended. Realization is a form of cognitive receptivity that is the upshot of putting together things we already knew, and grasping consequences we had not noticed. What we thus put together are rules for the use of familiar words that we know perfectly well, but of which we need reminding. We know perfectly well that mental states are states one can be said to *in*: we may be *in* a state of intense concentration, *in* a state of anxiety, *in* an excited or joyous state. We know that when one falls asleep one ceases to be *in* any mental state whatsoever, for one is *in* one mental state or another only when one is awake. It is obvious that mental states must last (obtain) for a while, since something momentary is an event or achievement, rather than a state. It is patent that mental states, such as being in pain, feeling tired, feeling cheerful, concentrating hard, can be interrupted, and later resumed. We all know that mental states can vary in intensity, and can wax or wane. These observations are not news from *The Metaphysical Herald*. They are reminders of what we all know. They are not opinions, conjectures or hypotheses. They are, in effect, constitutive rules for the use of the phrase ‘mental state’—aspects of what the phrase *means*. It *makes sense* to ask how long one’s anxiety, concentration or excitement lasted, but not how long one’s noticing or recognizing lasted. It *makes sense*, even if it is not true, to say that one’s concentration was interrupted; but it *makes no sense* to say that one’s understanding, one’s recognizing, or one’s noticing were interrupted. One’s weariness or excitement may wax or wane, but not one’s winning or losing. These grammatical observations are no more than reminders of what we would or would not say, reminders of usage (of what it *makes sense* to say) that any competent speaker of the language has learnt.

However, it should not be supposed that such reminders are always straightforward. Some differences between the uses of distinct expressions are difficult to think of (‘nearly’/‘almost’). Some are very difficult to survey. Prejudices often stand in the way. Fresh misunderstandings are always possible. Let me give an example. Understanding, Wittgenstein sapiently averred, is *akin* to an ability. This observation has been the source of further incomprehension. Michael Dummett² (following a mistaken observation of Frege’s) protested that we need to distinguish between a dispositional sense (‘A understands English’) which signifies an ability, and an occurrent sense (‘A understood what B said’), which does not.³ But, first, an ability is not a disposition (we all have the ability

² See Dummett 1993: 58-60, 101-103, 109, 133. For criticism, see Rundle 2001: 109ff. For further discussion, see Baker and Hacker 2005: esp. 380-85.

³ Recently Professor Diego Marconi has resuscitated this confusion (in his review of Hacker 2013: see Marconi 2014). Surprisingly, he asserts that the sentence ‘She knows how to understand this sentence’ does not support the assertion that understanding is akin to an ability. The sentence, to be sure, is ambivalent and not very good English. If it means ‘She understands this sentence’, then it confirms the claim that understanding is ability-like, for she can say what it means. If it means ‘She knows how this sentence is to be interpreted’, then this too confirms the claim, since she can, presumably, tell us how it

to kill another, but fortunately few of us have any such disposition). Secondly, understanding English is not *exercised* in understanding an English utterance. Understanding an utterance is not *an act* one performs—unlike reporting what was said, acting on what was said, explaining what was said. Understanding English is ability-like in so far as it is exhibited in responding cogently to what is said in English, in reporting what was said, in explaining what English words, sentences or utterances mean, and so on. For these performances are criteria of understanding a language. Understanding the utterance ‘Pass the butter, please’ is exhibited in passing the butter, in reporting correctly what was said (requested), and in explaining what the utterance means. For these performances are criteria for understanding an utterance. Hence, thirdly, these are not two different *senses* of ‘understand’, but two different *objects* of understanding. To understand what was said is not to exercise one’s ability to understand English, but an instance of it—it is not to “exercise one’s understanding” of English, but to exemplify it. In this example, one can see vividly that drawing our attention to features of usage with which we are indeed perfectly familiar may be a lengthy and difficult process. For the difficulties and misunderstandings ramify, and it is often as difficult to abandon a picture to which one cleaves as to hold back one’s tears. Nevertheless, if one perseveres, if one can think afresh and is willing to retrace one’s steps, the reward is substantial. Let me give an example.

If we look at the familiar use of the word ‘belief’ and its cognates, it is immediately evident that neither believing nor what is believed can be mental states. For while one may be *in* a state of incredulity, one cannot be *in* a state of belief or of believing. When one believes something to be so, one’s beliefs don’t lapse on falling asleep. Nor can one be interrupted in the middle of believing something and later resume believing it. Although there are degrees of conviction, there are no degrees of belief. One cannot believe *too much* that World War I lasted from 1914 until 1918, and I can’t believe it *more than you*. One may have less conviction than hitherto, but not less belief. So believing is not a mental state, indeed, not a state of any kind. That is something few philosophers recognize. It has dramatic consequences. For now one may come to realize that belief cannot be identical with a neural state of the brain, for only what *is* a state can be identical with a state. Of course, this is not an empirical discovery of an empirical truth, let alone an a priori discovery of an empirical truth. It is recognition of the bounds of sense—acknowledgement of a grammatical proposition. For it does not make sense to suppose that believing something is a mental state. It does not make sense to assert that something that is not a state at all is identical with a state of the brain. The apparently philosophical proposition ‘Belief is not a state of the brain’ is not a description, but the expression of an exclusionary rule (like ‘One can’t checkmate in draughts’). There is no such thing as a ‘mental state of believing’—this is a form of words that has no use, and it is excluded from our language.

is to be interpreted. Marconi suggests that “we seem to use the same word for both the ability (‘she understands English’) and its exercise”. But this is mistaken. To understand English and to understand an English utterance are not two different kinds of understanding, but two different objects of understanding (compare knowing English history and knowing that the battle of Hastings was fought in 1066: here too there are not multiple senses of “knowing”).

What one comes to realize when one puts familiar grammatical propositions together is misleadingly characterized as a truth about the world. It is rather a truth of grammar, i.e. a rule for the use of words.⁴ And its truth is in an important sense Pickwickian. For to be sure, rules are not true or false. To realize that neither believing nor what is believed can be brain states is not to come to know a truth about the world. For in realizing that belief is not a state of the brain, or that there can be no such thing as private ostensive definition, or that the mind is not a thing of any kind (neither an aethereal thing nor a material thing), or that to have a body is not to possess anything, one has not come to know that things are as these sentences describe them as being. For these sentences are not descriptions of anything—they are expressions of rules in the material mode (like ‘The chess king moves one square at a time’). To attach the truth-operator to such rule-expressing sentences is not to assert that things are as the sentence describes them as being, but rather to assert that the content of a rule is as it has been stated to be (‘It is true that the king in chess moves one square at a time’).

So (i) any knowledge one might speak of here takes the form of realization, and

(ii) what is realized is a feature of the conceptual scheme that we have mastered.

One might say, in Aristotelian terms that it is knowledge of the forms of reality. But the forms of reality just *are* the shadows of grammar—the shadows cast by the scaffolding from which we describe how things are. One might better say that the realization in question is a deepening of our understanding of the structure and interconnectedness of our conceptual scheme.

Thus far I believe that I have gone a little beyond Wittgenstein, but I do not think I have averred anything he would not accept. I do, however wish to disagree with him over one point.⁵

⁴ Professor Marconi surprisingly ascribes to me the view that grammatical propositions are not merely formulations of rules for the use of words, but “more precisely exclusionary rules”. This is not a view I have ever advanced. Indeed, it would not be more precise, merely more mistaken. ‘An object cannot simultaneously be red all over and green all over’ is an exclusionary rule. It excludes a form of words from language (‘is simultaneously red all over and green all over’). In this respect it is like an impossibility-proof in mathematics (e.g., that one cannot trisect an angle with a compass and rule). But ‘Red is more like orange than it is like yellow’ is an inference rule. So too are arithmetical equations, for they too are rules of grammar. ‘A proposition is true if things are as it describes them as being’ is a transformation-rule. ‘This  colour is black’ is a definition, and hence too a substitution rule. Professor Marconi, labouring under the illusion that I hold that grammatical rules are all exclusionary rules, and noting correctly that I agree with Wittgenstein that arithmetical propositions are norms of representation, queries what *this* grammatical proposition is meant to exclude. To be sure, it is not meant to exclude anything, since it is not an exclusionary rule at all.

⁵ It is worthwhile trying to put the record straight about criticizing Wittgenstein, since there are philosophers who are propagating egregious falsehoods on the matter. Professor Timothy Williamson has recently suggested (lecture at Belgrade University, September 2014, on the web) that in the 1970s even non-Wittgensteinian philosophers were often afraid to speak out against Wittgenstein—a sorry state of affairs that he says lasted until 2000. It was then that Williamson himself challenged an Oxford student who, in a large

I think it was mistaken of him to assert that philosophical problems arise only when language is idling (PI §132). This remark is more or less correct when it comes to a wide range of traditional philosophical problems. When philosophers assert that knowledge is a mental state, that all vagueness is merely epistemological, that time is unreal, that the mind is the software of the brain, then indeed language is idling. Such transgressions of the bounds of sense do not interfere with our ordinary commerce with words like ‘mental state’, ‘knowledge’, ‘mind’, ‘vague’, ‘time’. But when neuroscientists assert that the brain decides to move 350 ms before we ourselves feel any decision or intention, or that memories are stored in synaptic connections, or that seeing is apprehending an image created by the brain, then language is not idling, but hard at work and experiments are conducted to prove these (nonsensical) allegations. Conceptual confusions are rife, in the natural sciences and in moral, legal and political discourse. When psychologists assert that the problem that afflicts autistic children is that unlike normal children, they have failed to develop a theory of mind, the psychologists are literally talking nonsense—that is: what they say makes no sense. But this nonsensical conjecture affects the kinds of treatment given to autistic children. When biologists investigate the biological function of consciousness, and come up with the idea that “The advantage to an animal of being conscious lies in the purely private use it makes of conscious experience as a means of developing a conceptual framework which helps it to model another animal’s behaviour”⁶ a conceptual incoherence is embedded in a putatively empirical evolutionary theory. There is nothing idle about that—it profoundly affects and infects an empirical science. So too, when zoologists proclaim that they have discovered that elephants, dolphins, chimpanzees and crows are self-conscious creatures because they can recognize themselves in a mirror—then conceptual confusions invade science. For to recognize oneself in the mirror is not to recognize one’s self in the mirror, and the ability to recognize the reflection of one’s face in the mirror has no more to do with self-consciousness than has the ability to recognize one’s hand in the mirror.

graduate seminar, “kept pressing the Wittgensteinian line that contradictions are meaningless rather than false”. Becoming exasperated, Williamson courageously asserted “Maybe Wittgenstein was just wrong; it wouldn’t be the first time”—at which, he alleges, there was a collective gasp of shock. This is an odd anecdote. Graduate students are not authorities on what philosophers have said. Wittgenstein never held that contradictions are nonsense. Graduate students ought to know that. The thought that it was prohibited to criticize Wittgenstein in Oxford prior to 2000 is risible. Numerous Oxford philosophers who were not Wittgensteinians had criticized Wittgenstein in print, in public and in private when Williamson was still a schoolboy, including Austin, Ayer, Grice, and Hampshire. Oxford philosophers who, to one degree or another, were followers of Wittgenstein, such as Dummett, Strawson, Waismann, had criticized him extensively. From 1976 onwards for more than a decade Gordon Baker and I gave well-attended graduate seminars on Wittgenstein. These were among the liveliest philosophy seminars of the time. There was certainly no shortage of criticisms at them. The suggestion that Wittgenstein was ever ‘sacrosanct’ at Oxford is pure fiction.

⁶ Humphrey 1984: 35. He continued thus: “Somewhere along the evolutionary path that led from fish to chimpanzees a change occurred in the nervous system which transformed an animal which simply ‘behaved’ into an animal which at the same time informed its mind for the reasons for its behaviour. My guess is that this change involved the evolution of a new brain—a ‘conscious brain’ parallel to the old ‘executive brain’” (37).

Not only do philosophical problems arise when language is hard at work. They arise ubiquitously in science, and in public life—in economics, politics, law and in moral debate. It is one of the great tasks of philosophy to struggle against the corruption of science, law, politics, economics, art and moral discourse by conceptual confusion. Ironically, it was Wittgenstein himself who showed what gives philosophy *the right* to interfere thus in the sciences. For philosophy is the Tribunal of Reason before which to arraign natural and social scientists for transgressing the bounds of sense.

I also wish to point out an important limitation on Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. It was geared to the branches of philosophy that concerned him, namely what Kant called "theoretical" (in contrast to "practical") philosophy. Wittgenstein had no interest whatsoever in legal and political philosophy, let alone in philosophical investigations into economics and economic reasoning. His own views on morality, as far as one can judge, were of an extreme personal and existential character. I am inclined to think that this conception is at odds with the tenor of his highly naturalist⁷ and historicist approach to the problems of philosophy. One would have expected him to favour a broadly Aristotelian and Humean approach to ethics, and to have approved of the endeavours of his pupil Georg Henrik von Wright in his great book *The Varieties of Goodness*. Be that as it may, it seems to me that when one turns from theoretical philosophy to practical philosophy, new factors come into play. Although conceptual clarification and logical cartography certainly have their place in the domain of ethics, legal and political philosophy, rational debate about how we should live our lives, about what is of intrinsic value in our lives, and about what kinds of laws are appropriate for free people living under the rule of law at a given stage in history are surely licit subjects for philosophers to discuss. These subjects have been part of the task of philosophy ever since its inception with Socrates, and woe and betide us if we relinquish it.

3. Interpretations, misinterpretations and misunderstandings

So far I have laid out the main contours of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. The mode of presentation has deliberately been synoptic and assertive, rather than discursive and argumentative, for I have argued in support of these claims elsewhere.⁸ I have added a few modifications to Wittgenstein's account, and pointed out a limitation that must be recognized. However, his observations have been met with incomprehension, bewilderment, and misguided criticisms. It is to some of these that I shall now turn.

I. Wittgenstein asserted that "if someone were to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI §128). Furthermore, he wrote "Philosophy states only what everyone admits" (PI §599). This has bewildered his readers and raised the ire of many philosophers. Surely Wittgenstein himself advances a multitude of theses, for example that mathematical equations are norms of representation, or that

⁷ By 'naturalist' I do not mean a form of scientific reductionism favoured by followers of Quine.

⁸ See Baker and Hacker 2005, essays XIV and XV.

one cannot define pain by a private ostensive definition, or that a dog may expect its master to come home *now*, but cannot now expect its master to come home this time tomorrow. Surely these are not only theses, they are highly controversial theses that most philosophers do not accept.

To reply to this set of objections, we must be clear what Wittgenstein meant by 'theses'. Fortunately, we know. The remark was written with Waismann's *Thesen* in mind.⁹ This document was an attempt to present Wittgenstein's ideas in the *Tractatus* in a more accessible manner. So it consisted of apodeictic pronouncements about the essence of things—about the world, language, logic, and so forth. But if the very idea of *de re* necessities is chimerical, then to be sure there can be no theses. The proposition that reality consists of facts not of things¹⁰ is a thesis—a statement concerning the necessary, language-independent nature of the word. But it is a chimera. What one *can* say is that a description of (any part of) reality is a statement of facts. And with that grammatical triviality everyone would surely agree. If they did not, that would betoken failure of understanding. It is not a thesis, but a grammatical proposition—a rule of representation. It says that the phrase 'a description of how things are' can be replaced by 'a statement of facts'.

All right, one may concede, but what of such assertions as 'One cannot define colour-words or names of psychological attributes by means of private ostensive definitions', 'Arithmetical equations are rules of representation', or 'Behaviour is not inductive but criterial (logical) evidence for the mental'?¹¹ These, Marconi exclaims, are surely not grammatical trivialities that everyone would agree to. Indeed, they do not even look like grammatical rules anyway. Surely, they are substantive theses about definitions, evidence, and the nature of arithmetical equations! Indeed, they are expressions of Wittgenstein's opinions, which he explicitly avowed not to advance.

That is far too quick. Philosophers should greet each other with the words 'Take it slowly!' We must first explain what an ostensive definition is. It is an explanation of the meaning of a word by pointing at a sample, and saying "That is N" (e.g. "That is one metre", or "That is red") or, more explicitly, "That

⁹ Reprinted in McGuinness 1979: 233-62.

¹⁰ See Waismann's *Thesen*, in McGuinness 1979: 233.

¹¹ This "seems to entail", according to Marconi, "that we do not *conjecture* the mental from behaviour, which in turn could be taken to entail that we cannot go wrong". It seems no such thing, and it could not be so taken. One can conjecture from the fact that one's wife is taking an aspirin, that she has a headache (she suffers from headaches and takes aspirin to alleviate them). But when she holds her head moaning "I have a terrible headache", one does not *conjecture* that she has a headache. However, pain-behaviour is a *criterion* (logically good evidence) for pain. It is defeasible. Hence satisfaction of the criteria for pain do not *entail* that we cannot go wrong in asserting the person to be in pain. For additional evidence may defeat the criterial evidence. But if it is undefeated, then it commonly confers certainty. Marconi queries whether we cannot distinguish between 'putting forth a conjecture' from 'applying a defeasible criterion', and asks whether this is 'a logical or merely psychological difference'. To be sure, there is all the *logical* difference in the world between a conjecture warranted by well-established inductive correlations and ascription of a psychological predicate warranted by criteria that constitute logically good evidence. The former presupposes antecedent identification of the relata, and observation of their regular correlation. The latter does not.

length is (or is called) a metre” or “That colour is (or is called) red”. This is an explanation or stipulation of the technical expression ‘an ostensive definition’. No one can disagree with that. Then we must remind ourselves and explain what a sample is. A sample is something *we use* to explain the meaning of certain words and kinds of word, and as a standard to justify the application of such a word. Just think of colour samples in a paint-catalogue, or of rulers and tape measure that are samples of lengths. We explain what ‘1 metre’ means by pointing to the ruler and saying “That length is one metre” or pointing to a sample of peach-blossom pink in the book of samples and saying “That colour [not: that piece of paper] is (or ‘is called’) peach-blossom pink”. No one can disagree with that. We further point out that the ostensive definition we thus give is not a description of what we point at, for a description presupposes the meanings of its constituent words as given and known, but an ostensive definition *explains* the meaning of the word defined. This too can hardly be denied. Furthermore, not only is the ostensive definition not a description of what is pointed at, it is *a rule*. For it in effect says that anything that is *this* length is correctly described as being a metre long, and that anything that is *this* colour is correctly described as being peach-blossom pink in colour. This too cannot be denied. So, one concludes, the samples we use in thus explaining the meaning of certain classes of word belong to the means of representation—they are instruments of language, they are the measures, not what is measured. Indeed, we continue, is it not obvious that an ostensive definition is akin to a substitution rule constituted by familiar analytic definitions? For instead of saying “The curtains are pink-blossom pink” one can say “The curtains are *this* colour” (pointing to the sample). In effect, the sample, the pointing gesture, and the words ‘This colour’ can replace the phrase ‘peach-blossom pink’. This too would appear to be undeniable.

What I have done in the above paragraph (for the benefit of Professor Marconi and anyone equally at sea) is to show how one may present the private language discussion as a step by step argument in which we assemble a select array of familiar and undeniable rules for the use of words, and marshal them in such a manner that the very idea of a logically private language disintegrates before one. I shall go no further, for this is not an essay on the private language arguments. But I shall point out the direction in which one must proceed here. The next step is to explain what purports to be “private”, namely *private ownership of experience* and *epistemic privacy*—both of which are and must be shown to be chimerical. Then one must proceed to explain why others *could not* understand a putative private ostensive definition, since they cannot share the defining sample with the subject. But one must go further, and explain why a mental representation cannot fulfil the role of a sample, i.e. that there is no such thing as using a mental image or representation as a sample for the application of a word. For

- (i) There is no criterion of identity for such an internal representation.
- (ii) Mental representations cannot, *logically cannot*, function as objects for comparison as samples must be capable of doing, for one cannot, *logically cannot*, hold up a mental representation alongside what it is meant to represent, in order to compare the two.

(iii) One cannot imagine something while one is actually perceiving it.¹²

It should now be evident first, that these assertions are no more *opinions* than the statement that bachelors are unmarried men is an opinion. They are not theses, but a sequence of grammatical clarifications with which no one can sensibly disagree. If someone does, that is not a mark of a difference of opinion, but of incomprehension, and that means that one must go back to whatever is puzzling and clarify it more thoroughly. Equally, no theses were advanced, no assertions concerning the language-independent nature of things. Nothing is appealed to except uses of words and grammatical stipulations. The method is indeed to assemble familiar rules for the uses of words, with which no one can disagree, and to order them in such a way as to demonstrate an incoherence, the realization of which is the culmination of a successful overview of the rules.

II. Surely, it is often remonstrated, Wittgenstein advances a wide range of theories that many, indeed most, philosophers contest. Is the private language argument not a theory? Does he not advance a use-theory of meaning? Is the contention that there are no theories in philosophy not itself a theory—sometimes caricatured as the “no-theory theory”?

This is confused. If all that is meant by ‘theoretical’ here is a contrast with ‘practical’, then of course, Wittgenstein’s investigations are theoretical. But that is wholly trivial. If the prototype of theory is given by scientific theories, then obviously Wittgenstein advances no theories, nor is there any room in philosophy for theories. For theories in science are, for example, hypothetico-deductive theories, or theoretical explanations by reference to intervening mechanisms, or inferences to the best explanation, and so forth. But there are no hypotheses in philosophy. There are no hypothetical rules of representation. Logical grammar, which determines the bounds of sense, can involve no hypotheses. We cannot say of a form of words: “Perhaps it makes sense, perhaps not, we must find out”. There are no intervening mechanisms in grammar—internal relations are

¹² It is quite remarkable that more than sixty years after the publication of the *Investigations* philosophers (such as the Wykham Professor of Logic at the University of Oxford) can still labour under the illusion that the private language argument(s) depend upon the principle of verification. But Professor Williamson confidently announces that “The simplest and clearest reconstruction had the argument rest on a verificationist premise to the effect that one cannot *be* in a mental state unless some independent check was possible on whether one was in that mental state” (29). I am afraid that Professor Williamson is 44 years out of date. This simple and clearest malconstruction of the private language argument(s) was advanced by Judith Jarvis Thompson in 1971 and definitively refuted by Anthony Kenny in his reply to her: see Kenny 1971. Williamson adds that those defenders of Wittgenstein who denied that he relied upon the principle of verification never satisfactorily explain how. It would be interesting to learn what was unconvincing about Kenny’s explanation in that very article or in Kenny 1973. I too advanced a verification-free explanation in Hacker 1972 (and improved it in the 2nd edition of 1986). I gave a very detailed explanation of the intricacies of Wittgenstein’s argument in Hacker 1990, in a series of seven interconnected essays, and a paragraph by paragraph exegesis of 144 pages. Others since then have done an excellent explanatory job, e. g. H.-J. Glock (1996) and Severin Schroeder (2006). One would like to know what Williamson found unsatisfactory about these detailed and elaborate arguments, which he obviously must have read before he condemned them one and all as unsatisfactory.

not welded together by any mechanism, but by the practices of uses expressions. There are no inferences to the best explanation in grammar either, for grammatical remarks do not postulate the existence of unobserved or unobservable entities. Nor are they confirmed or infirmed by subsequent observations and discoveries.

Wittgenstein's slogan 'The meaning of a word is its use in the language' is not theory of anything, least of all a use-theory of meaning. It is a grammatical statement to the effect that in most uses of the expression 'the meaning of a word' we can replace it by the expression 'the use of a word'. In most contexts, the two phrases mean the same. That is no more a theory than the assertion that in most uses of the word 'bachelor', it can be replaced by the phrase 'an unmarried man' (but not in such contexts as 'bachelor of art' or 'knight bachelor').

Wittgenstein's assertion that there are no theories in philosophy is not a theory about philosophy, but a grammatical elucidation of what philosophy now is. Philosophy is the dissolution of conceptual confusion and the description of segments of our conceptual scheme that is guided by the need to avoid conceptual, grammatical, entanglement. There is no room in philosophy for conjectures, or for hypothetico-deductive conclusions that can be verified or falsified in experience, or for explanations by means of intervening mechanisms, or for inferences to the best explanation that can be confirmed by an *experimentum crucis*. Normative descriptions of the use of words may be systematic, but they are no theory.

III. Numerous philosophers, predominantly American ones, have found Wittgenstein's appeal to the ordinary use of words as a tool for philosophical clarification and means of elucidation deeply offensive and often outrageous. They have raised the following battery of questions: If philosophy investigates the ordinary use of words, then

- (i) Philosophy is just a branch of empirical linguistics, which is absurd!
- (ii) How can Wittgenstein know what the ordinary use of words is without doing social surveys?
- (iii) Why should ordinary language be privileged?
- (iv) Why should ordinary use be privileged over technical use? Why should we be guided by the usage of the man on the Clapham omnibus rather than by the educated scientist?
- (v) Why should philosophers, like scientists, not introduce new technical terminology of their own to replace ordinary language?

These are grievous misunderstandings. I shall explain why.

First, the description of the correct use of words in our language is not the goal of philosophy, but of lexicography. Nor is language the subject-matter of philosophy in general, but only of philosophy of language. The description of grammatical rules is one, perhaps the major, *method* of philosophy. Moreover, the rules of grammar are described *with a very specific purpose in mind*: not to construct a grammar of the language—that is the task of descriptive linguistics. The purpose is to disentangle conceptual confusions and to resolve conceptual questions.

Secondly, knowledge of the grammar of one's language does not require social surveys, any more than a professional player's knowledge of the rules of chess requires social surveys. A philosopher's descriptions of the grammatical

rules for the use of some word or phrase that is the source of conceptual unclarity is the practical knowledge of the rules of a practice that anyone who has mastered the practice possesses. A chess master does not need to consult other chess players in order to be able to state rules of chess. Nor does a champion soccer player have to consult the man in the street to make sure what counts as scoring a goal. And a mathematician does not have to do social surveys in order to assure himself that $3 + 3 = 6$.

Thirdly, ordinary language may be contrasted with *formal* language, or it may be contrasted with *technical* language. Philosophy is concerned with formal languages or formal calculi only in the domain of the philosophy of logic. Otherwise formal languages are irrelevant to philosophical problems. No serious philosophical problem, outside the philosophy of logic, has ever been solved or dissolved by recourse to formal calculi. In general, philosophy examines expressions of natural language to resolve its problems. Natural language may be ordinary, non-technical language, or technical language of some science or other, or of mathematics and logic.

Fourthly, ordinary language has no privilege over technical language. Philosophy investigates technical language and the use of technical terms when the problems it confronts are problems that arise in the special sciences and involve theoretical terms of that science. No philosopher, least of all Wittgenstein, would suggest that we investigate problems in transfinite set theory without the use of the technical terminology of set theory. But most of the problems of philosophy concern non-technical terms of natural language, such as 'mind' and 'body', 'knowledge' and 'belief', 'cause' and 'reason', and so forth. These are not technical terms of any scientific theory (unlike 'meson', 'quark') that are rendered obsolete by the definitive refutation and rejection of the theory (like 'phlogiston' and 'caloric').

Professor Marconi queries whether, "if our 'conceptual scheme' is to be investigated by surveying our ordinary use of words, can such use really be conceived as completely segregated from scientific uses? E.g., is our ordinary use of 'mind' and related words entirely isolated from scientific theories of the mind and the brain?". To be sure, those parts of our conceptual scheme that belong to the province of technical terms in science are to be examined and described by scrutiny of the technical uses of words. Those parts of our conceptual scheme that do not are to be examined and described by reference to the ordinary, non-technical uses of words. Of course, the sciences also employ ordinary non-technical terms of natural language—as psychology and cognitive neuroscience employ such terms as 'mind', 'body', 'know', 'think', etc. If the use of the word 'mind' by psychologists and neuroscientists *in both true and false statements* differs from that of competent speakers of English, then they obviously do not mean the same by the word. There is nothing awry with that, as long as they explain what exactly they do mean, and do not attempt to draw inferences from sentences in which the word occurs that are licit only in the non-technical use of the word. In practice, we find that they do intend to use the word as we all do, that they really do want to illuminate the nature of what we all call "the mind". But because of conceptual confusions, they advance nonsensical assertions that pur-

port to be empirical, scientific discoveries (e.g., that the mind is the brain, that the brain thinks and decides, that memory is stored at synaptic connections).¹³

Finally, there is nothing stopping philosophers from introducing technical terminology of their own when they find the need for it—but not on the model of the technical, theoretical terms we find in the sciences. For the technical terms of the sciences are theoretical terms, the usefulness of which turns on the success of the theory. The repudiation of the theory typically renders the theoretical term obsolete, as happened with terms such as ‘phlogiston’ or ‘caloric’. But philosophy constructs no theories. Insofar as it needs technical terms this is for purposes of classification, as with such terms as ‘inductive’/‘deductive’, ‘analytic’/‘synthetic’, or ‘a priori’/‘a posteriori’—or indeed ‘language-game’, ‘family resemblance concept’, ‘genuine duration’.

Cannot philosophers introduce special philosophical uses of familiar expressions in ordinary language? May they not *regiment* usage for philosophical purposes—as Carnap and Quine recommended and did? Only if the regimenting is not for bogus theory construction. We must inquire what might be the special philosophical purposes for which the ordinary use of an expression requires a Procrustean bed. Most special philosophical uses turn out to be special philosophical confusions. For our task as philosophers is to examine the conceptual scheme we have, not one that we do not have. If the conceptual problem we are engaged with arises out of a confusion or unclarity in the use of an expression in our language, it is not going to be resolved by replacing it with a novel expression, but only surreptitiously swept under the carpet.*

* An early draft of this paper was presented at a symposium at the University of Haifa in November 2014.

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Revisiting Moore's Metaphysics

Herbert Hochberg

University of Austin

Abstract

The paper reexamines Moore's early (1890s-1903) metaphysics and critically examines some recent discussion (Bell, MacBride) of both Moore's metaphysics and the significance of the latter for his more well-known works of the early 20th century. In doing so it focuses on (1) the distinction between natural and non-natural properties, (2) problems regarding universals, relations, particulars, "tropes" and predication, and (3) the matter of "intentionality"—both as issues and as they arise in Moore's early writings.

Keywords: universal, particular, relation, trope, existence, proposition, natural.

A topic of Moore's dissertation works in 1897 and 1898 (Moore 2011) on the metaphysical basis of ethics suggests that key ideas in the classic *Principia Ethica* of 1903 can be understood in terms of his metaphysics or ontology of the period. This is especially so with respect to his celebrated claim that value properties are non-natural properties. That suggestion was set out in a 1962 paper examining a perplexing and odd ontology developed by the man later known as a, if not *the*, philosopher of *common sense*—a man celebrated for proving that two human hands exist by holding up both of his hands and, with appropriate gestures, asserting "Here is one hand, and here is another." That became a well-known example employed by one of the founding fathers of the development of the 20th century analytic tradition in British philosophy.

1. The pattern of 1899

While the realistic metaphysics that underlay Moore's widely discussed distinction has been reincarnated on the contemporary scene in a variety of modes, what is of concern here is simply the current revival of interest in Moore's early views. Such views culminated in the attack on idealism that he and Russell developed and sustained in the first quarter of the twentieth century and is now part of that century's history of philosophy. Yet, one of the questions currently being raised is whether Moore was attacking idealism at all, since he is allegedly taken to have derived his views from Franz Brentano and differed in an almost casual way, almost as an afterthought, by not taking a conscious act and its ob-

ject to form an organic whole. To take the act and object to do so would lead one to hold that you cannot have one part of such a whole without the other part. It would be a case of a supposed *internal connection*—a key idea for thinking in terms of the connection of everything with everything else that leads to the idealist's notion of a holistic *Absolute*. Moore started out in 1899 with the view that the ultimate constituents of Reality were concepts—'objects' of thought—that were general ideas or universals grasped by, but neither generated by nor requiring, either minds or acts of mind. He would in 1901 compare such universal concepts to *Platonic Ideas*. On his early view, particular objects of experience, like red circles or experiences of pleasure, not being universal concepts, are not among the ultimate entities. Far from thinking that general concepts are particulars in time (and space, in some cases), as Bell (1999) thinks Moore does, Moore clearly takes the ultimate entities—entities that *are* or *be*—to be universal concepts or meanings. He even explicitly says so. What causes commentators a problem, however, is that only particulars are implicitly said to exist, where a particular is understood to either exist in time or in both time and space. The operational distinction is between what entities have *Being*, but do not exist, and what exists in time (and space). This leads to the basic theme of the present discussion.

A major change, and one most important in the development of 20th century *analytic realism*, took place in Moore's thought in the short interval between his writings of 1897-99 and his 1900-01 paper "Identity." This involves an argument that Moore had developed by the end of 1900. That argument is two-fold, and both parts of it are now well known. One part consists of an argument for universals that became, in Russell's 1911 version, the standard argument for the reality of universals in the 20th century. The other part is an argument against individuation by relational difference and the resulting conclusion that numerical diversity could not be reduced to conceptual diversity. The rejection of a form of the *identity of indiscernibles* followed, as Moore noted. This, in turn, involved rejecting a fundamental theme of the 1899 paper. In that paper Moore had taken relations to ground the diversity of objects and had thus held to a simple version of the identity of indiscernibles: *to differ is to differ conceptually* (in a property). The later argument thus became an argument for the existence of basic particulars—entities that differed from each other but were conceptually the same. Such basic particulars, which grounded the diversity of other objects were simply or *numerically* different. For Moore these were tropes, not bare particulars or substrata. The line of argument he developed was that not everything was a universal or complex of universals, and this was in direct opposition to a basic theme of his 1899 paper.

The major shift in Moore's thought can then be seen to have focused on the nature of *diversity*. Thus in 1900-01 he distinguished two kinds of diversity—conceptual difference and numerical diversity. This almost flipped around Peter Abelard's early 12th century distinction between substantial diversity and numerical diversity. For Abelard, numerical diversity amounted to a difference in the application of predicates. Such a difference allowed for diversity to arise in connection with one substance. Thus a wax statue was made of wax, while the *substantially identical* piece of wax that it was made of was not itself made of wax. Abelard was interested in a theological issue where such a distinction could prove useful and, given the times, dangerous to employ. Moore was interested in the case of the universal Redness differing from the universal Yellow-

ness *conceptually*, as they are diverse concepts or “universal meanings,” as well as *numerically* diverse. He also took Redness to be conceptually identical with numerous red tropes—instances of the universal that were contained by particular red objects. Such tropes were held to be conceptually identical with each other, as well as with the universal, while differing numerically from the latter and from each other.

In the earlier paper of 1899 Moore had been led by his views on propositions and existence to *implicitly* introduce tropes as complexes of concepts. This requires explanation. Consider a perception of a red circle, *A*, and a judgment, (*J*), *that A is red*. For Moore, (*J*), considered as a proposition, and not as an act of judging, is taken as a complex of concepts, following a pattern reminiscent of F. H. Bradley's having taken such a proposition to be a *complex concept*. Moore also took *the concept of A* as well as *the object A* to be complexes of concepts. Thus objects, as well as complex concepts were complexes composed of concepts. This also followed Bradley's discussions of the problems of subject-predicate judgments, and Moore notes Bradley in his discussion.

Now to Mr. Bradley's argument that “the idea in judgment is the universal meaning” I have nothing to add. It appears to me conclusive, as against those, of whom there have been too many, who have treated the idea as a mental state (Moore 1899: 177).

He does not note that it also follows Bradley's construal of all predicative judgments as existential judgments.

In Moore's analysis, the details come through in piecemeal fashion. The proposition (*J*) is a complex of concepts including Redness and other concepts in a connecting relation. This presents an immediate problem as Moore has two opposed ideas guiding his discussion. One is that the truth of a proposition is not based on its relation to anything external to the proposition. He thus explicitly rejects any form of a correspondence theory of truth in 1899 and holds, instead, that truth is a matter of *the way* the component concepts forming a proposition are joined. He thinks in terms of a truth-forming connection and a false-forming connection (or form, relation) that connects the other concepts that make up the proposition.

What kind of relation makes a proposition true, what false, cannot be further defined, but must be immediately recognized (Moore 1899: 180).

One can also read Moore, as MacBride does, to take there to be, as Moore says, concepts of truth and falsity that are components of propositions. The single proposition forming relation then would be truth-making or false-making in combining one or the other with the remaining concepts in the proposition. As I see it, Moore's discussion better fits taking there to be different truth-forming and fact-forming connecting relations that are internal to the proposition. Such connections are then also “universal meanings” or concepts. That also provides a better account of his taking propositions to be necessarily true or necessarily false.

Moore further thinks that the proposition (*J*) is true in that Redness is one of the concepts that makes up the complex of concepts that form (*J*). This is a familiar theme regarding truth and gives rise to a problem. *A*, as a complex of

concepts, is the subject of which we predicate Redness. Moore wants to *deconstruct* such a use of the 'is' of predication into the claim that Redness is one of the concepts that make up *A*. Hence it is like saying that Redness is a *part of A* or that Redness is *in A*. The composite entity that is *A* is what is the 'truth-maker'. Moreover, the truth making connection is blended with the proposition forming relation that also, strangely, appears to form the object, *A*. But that obviously doesn't work out so simply. To see why, we will shift our focus to the proposition '*A* exists'.

Moore holds that existential proposition to be true, in the present case. How does he construe it? Like all propositions, that existential proposition is a complex of concepts. Moreover, one can see why Moore, who takes *Existence* to be a concept among concepts, holds that it contains *Existence* joined to the other concepts that make up *A*. In the process, he also takes a temporal concept, a date variably represented by the concept *Now*, to be a constituent of *A*. (We can neglect the spatial concept that is likely involved.) What then is the difference between the true proposition—*A* *Exists*—and the object *A*? Moore sees none and *identifies* existent objects such as *A*, which are temporal particulars, with true existential propositions. If you are tempted to ask whether they are conceptually or numerically identical, you must recall that we are considering the 1899 paper which lacks that distinction of a year later. In 1899 Moore holds that to differ is to differ conceptually. That aside, the proposition that *A* exists thus contains the concepts that make up what we might call a complex concept of *A* (*Redness*, *Circularity* and *Now* in the example) joined to the concept *Existence* by a connecting relation that *internally grounds* the proposition's being true, rather than false. That tempts one to say that if *A* *exists* it does so *necessarily*. This is connected to a general criticism of bundle theories of objects: such theories purportedly turn true subject-predicate propositions into necessary truths.

Such a criticism has a point but is neither clearly put nor viable, as one can argue along the lines of Russell's rejection of that claim during the 1940s. Russell noted that a proposition's being analytic is a matter of logic and, perhaps, of the definition or meaning of terms. The point was that it depends on whether one takes the sign '*A*', referring to *A*, as a logically proper name (primitive descriptive constant of appropriate type) or as an abbreviation. What he was doing was holding that one could use a primitive constant for a complex object, and not as an abbreviation for an expression embodying or reflecting an analysis of the object. However, there is another point.

Even if the sign '*A*' is construed as an abbreviation for a definite description, involving predicates referring to the properties occurring in the object's analysis, we would not have an analytic proposition. Rather, we would have an existential claim that a certain set of properties were conjoined or com-present. Russell, one recalls, had employed such a connecting relation in shifting to a bundle analysis of particulars in the 1940s. For, strange as it seems when now reading the early Moore, Russell had actually reverted to a variant of the view Moore held in 1899. I would also claim, and once did, that Bradley and Bosanquet held a similar view. (They, however, introduced a major addition since they held that all the complexes of concepts that formed true propositions were themselves items in the complex that was the one *Real* entity, *The Absolute*.)

Moore's pattern implicitly brings in another entity that is involved in his analysis. In addition to the object *A* there is (are) the complex concept(s) that is

(are) characterized as being the (a) 'concept of *A*'. It is open to hold that such a concept can join with *Existence* in the truth-forming or false-forming relation that combines concepts into propositions. Alternatively, one can hold that an object, such as *A*, is composed of the ultimate simple concepts (in *the* concept of *A*) joined to a simple concept, *Existence*, that forms the object *A*. We merely take a certain selection of concepts to indicate the object *had in mind* in judging that *A* is red or that *A* exists, as in the familiar case of Bradley's discussion of judgments regarding a piece of sugar being white, sweet, etc. Such a pattern is of special interest in that Russell's celebrated theory of (definite) descriptions was shortly to appear.

2. A major complication and a faulty analysis

Moore went on to consider the proposition that *Redness* exists, which while apparently a simpler existential proposition than the existential proposition about *A*, takes us directly into a major problem for his view. On that view such a simple existential proposition contains only the concept *Redness*, the concept *Existence*, a temporal concept, *Now*, and, perhaps, a spatial location—all connected by the appropriate truth-forming relation.

Aside from all the intricacies and problems of the pattern, one thing clearly emerges: such a complex *cannot be* identified with the simple universal concept *Redness*. It is, rather, a trope of *Redness*—a trope that is not a simple on Moore's pattern, but a complex temporal existent. Such a complex is identified with the existential proposition that *Redness exists now*. The universal *Redness* is not an existent, since it is not such a complex temporal particular, while a trope *in* a specific object *A*, the *Redness* of *A*, is a particular existent that is *in* *A*. Though, for Moore, the universal was a simple while the *Redness-of-A* was a complex, Bell confuses the two. Once he does that he can write a paper such as the one he has written. That is the simple point on which Bell's analysis rests—the confusion of the universal quality with its particular trope instances.

Given Moore's pattern it is easy to see that two basic claims Bell makes:

- (a) Moore's 1899 paper is derivative from Moore's reading of Brentano
- (b) Moore's universal concepts are really temporal particulars

are wrong and misconstrue much of what Moore does and the reasons he does what he does. Bell, understandably, appears to get lost in the web Moore created in his early discussions of concepts, judgments, truth and existence. That is understandable as Moore himself got lost in it when writing *Principia Ethica*. Bell's misreading is, in part, caused by his seeking to support his claim of (b) in terms of (a). He does this by stressing Moore's use of a variant of the 'act-object' distinction in the widely known classic "The Refutation of Idealism" of 1903. But Moore undoubtedly already had his own variant of Platonic realism, and the theme of the independence of the universal Ideas, from their much earlier Greek origins that he had studied. Even the tropes he implicitly introduces are in Plato, as Moore noted in 1901.

MacBride takes Bell's paper as a foil for setting out his own views, challenging the assertion that Moore's concepts were particulars and that Moore was setting out a type of mereological framework that took philosophical analysis to consist of analyzing complex particulars into constituent parts of the same kind of entity—particulars in this case. Thus, for Bell, the constituent concepts

of particulars must also be particulars. This supposedly is indicated, as Bell reads Moore, by noting that Moore would write that: “A thing becomes intelligible first when it is analyzed into its constituent concepts” (Moore 1899: 182).

According to Bell, what is ‘universal’ and an ‘attribute’ does not lend itself to such a *mereological* analysis. He doesn’t say exactly why, but one aspect is obvious. A bundle view that takes an object to be composed of qualities as parts does not make use, on the surface at least, of predicative attribution or exemplification. Rather, such a view appears to adopt a pattern of parts and wholes, with a quality being a part of, rather than an *adjective* of, the whole.

The point is clear if one understands its limitations. But the notion of a universal has been construed in different ways in various contexts. If diverse wholes share the same quality as a part, the quality is general or common or, as one says, *universal*. This was one of the senses that Russell had noted, and it is helpful to recall Nelson Goodman’s well known and significant work in *The Structure of Appearance*. The mereological calculus Goodman had constructed was construed in terms of elements like *Redness*, and not in terms of diverse tropes of *Redness*. For Goodman, such tropes were complexes of such a common *Redness* and common temporal and spatial qualities. He classified as *nominalist* an analysis (or the formal schema employed in setting one out) that recognized only one kind of basic entity. Whether one started with tropes or with entities like *Redness*, one recognized only particulars so long as there were not entities of diverse kinds or *types* that were taken as *simple*. To get a distinct entity from diverse elements, x , y , etc., one had to compound them in some way. Goodman rejected the generation of a domain of entities from a single entity, x , say, by introducing some operator, such as one that forms classes or properties—‘the unit class of x ’ or ‘the property of being x ’. He also rejected starting with two types, particulars x , y , etc. and properties, f , g , etc., in a predicate calculus style framework along the structural lines of *Principia Mathematica*.

In that sense the entities of Goodman’s calculus could be called ‘individuals’ or ‘particulars’, even if they were entities like *Redness* and *Yellowness* that were common to more complex entities, like A and B . Goodman’s concern was not with what the basic entities were but with not generating entities in the way alternative views allowed, such as classes from things and facts from constituents. This led him to adopt a mereological style calculus of individuals, generating complex individuals from simple ones.

In yet another way of distinguishing particulars from universals that Russell had noted, a universal was an entity that could be exemplified by something else, as well as something that could, in turn, exemplify something (of another Russellian type). A particular could only exemplify and not be exemplified. Universals were thus *predicables* that were also *terms* for other, higher order, *predicables*. On Moore’s early view, *Redness*, being common to various complexes that it was a component of, was a general or common property or *concept* (as in Bradley)—a universal entity for Moore in that sense. It was also an ‘abstract’ entity in not being temporal, and, hence, like a number, rather than an object like A or a trope. (As a simple, it could not contain a temporal quality.) The tropes of Plato, and perhaps of Aristotle, the individual accidents of some medieval philosophers and the later *moments* of the Austrian tradition are neither common nor abstract elements. The “tallness in *Theaetetus*” was particular to *Theaetetus*, and not something that could be the tallness in anyone else, Greek or

barbarian. It is thus odd to call entities like Redness itself, 'particulars', as Russell did in the version of the bundle view he developed in 1940-1948. He did so precisely because they were not exemplified by, but, rather, 'contained in' the objects they thereby *qualified*. Yet, for Russell, they were clearly "universals" in being common to objects, rather than particularized tropes that were unique to objects. The same is obviously true of Moore in 1899, a time when Russell was thinking of *universals* as being predicables. It was in the 1940 book, where he set out a bundle view, that he clearly and explicitly distinguished between various senses of the term 'universal'. It was clear what and why he said what he did. He replaced standard exemplification of universals by particulars in 1940 by adopting a view recalling Moore's writings of 1899 and 1900-01, since the apparatus of Russell's later bundle view resembles a mereological style calculus and recalls Moore's writings of almost a half-century earlier. It is interesting that Goodman had attended Russell's lectures, at Harvard in the spring of 1940, that were published as *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*.

In a way the whole 'issue' can be seen as merely a matter of terminology, if one emphasizes the mark of 'universality' as relying on what is 'attributable' or 'predicable'.

Bell's claims substantially depend on such a simple terminological matter. That matter also led Russell to use the term 'particular' for what was clearly the universal Redness, a common constituent of the circles *A* and *B* in our example. This is transparently clear when we think of Russell's usage in connection with his rejecting, in 1940, the well-known argument for basic particulars that he and Moore had set out many years before. One of the two reasons Russell had for later rejecting the argument was to have the principle of the identity of indiscernibles follow from the ontological analysis of objects. In this he can be seen to have dramatically reversed Moore's early rejection of that 'principle' by removing basic particulars as fundamental elements and taking only universal meanings to be such elements.

Russell's world of 1940 was also a world in which universals were the ultimate entities. Ordinary objects of experience, being compounds of such elements, were themselves common constituents of further complexes. It was a *world of universals*, whatever one calls them, from the basic entities up through partial complexes and to the total complexes of compresence.¹ Specifically, it was so in that, first, the basic entities were apprehended *attributes* that could be common components of objects like *A* and *B*; and, second, all entities were logically of the same kind. Part of the oddity of use is that qualities are common *qualia*, hence specifically not tropes.

Bell is simply reflecting a feature of bundle analyses of objects like *A* when he proceeds to say that Moore's pattern: "inevitably tends to favour the particular and the individual at the expense of whatever is *general or attributive*" (Bell 1999: 205).²

That clearly and explicitly mixes the two senses of universal—*being general* and *being attributable*. Bell also cites the concluding summary of "The Nature of

¹ Questions obviously arise concerning time, relations, implicit facts, events and the fitting of the physical world, its temporal and spatial properties and relations to the basically phenomenalist realms Russell starts with. These he addressed in some detail in his 1948 *Human Knowledge its Scope and Limits*.

² Emphasis added.

Judgment” as apparently conclusive evidence for his argument that Moore is a ‘particularist’.

A concept is not in any intelligible sense an ‘adjective’... For we must, if we are to be consistent, describe what appears to be most substantive as no more than a collection of such supposed adjectives (Moore 1898: 192-93).

As Fraser MacBride notes, this quotation hardly supports Bell’s claim as it is easily read to simply claim that universal concepts are not “adjectives” of what they qualify since they are components of such objects. As components that in relation form the objects and as ultimate entities in Moore’s ontology, such qualities are, in a clear use of ‘substance’, the substances of the world. One sees again, how the diverse senses of *universal* come into play. If one supplies the context that has been left out of the quotation it becomes even clearer:

A concept is not in any intelligible sense an ‘adjective,’ as if there were something substantive, more ultimate than it. For we must, if we are to be consistent, describe what appears to be most substantive as no more than a collection of such supposed adjectives: and thus, in the end, the concept turns out to be the only substantive or subject, and no one concept either more or less an adjective than any other. From our description of a judgment, there must, then, disappear all reference either to our mind or to the world. Neither of these can furnish ‘ground’ for anything, save in so far as they are complex judgments. The nature of the judgment is more ultimate than either, and less ultimate only than the nature of its constituents—the nature of the concept or logical idea (Moore 1899: 192-93).

Reading this more complete passage carefully, one sees that concepts are taken to be substantive in exactly the sense that Russell will call common qualities ‘particulars’ in 1940-48. They are not adjectives or predicables of objects but components of such complexes of concepts. However, they are also terms of relations that form both *objects*, such as *A*, and true and false *propositions*. A matter Moore does not explicitly focus on is whether such relations themselves are among the universal concepts. Since he does speak of the concept truth one can take him to recognize, by recognizing a truth-forming relation that is obviously not particular to one true proposition, that they are also universals. This fits with Moore’s later persistent puzzling about the way relations were predicable of objects and the way attributes were predicable.

Objects are simply complexes of concepts (true existential propositions) in a relation or in a number of inter-connecting dyadic relations. That is one thing involved in the above quotation. Another is that the concepts, as ultimate entities, are more ultimate than propositions, which in turn are more ultimate than either mind or the world of objects. The reference to the ‘world’ is of special interest. It was earlier taken in the context of a correspondence theory of truth, which Moore rejected. Such a theory viewed “the world” as the ground of truth of true propositions. In opposing this Moore held to the internal nature of truth—internal to the proposition—and rejected a world apart from a realm of Ideas and propositions as embodying truth and ultimate Being. How closer to Plato could one get at the dawn of the 20th century? Brentano’s particularist tropes clearly do not take center stage in Moore’s tale of the ascent into the light of the eternal realm of Ideas and propositions. In a way, the tangle of Ideas and

tropes will come to front and center with the apprehension of the Idea—Goodness-in-itself—in 1903 and the distinction between natural and non-natural properties.

Moore's early discussion does not bring in either mental acts or minds. *Truth* not only does not require an external ground of truth—external to the proposition; it is also totally separated from minds or mental acts. The act-object distinction is a relatively trivial consequence of the Platonism. The Ideas, along with the network of their propositional combinations, are there to be apprehended. In 1903 the act-object distinction will play a role, but not a defining role, in a specific and celebrated line of argument offered to refute idealism. Yet it is a part of the argument that has been somewhat overplayed by subsequent admirers and critics alike.

“The Refutation of Idealism” contains more than one argument, and a key argument is not dependent on the act-object distinction but, rather, seems to imply it. That argument is, simply put, that the idea of *Existence* neither contains the idea of *Being Perceived* nor is identical with it. Hence, it cannot follow that what exists must be perceived. What is worth noting is not only how that fits Moore's whole early period but how it especially jibes with the key theme of the other celebrated work published in 1903, *Principia Ethica*. There, recall, a key theme was that *Goodness* (idea, property) neither contained *Pleasure* (idea, property) nor was identical with it. That version of the argument has become too well known and too frequently praised and criticized to require repeating. Hence, like the idealists who were confused about *Existence*, the pleasure theorists were confused about *Goodness*.

3. Reading Moore

Suppose we go back almost a thousand years prior to Moore to the early years of Western medieval philosophy when there was a focus on the problems of individuation and universals. For some, in those years, to understand what a species like humanity is was to understand its ‘definition’—*being a rational animal*, say. The species was taken by some to be composed of parts—sometimes characterized as the genus or ‘matter’, *animal*, and the differentia or ‘form’, *rationality*. They thus employed the familiar model of matter being informed by forms. That pattern was applied to the present case by construing a species in terms of the underlying genus being ‘modified’ by a limiting form—*rationality*, for example. In other words the parts were understood in terms of being connected by some variant of a form inhering in matter to compose a whole. This has nothing to do with mereology, as one generally understands that—though one can easily use terms like *part* and *whole* in an obvious sense which allows for universals to be parts of other, more complex, universals. One of the most important early debates involved the consequences of what was involved in taking a differentia, *rationality*, to modify or join a genus, *animality* to form a species.

To take ordinary particulars to have properties as parts is not to automatically take such parts to be particulars. Nor is it to automatically take such objects, understood as such complexes, to be complex properties rather than complexes of properties. Those are additional moves that are not entailed by the initial move. But there is another complication. As one reads Moore it becomes perfectly clear that in his early years he takes there to be both the universal properties or concepts, Redness, and the particular instances—the Redness of

circle *A*, as opposed to the Redness of circle *B*. He does not specifically say this in 1899, but he does clearly imply it by what he does say when he holds that “Redness exists.” Though such a proposition might appear to contain only the concepts Existence and Redness, on Moore’s 1899 analysis. But Moore asserts that:

If now we take the existential proposition “Red exists,” we have an example of the type required. It is maintained that, when I say this, my meaning is that the concept “red” and the concept “existence” stand in a specific relation both to one another and to the concept of time. I mean that “Red exists now” and thereby imply a distinction from its past and future existence. And this connexion of red and existence with the moment of time I mean by “now” would seem to be as necessary as any other connexion whatever. If it is true, it is necessarily true, and if false, necessarily false (Moore 1899: 189-190).

Thus we have an existential proposition that also contains a temporal concept or date, *now*, and perhaps a spatial location as well, *here*, that he simply ignores at this point. Aside from the intricacies and problems of the resulting pattern that is being woven, one thing clearly emerges: the complex entity that we are now talking about, a propositional entity that is a complex composed of the universal concept Redness, a temporal concept, and the concept Existence in a relational connection *cannot be* the simple universal concept Redness (or *of Redness* here—this raises a complication that I ignore but will touch on below). It must be, like a trope of Redness, a temporal entity that is not a simple, but a complex. That complex is identified, not with the universal Idea, Redness, but with the existential proposition that Redness exists now. The universal Redness is not an existent, since it is not in time. It is a specific trope, as the Redness-of-*A*, which is an existent and a particular. Redness, moreover, is simple, while the Redness-of-*A* is a complex. Such features of Moore’s pattern indicate that two basic claims Bell makes are mistaken. Those claims are, first, that Moore’s 1899 paper is derived from his reading of Brentano, and, second, that Moore’s concepts are not universals at all but, like medieval individual accidents, they are the temporal particulars or moments of the Austrian philosophers.

It seems as if Bell gets lost, as one easily does, in the web Moore created *via* his discussion of concepts and existence. The misreading is partially caused by Bell’s stressing Moore’s employing the ‘act-object’ distinction in the later “The Refutation of Idealism.” That distinction is of course associated closely with Brentano in present discussions. However, Moore undoubtedly already had his variant of Platonic realism, and the independence of the universal Ideas, from much earlier Greek sources. Even the tropes or moments or individual accidents are in Plato, as Moore notes in mentioning Plato’s *Phaedo*. We might also recall that Russell, in the 1940s, took common properties, like Redness, as components of objects, but called such components ‘particulars’. He did so simply because they were no longer attributed as predicables of objects, but were constituents of such objects. So while they were particulars, they were in a clear sense common attributes of diverse objects. The objects themselves are also, one might note, common properties in that they are logically of the same ‘kind’ or ‘type’ as their component qualities. In short, for Russell, complexes of qualities—*complexes of compresence*—were construed as complex qualities.

Concepts are clearly universal qualitative concepts for Moore in the 1898 paper. Problems arise for some, first, due to his introducing, in addition, particular instances in the unclear and implicit way that he does in 1899; second, by his discussion of existence and his holding that existents are composites that contain the concept *existence*; third, by his distinguishing *being* from *existing*; fourth, his using the term 'Redness' to speak of both the universal concept and of particular Rednesses that exist at times; and, fifth, being captivated by the idea that objects like *A* and *B*, as well as temporal, particular Rednesses, are *existential propositions*.

Such things are what led to my speaking, in the early paper on Moore, of there being 'nominalist' aspects in Moore's metaphysics. That was not to say, as I reiterated in two following pieces, that Moore was a nominalist, as some critics had misunderstood. Universal concepts were not existents, for Moore, but they were ultimate constituents of what did exist, according to the ontology of 1899. This distinction between being and existence persisted in his, and Russell's writings, as one especially notes in their almost simultaneously written *The Problems of Philosophy* and *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*.

Existents, for Moore, were taken in nominalist fashion as what existed in time. That is true. This made them particulars, by the conception of the particular-universal distinction that takes a particular to be a temporal existent while a universal concept does not so exist. They are no more temporal than numbers, if one acknowledges such abstract entities. Such eternal things are then sometimes said *to have Being*. The oddity of phrasing was compounded by his perplexing identification of objects with existential propositions—propositions that contained the concepts that composed what one might think of as a description of the object together with the concept *Existence*. One is tempted to speak of the concept of the object being joined with Existence, and Moore does sometimes write as if he is thinking in that way. If so, such a concept would seem to be something like a composite of concepts that give a uniquely indicating description of the object, employing, in cases like that of *A* and *B*, spatio-temporal concepts.³ Moore did not go into detail about this, and problems obviously lurk in doing so. To tackle it would invite one to speak gibberish in short order. However, it is safe to say that Moore held there to be both temporal moments and spatial locations. Both such moments and locations, however else construed, clearly can be common to various complexes of concepts. It is thus equally clear that a complex composed of Redness and Now could be a complex of concepts that is not an existent particular object, as it lacks the concept of Existence. So one is tempted to think of it as a *concept of* a particular Redness trope that is not itself such a trope. That is as far as I will go into this stew. What is easy to see though, is that for Moore, objects like *A* and *B* are particulars, as are their component quality instances, such as the Redness-of-*A*, but, ultimately, both the objects and such instances are themselves composed of common concepts. That is the view of 1899.

I think it worth noting, given Quine's importance in the history of the analytic tradition, that if you believe (along lines recalling Duns Scotus) that there are individuating properties like the property of being-Socrates, *Socratizing* or *Socratizes*, then such a property is sensibly predicated, either truly or falsely, of

³ To be "in time", one might suppose, would be to contain both a temporal concept and Existence.

particular things. Particulars, in what I take to be an essential sense of that notion, one Russell emphasized in 1903, are not exemplifiable. On a linguistic variant of that theme, the term ‘Socratizes’ was treated by Quine as a predicate—which was one point of introducing such an expression in the first place. That was part of Quine’s well-known attempt to reprocess proper names into predicates in order to eliminate such indexical signs from a schema. That device helps to separate what goes on in Moore from what Bell thinks must be going on. There is no need to hold that even Moore’s individual concepts, such as the concept ‘of’ Redness are particulars themselves, let alone the clearly universal concept Redness itself. It is the universal that is apprehended when one judges that—Red(ness) \neq Yellow(ness)—or that Red is darker than Yellow. In fact just consider the judgment that two particular instances of Redness are instances of one and the same universal concept—a type of judgment that will enter explicitly into Moore’s 1900-1901 paper “Identity.”

What we have in his discussion of Redness in 1899 is something reminiscent of a once much discussed Fregean problem concerning reference to concepts. Recognizing concepts, like being a horse, one oddly did not refer to such a concept by employing the phrase “the concept horse.” So, oddly for Moore, recognizing the concept Redness, one does not truly assert its existence when one, perceiving *A*, truly judges that: Redness exists (here, now). What exists in time (and space) is the Redness-of-*A*, and not Redness. Ignoring the distinction or confusing the two, as I thought Moore had sometimes done, a reader can take Moore’s concepts as particulars. I thought, in the 1962 paper, that Moore sometimes wrote, in 1898, as if he himself mingled the two—as it easy to do on such a view. Essentially that is what Bell does in his recent paper. Or to put it differently, he avoids literally mixing the two because he collapses the one into the other.

4. Bell’s Misreading

Bell’s discussion of Moore employs the following declaration:

Moore’s whole/part theory embodies three basic principles. The first is now generally referred to as the *principle of mereological essentialism*, and states that a whole is internally related to its component parts. In other words, if *x* is a part of *W*, then *W* is necessarily such that it has *x* as a part. As Hylton points out, this is the *only* internal relation that was acknowledged by Moore at this time. The second principle is methodological—we might call it the *principle of mereological adequacy*. It states that all forms of complexity (and hence all forms of analysis) involve only whole/part and part/part relations. And, thirdly, at least until 1902, Moore also subscribed to a strong *principle of mereological atomism*, namely, that in any complex whole the parts are detachable: each part could exist independently of any whole in which it happens to participate (Bell 1999: 202-203).

Much in this is simply not true. It is not true that Redness could exist by itself, as Redness does not exist at all.

Moore’s later statement in *Principia Ethica* that such color properties can exist by themselves, apart from objects like *A* and *B*, as they are “natural properties,” does involve a shift to talk about tropes. That is actually the basis for the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘non-natural’ properties. In 1903 Moore did

mix Redness with the Redness-of-*A*, etc. in *Principia*. Or, at least he was confused, as he later honestly and famously replied to Broad's objection to his claim by saying that he had no idea what he was talking about then.

Moreover, *part-of* is hardly the only internal relation in Moore, assuming it is a relation at all. There are the truth making and false making compositional relations that are specifically held to be internal and formative of propositions and objects, in the case of true existential propositions. There are also the various relations between concepts that compose complexes that are not existential propositions. Part-of, moreover, is clearly construed in terms of the compresence type of relation that provides for a complex of concepts. To say a concept is a component or part of a proposition is to say it enters into one of a set of relations that form the proposition. Totally unlike a mereological system, Moore recognizes what mereologists systematically tend to deny, the connecting relations formative of complexes—the purportedly defined common mereological sign '+' used to signify a sum such as '*A + B*'. Moore is philosophically acute in recognizing that, structurally considered, the definition goes the other way. Finally, it is simply not true that for any part of any whole it could exist apart. No universal concept exists at all, and yet they are the ultimate parts of all complexes. Moreover, existents must contain the concept of existence. No complex that does not contain it thereby exists. And so on. Finally, we must recall that there are various relations involved in some way internally in concepts. Moore surely took these as universal concepts of a special kind and, consequently, not as existents.

The act-object dichotomy that Moore employed in "The Refutation of Idealism"—along with the 'act-psychology' of a time—undoubtedly played some role in Moore's writing. Moore and Russell, as is well known, read and wrote about the Austrian philosophers. But it is far more likely that Moore's early pattern of the analysis of objects into universal concepts in relation goes back to Plato and to Moore's familiarity with Bradley. The kind of bundle view he is developing is akin to more local philosophical patterns, those of Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* and Bosanquet's *Essentials of Logic*, than to what occurs in Brentano.

The move to the act-object distinction that is prominent in the 1903 paper is not at all far removed from the simple recognition of universal concepts being independent of the mental experiences that apprehend them. When he moves from Moore's implicitly bringing in Redness tropes in 1899 to taking him to thereby replace the universal concepts he explicitly begins with, as Moore seems to have done in *Principia Ethica*, Bell rearranges what takes place in Moore. In 1903, in trying to articulate an ontological difference of kind between Yellow and Good in *Principia Ethica*, and thus provide an ontological ground for the difference between value and fact, he does appear to confuse trope instances with what he once took to be universal concepts. But that is certainly not to be taken as evidence of the non-being of universals in the 1899 paper, and certainly not, in its development in 1900-01. That is, as one says, crystal clear from the latter paper.

In 1903, Moore said what he did because he was thinking of natural properties as the particular tropes—that exist like atoms of old—and are constituents of objects like *A* and *B*. Non-natural properties were non-temporal universal concepts and relations. To put it more clearly, the natural properties of *Principia Ethica* are the particular instances of the universal concepts of 1899 and 1901. The

universals themselves are not natural properties that exist in time (and space). When we predicate a universal like Redness truly, we have a case where a trope is a constituent of an object and such a trope instantiates the universal Redness. It is a familiar tripartite schema if we recall again the Tallness in *Theaetetus* and the Tallness itself of Plato's *Phaedo*. A universal property like Goodness is emphatically non-natural in that there are no corresponding tropes of such universals. Probably relations are not as well. For Moore continually takes the predication of attributes to be fundamentally different from the predication of relations. And it is not merely a matter of their *addicity*. It is likely a matter of their not having corresponding tropes, as is the case with value properties.

Consider again the beautiful red circles, A and B. They are red in virtue of Red-1 and Red-2 that are particular constituents, respectively, of the circles. Red-1 and Red-2 are of a kind in that, by 1901, they are simple entities that do not contain Redness but *exemplify* it. Beauty is directly exemplified by both A and B without benefit of an intermediary trope. Hence, the value properties become non-natural while Redness is 'natural' given its trope instances. That is, as in the case of universals and particulars, different distinctions are involved. One distinguishes between a natural and a non-natural property in terms of (1) Being in time and not being in time, (2) being a component of what is qualified and being predicable of what is qualified, (3) being a universal and being a trope, (4) existing as opposed to Being. These various senses mingle and intersect in various ways that further complicates the matter. In any case, Moore arrives at the terminology and its uses via mixing tropes, in time (and space) with their universals in his discussion. Thus while speaking of Yellow he ignores the universal and indicates trope instances in *Principia Ethica*. In the case of Good and Beauty he speaks of the universal. So the difference, natural vs. non-natural, entered the philosophical arena in confusion.

The Moorean confusion is shared by Bell, and he thus arrives at his view of Moore in the 1899 paper. Yet, the picture is more complicated, for regarding the purported role of the act-object distinction in Moore's early paper we might note:

With this, then, we have approached the nature of a proposition or judgment. A proposition is composed not of words, nor yet of thoughts, but of concepts. Concepts are possible objects of thought; but that is no definition of them. It merely states that they may come into relation with a thinker; and in order that they may do anything, they must already be something. It is indifferent to their nature whether anybody thinks them or not. They are incapable of change; and the relation into which they enter with the knowing subject implies no action or reaction. It is a unique relation which can begin or cease with a change in the subject; but the concept is neither cause nor effect of such a change. The occurrence of the relation has, no doubt, its causes and effects, but these are to be found only in the subject (Moore 1899: 179).

Thus it is the thinker that comes into the relation to the proposition thought or judged about. It is not an act of thought that is focused on. The key move is not so much in terms of act and object here, but, rather, that in order that concepts may "do anything they must already be something." It is the sort of thing that is echoed in Sartre's proof of 'realism' a half-century later. *Being thought* presupposes 'being' and not the reverse. There is a presupposition, but it cannot be the

case that 'being' presupposes being thought. It is a straight-forward rejection of Berkeley. It does not presuppose the analysis of thought in terms of act and object unless all one means by that is a separation of what thinks and what is thought—as we find in Plato. The latter's variant of innate ideas and discussions of various post-Platonic notions of the "active intellect" not withstanding.

Bell throws in odd additions to support the claim that Moore's view is derived from Brentano. In a footnote, after cautioning that he will not discuss Moore's ethics, he cites "six propositions" that he finds in Moore that are also found in Brentano. They are (1) there is one basic ethical concept; (2) it is that of intrinsic value—good in itself; (3) it is objective; (4) it is a non-natural property, i.e. not temporal; (5) fundamental ethical principals are self-evident (perhaps perceived by the mind, after appropriate preparation, by dialectic); (6) aesthetic satisfaction and knowledge are among the higher of many goods.

As to (1) all one need do is recall the role of "The Idea of the Good" in Plato's hierarchy of Forms; regarding (2), one might consider "The Good is Good", "The Beautiful is Beautiful" and various discussions of the Good itself and in itself, in the dialogues as well as in neo-Platonism; (3) one might reread the *Protagoras*, in this connection, and whether man is the measure of all things; as to (4), is it not obvious that the traditional eternal Ideas are held to be atemporal? Regarding (5), one might consider exactly what takes place when a Platonic Idea is grasped, "uncovered" or perceived by the mind, after appropriate preparation, by dialectic, as well as the emergence from the cave into the light of the sun; and, finally, regarding (6), we might suspect that the experience of The Beautiful and beautiful things, as such, are Good—particularly abstract art that does not deceive, as some later art theorists have picked up a theme from Plato and the neo-Platonists. Mondrian is a clear case in point, Kandinsky another. Bell has hardly added to his case for the deciding influence of Brentano rather than Plato.

5. MacBride's Interpretation

In effect, I have agreed with MacBride's reading of Moore (MacBride 2012a and 2012b) by adding some details regarding my understanding of Moore that support his criticisms of Bell. The problems that I find with MacBride's reading have more to do with his handling of propositions and relations than with his rejection of Bell's reading of Moore. MacBride construes Moore as taking propositions to be non-entities in view of their being complexes of the fundamental entities, universal concepts, in relation—in the truth-forming or false-forming relation. Thus, the nature of judgment would turn out to involve the claim that judgments, true or false, are both non-entities and not simply like concepts that are Beings but non-existents. This I think is due to the way MacBride himself construes relations. For him, relations dissolve into their terms—they are, as he once put it, needless posited entities. There are two issues, then. First, does Moore recognize relations? Second, Moore's view aside, do we need to recognize relations? The second takes us to the classical problems regarding universals and the specific case of relational universals. Here I have nothing new to add and it is pointless to reiterate old themes.

Regarding the first, I think it clear that Moore recognizes relations and requires propositions. I have argued earlier (1962, 1978) that his later account of belief and judgment (in cases like someone judging that *this is a pencil*) in *Some*

Main Problems of Philosophy requires propositional entities—either in the form of proposition or in the sense of a special kind of attribute of mental acts—a content property, as one might say—of judgment, belief, etc. In 1899 it seems transparent from the way he talks about judgments, understood as propositions, being independent of minds and mental acts. Moreover, any existent object is itself an existential proposition—in Moore’s own words. Removing propositions would oddly, though not paradoxically, remove all the existents from his ontology. Yet, the fundamental entities are universal concepts and these include relations, which are basis for differentiating objects. The type of exception is in the category of universal relations, specifically the truth-forming and false-forming relations.

The material diversity of things, which is generally taken as starting-point, is only derived; and the identity of the concept, in several different things, which appears on that assumption as the problem of philosophy, will now, if it instead be taken as the starting-point, render the derivation easy. Two things are then seen to be differentiated by the different relations in which their common concepts stand to other concepts. The opposition of concepts to existents disappears, since an existent is seen to be nothing but a concept or complex of concepts standing in a unique relation to the concept of existence.

This marks the major difference between the 1899 and 1900-01 papers, as the later sets out the argument for numerical difference as distinct from conceptual diversity as we have already seen. Rejecting it in the paper of a year later, Moore removes the intricate web of the earlier paper. For tropes are explicitly recognized as the constituents of objects. Tropes, as basic particulars that are instances of universals now stand in a unique relation to such universals and no longer contain them. Objects like *A*, *B*, and their individual rednesses are no longer existential propositions. But not only is there Moore’s variant of an exemplification relation between tropes and their universals, Moore obviously rejects construing tropes as alike by means of a similarity relation. For, they are of course similar in virtue of being conceptually identical with each other and the same universal, as well as exemplifying the same universal. That is Realism with overkill.

The 1900-01 paper is quite clear about the basic Platonic pattern and the explicit distinction between the basic particular Redness-of-*A* and the universal concept Redness, as well as further non-explicable relation between them.

On the other hand, we have accepted the principle frequently implied in Plato that the idea in a thing may be different from the idea in itself; and we have still to see whether there is any insurmountable objection to this view (Moore 1901: 111).

My answer is that something more than this is meant by exact similarity, namely, the fact that each of the things said so to be has a peculiar relation to a third thing, numerically but not conceptually different from them, which they have not to one another. This third thing is the Platonic idea, or, as we may now call it, the universal (Moore 1901: 114).

It is clear that Moore has worked out and clarified the metaphysical view he developed in his thesis and transcribed into *The Nature of Judgment*. He has done so by clarifying the differences and connections between particularized instances of

universal ideas and the Ideas themselves. Over and above the explicit reference to Platonic Ideas, this seems quite in Platonic fashion. He has also clarified his acceptance of both kinds of entities. He has done this on the basis of his argument against the identity of indiscernibles and his explicitly recognizing two types of identity and diversity.

What comes to muddy the waters again in 1903 is the somewhat careless discussion in *Principia Ethica*, that is obviously based on his earlier recognition of both universals (Ideas) and particularized qualities. That distinction and the non-constitutive connections of the Platonic Ideas to their particularized instances and the objects those instances inhere in found the way natural and non-natural properties are distinguished. Natural properties are universals blurred into their particularized instances in 1903. This cannot be read backwards into either the 1899 or the 1900-01 papers.

Since natural properties are thought of in terms of their individual tropes, this yellowness, that experience of pleasure, etc., in 1903, they remain components of the objects that a relevant adjectival expression, such as "is yellow" truly qualifies. Non-natural properties, however, being external to objects and relational patterns among them, are universals that are predicated of wholes. If, for simplicity, we think in terms of a purely aesthetic quality of value, rather than Goodness, and think of a universal concept of Beauty, then we can take, to keep it simple, the red circle *A* to be beautiful, or even ascribe Beauty to the pattern composed of *A* in spatial juxtaposition to *B*. There would not then be a trope of Beauty involved as there are no such tropes. The universal would be ascribed to a 'whole'—*A*, composed of particularized natural properties or the more complex whole, the pattern formed by *A* and *B*. That raises a question about the connection between such wholes and a non-natural value property: a question Moore would take up about twenty years later.

Later Moore would take value properties to have a unique necessary connection to the complexes they characterized by means of a necessary connection between the properties jointly involved in the composition of the object and the value property. It is no accident that in speaking of this aspect of his view he reverted to clearly taking the natural properties as if they were universals. In short, if *A* was Beautiful, any object with the natural properties of *A* would also be Beautiful. Moore's whole pattern, one might note, is obviously reminiscent of Plato's concern not only with the Ideas but with the details of their connections—Ideas "partaking" of Ideas, as well as with the connection between Ideas and particulars.

Perhaps Moore, in 1903, eager to drive a deep wedge between natural and non-natural properties, simply omitted the non-existent, non-valuative Platonic Ideas that he had so clearly and carefully separated from their particular tropes in 1901, tropes that he had implicitly introduced in 1899 while explicitly recognizing Platonic Ideas in 1899. In 1903 he appears to have simply mixed a universal like Yellow with its tropes and implicitly used the differences between tropes and universals to ground the difference between natural and non-natural properties.

It seems necessary, then, to regard the world as formed of concepts. These are the only objects of knowledge. They cannot be regarded fundamentally as abstractions either from things or from ideas; since both alike can, if anything is to be true of them, be composed of nothing but concepts. A thing becomes intelli-

ble first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts.... Even the description of an existent as a proposition (a true existential proposition) seems to lose its strangeness, when it is remembered that a proposition is here to be understood, not as anything subjective-an assertion or affirmation of something but as the combination of concepts which is affirmed. For we are familiar with the idea of affirming or “positing” an existent, of knowing objects as well as propositions; and the difficulty hitherto has been to discover wherein the two processes were akin. It now appears that perception is to be regarded philosophically as the cognition of an existential proposition; and it is thus apparent how it can furnish a basis for inference, which uniformly exhibits the connexion between propositions (Moore 1899: 182-183).

It is interesting that the problems posed for Moore’s 1899 view were considered in some detail by Russell in his 1940-48 view that also construed objects as complexes of qualities. In a given space, say the center or left of the visual field, something can later be where something else was. For Moore, in the early years, as for Russell in the latter years, a temporal moment or span allowed for incompatible properties and diverse objects to be at the same location. But for Moore’s early account there is an obvious problem that is an old one: Existence itself. Plato mused about existence existing. Moore does not. Perhaps that is because he sometimes appears to hold no universal concept exists. It would appear to be senseless to take there to be *existents* in virtue of there being tropes of *Existence*. Such tropes would, in turn, have to contain the concept of existence, on Moore’s pattern. Alternatively, unlike Plato, he might hold that existence, like other concepts, does not itself exist, but simply ‘Is’ or ‘has Being’.

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One Cheer for Autonomy-centered Perfectionism: An Arm's-length Defense of Joseph Raz's Perfectionism Against an Allegation of Internal Inconsistency

Matthew H. Kramer

University of Cambridge

Abstract

In the present article, I will concentrate sustainedly on a central strand of Jonathan Quong's critique of Joseph Raz's autonomy-centered liberal perfectionism. Rightly taking Raz to have offered the most elaborate and prominent version of autonomy-centered perfectionism in the contemporary debates over such matters, Quong devotes much of the first half of his book to contesting a number of Raz's positions. This article will defend Raz against one of Quong's chief objections, an allegation of internal inconsistency.

Keywords: perfectionism, liberalism, Joseph Raz, neutrality, autonomy.

Jonathan Quong's *Liberalism without Perfection* (2011) is a highly impressive defense of Rawlsian anti-perfectionism. In the present article, I will concentrate sustainedly on a central strand of Quong's critique of Joseph Raz's autonomy-centered liberal perfectionism. Rightly taking Raz to have offered the most elaborate and prominent version of autonomy-centered perfectionism in the contemporary debates over such matters, Quong devotes much of the first half of his book to contesting a number of Raz's positions. This article will defend Raz against one of Quong's chief objections, an allegation of internal inconsistency.

From the outset, however, the limitedness of my defense of Raz in this article should be clearly signaled. My ripostes to some of Quong's indictments are decidedly not aimed at vindicating the soundness of Raz's overall theory or the soundness of the theories propounded by other autonomy-centered perfectionists. On the contrary, although I elsewhere argue in favor of a certain type of

perfectionism,¹ autonomy-centered theories (of which Raz's doctrine is the premier specimen) are very different from the variety of perfectionism which I espouse. Moreover, even if I were attracted toward autonomy-centered theories, I would concur with some of Quong's animadversions on Raz's ideas. His telling critique of Raz's conception of authority, for example, is in line with several broadly similar critiques put forward by philosophers whose challenges to Raz's understanding of authority are not oriented toward disputes between perfectionists and neutralists.²

Still, although I am wary of many aspects of the autonomy-centered perfectionism espoused by Raz and others, and although I am sympathetic toward quite a few aspects of Quong's Rawlsian neutralism, this article will seek to deflect some of Quong's anti-perfectionist strictures. Were those strictures correct, they could be generalized *mutatis mutandis* to virtually all perfectionist doctrines—including the aspirational-perfectionist doctrines which I elsewhere champion. Hence, notwithstanding that my defense of the foremost proponent of autonomy-centered perfectionism will be an arm's-length intervention, it will be pursued in earnest.

1. The Harm Principle

Ever since the publication of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* in 1859, the so-called harm principle has been of central importance in the political thought of liberals. As an encapsulation of liberalism's resistance toward paternalistic interventions into the lives of individuals, the harm principle has been invoked saliently in a myriad of controversies over sundry governmental measures. It lays down a necessary condition for the legitimacy of such measures that involve coercion or manipulation. As Mill classically proclaimed,

the only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will is to prevent harm to others. His own good either physical or moral is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise or even right (Mill 1956: 13).

Although this formulation on its own terms is applicable to acts of dominance by private citizens as well as to acts of dominance by public officials, it is especially pertinent as a touchstone for the legitimacy of acts of the latter kind. No coercive or manipulative steps taken by governmental officials in their public capacities are morally permissible if the steps are not taken for the purpose of protecting people (or animals) from being harmed by others.

Of course, any thorough exploration of the harm principle would have to elucidate its key elements. We would need to investigate searchingly the notion of 'harm' itself,³ and we would likewise have to ponder carefully what sorts of

¹ The arguments are presented in the closing chapters of a book, *Liberalism with Excellence*, on which I am currently working.

² For Quong's critique of the Razian conception of authority, see Quong 2011: 110-20. For some of the cognate challenges to that conception mounted by other philosophers, see Darwall 2009, 2010; Herskovitz 2003, 2011; Perry 2013.

³ I probe some of these complexities of the harm principle in Kramer 2014.

actions are the exercises of power—the exertions of coercion or manipulation—that fall within the harm principle’s ambit. To some degree, this article’s discussions of Quong on Raz will address questions about the scope of the harm principle. For the purposes of those discussions, however, there is no need for any detailed analysis of the notion of harm. A pre-theoretical understanding will suffice. After all, the focus in this article lies less on the harm principle itself than on the role of that principle within Raz’s perfectionism.

2. A Road Not Taken

Given that the paramount aim of Quong’s critique of Raz is to show that Raz’s autonomy-centered perfectionism will countenance the use of paternalistic coercion or manipulation in any number of situations, it is somewhat surprising that Quong does not highlight Raz’s amplification of the harm principle. In the final chapter of *The Morality of Freedom*, Raz rewrites the harm principle in a disconcerting fashion: “Mill’s harm principle states that the only justification for coercively interfering with a person is to prevent him from harming others. My discussion will revolve round the somewhat wider principle which regards the prevention of harm to anyone (himself included) as the only justifiable ground for coercive interference with a person” (1986: 412-13). By affirming that people can legitimately be subjected to coercive interference for the purpose of preventing them from harming themselves, Raz has markedly retreated from the anti-paternalistic unyieldingness of Mill’s formulation of the harm principle.

To be sure, the retreat from Mill’s robust principle is far from comprehensive. As Raz himself observes, his version of the harm principle “restrains both individuals and the state from coercing people to refrain from certain activities or to undertake others on the ground that those activities are morally either repugnant or desirable” (1986: 413). Still, although the Razian harm principle does disallow governmental measures that coerce or manipulate people with the aim of inducing them to pursue more wholesome ways of life, it does not in itself prohibit any measures that coerce or manipulate well-informed adults with the aim of inducing them to pursue less dangerous ways of life. For example, it does not in itself disallow governmental measures that coerce or manipulate well-informed fat adults with the aim of inducing them to adopt more healthful patterns of eating. Similarly, it does not in itself disallow governmental measures that coerce or manipulate well-informed adults with the aim of inducing them to eschew dangerous sports such as rock climbing and boxing (or with the aim of inducing them to desist from the dangerous habit of smoking). Of course, just as the concept of harm must be explicated before we can know how expansive the protective scope of Mill’s version of the harm principle is, so too an explication of that concept is needed before we can gauge how narrow the protective scope of the Razian harm principle is. Nonetheless, without going into such complexities—which, within this article, would take us too far afield—we can see that the basic terms of Raz’s formulation are significantly more receptive to governmental interventions into people’s lives than are the basic terms of Mill’s formulation.

Rather surprisingly, however, Quong does not devote any attention to Raz’s rewriting of the harm principle. Indeed, he glosses over that rewriting when he introduces Raz’s discussion of the matter: “Raz’s more detailed argument [for liberal toleration] aims to provide a perfectionist account of Mill’s

well-known harm principle. That principle, in its basic form, states that the only reason which can serve to legitimate the use of coercion against someone is to prevent that person from causing harm” (Quong 2011: 51). What Quong says here is of course accurate, but it is somewhat misleading. For a Millian liberal, a necessary condition for the legitimacy of the use of coercion against any person P is that the coercion will serve to prevent harm that would have been caused by P to others. Mill laid great stress on this point, not only in the wording from *On Liberty* which I have quoted above but also in some equally famous wording that almost immediately follows:

[T]he conduct from which it is desired to deter [somebody against whom coercion is wielded] must be calculated to produce evil to someone else. The only part of the conduct of anyone for which he is amenable to society is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute.⁴

Of course, my quotation of Mill’s ringing pronouncements is not meant to suggest that his position is entirely unproblematic. Pinning down the distinction between self-regarding conduct and other-regarding conduct has proved to be a deeply contentious matter in political philosophy and in American constitutional theory. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties of drawing such a contrast, an insistence on its central importance for the legitimacy of coercive or manipulative actions by governments is a hallmark of Millian liberalism. On that very point, in connection with the infliction of harm, Raz abandons the Millian tradition.

All the same, because Quong does not take exception to Raz on that point, I too—in this article—will set it aside. Quong instead concentrates on some other key aspects of Raz’s engagement with the harm principle. As has been noted, several of Quong’s queries are well-founded and perceptive. Here, however, we shall examine certain arguments of his that are misdirected.

3. Threats and Taxes

As Quong observes (2011: 61), Raz rightly holds that the harm principle articulates a necessary condition for the legitimacy of manipulation as well as for the legitimacy of coercion. Raz writes: “Resort to manipulation should be subject to the same condition as resort to coercion. Both can be justified only to prevent harm” (1986: 420). In my remarks heretofore in this article, I have indeed taken as given that the harm principle applies to manipulation as much as to coercion. Now, because manipulation is covered by the harm principle, Raz’s autonomy-centered perfectionism—with its emphasis on the use of subsidies and other “positive” techniques to encourage people to lead more robustly autonomous and valuable lives—might appear to contravene that principle quite blatantly. Quong contends that Raz has indeed run afoul of the harm principle by sanctioning the use of perfectionist techniques that are properly classifiable as manipulative. Quong makes clear the far-reaching implications of his critique of Raz on this point, as he indicates that he will “focus on perfectionist state subsi-

⁴ Mill 1956: 13. Though Mill did not squarely address the issue, the best view of the harm principle is that it can be satisfied by governmental actions that are aimed at protecting non-human animals from serious harm.

dies: such subsidies are a major feature of most liberal perfectionist arguments, and so if they are prohibited on grounds of manipulation, this dramatically reduces the scope for perfectionist state action” (2011: 61). In a footnote, Quong mentions an array of perfectionists who have advocated the use of state subsidies to steer people toward ways of life that are suitably rewarding. Those theorists are all autonomy-centered perfectionists, but this latest quotation makes clear that Quong’s critique if correct would impugn my significantly different variety of perfectionism as well. After all, nearly every version of perfectionism favors the use of state subsidies in quite a few situations. Divergent though the sundry versions of perfectionism are in the rationales that underlie their respective recommendations, those bottom-line recommendations themselves intermittently converge. Hence, if Quong were to succeed in his attack on Raz’s autonomy-centered perfectionism by showing that perfectionist state subsidies are illegitimately manipulative, he would also thereby cast doubt upon virtually every other type of perfectionism. Thus, my defense of Raz on this point is also a defense of the perfectionism for which I elsewhere argue.

3.1. Toward an Account of Manipulation: Threats and Offers

Quong recognizes that his prosecution of his case against Raz depends on his provision of an account of illegitimate manipulation. Manipulation is like coercion in being subject to the harm principle, because manipulation is like coercion in that it encroaches upon the autonomy of the person P against whom it is directed. It subordinates the will of P to that of somebody else. Thus, unless the manipulation is undertaken to prevent P from causing harm to others, it is morally impermissible. (Of course, the manipulation might be morally impermissible even if it is indeed undertaken to prevent P from causing harm to others. Compliance with the harm principle is a necessary condition rather than a sufficient condition for the legitimacy of manipulation or coercion.) Quong therefore needs to tell us what manipulation is, and he needs to establish that perfectionist subsidies as envisioned by Raz are instances of manipulation that do not serve to keep people from causing harm to others.

To determine whether a legal-governmental policy counts as manipulative or not, Quong draws on the analysis of threats and offers in Robert Nozick’s deservedly renowned essay on coercion (Quong 2011: 63-7; Nozick 1969: 447-53, 458-65). Both offers and threats are aimed at influencing the behavior of people by altering the patterns of incentives with which they are confronted, but only threats are coercive. Indeed, the key to distinguishing between an offer and a threat resides in pinning down why only the latter is coercive. As Quong indicates, Nozick elaborated on the coerciveness of threats and the non-coerciveness of offers by claiming (1) that the will of a person addressed by a credible threat is subordinated to the will of the person who has issued the threat, and (2) that the will of a person presented with a genuine offer is not similarly subordinated to the will of the person who has advanced the offer. Nozick captured this contrast intuitively with several pithy formulations, before he proceeded to plumb its intricacies. A few of his terse formulations should be quoted here:

[W]hen a person does something because of threats, the will of another is operating or predominant, whereas when he does something because of offers this is not so; a person who does something because of threats is subject to the will of

another, whereas a person who acts because of an offer is not; ... when someone does something because of offers it is his own choice, whereas when he does something because of threats it is not his own choice but someone else's, or not fully his own choice, or someone else has made his choice for him (Nozick 1969: 459).

At a very general level, these aphorisms underscore the ways in which credible threats curtail the autonomy of their addressees.

To differentiate between the coercive change of incentives brought about by a threat and the non-coercive change of incentives brought about by an offer, we need to compare the situation prior to the change of incentives with the situation subsequent thereto. In so doing, we will be ascertaining whether the change is positive or negative in the eyes of the addressee. If the change is negative, as is indeed the case when a credible threat is delivered, the addressee is confronted with a choice which she would have preferred to avoid. Contrariwise, if the change is positive, as is the case when a genuine offer has been advanced, the addressee is presented with a choice which she prefers to have. In the former case but not in the latter, then, the will of the addressee has been subordinated to that of the addressor—because in the former case the addressee has undergone an alteration in her situation that is not to her liking, whereas in the latter case the addressee has undergone an alteration in her situation that is in accordance with her wishes. In a slightly more formal manner, Nozick summarized the distinction between threats and offers as follows (1969: 449):

If P intentionally changes the consequences of two actions A_1 and A_2 available to Q so as to lessen the desirability of the consequences of A_1 , and so as to increase the desirability of the consequences of A_2 , and part of P's reason for acting as he does is to lessen and increase the desirabilities of the respective consequences[,] then

- (a) This resultant change predominantly involves a threat to Q if he does A_1 if Q prefers doing the old A_1 (without the worsened consequences) to doing the new A_2 (with the improved consequences).
- (b) This resultant change predominantly involves an offer to Q to do A_2 if Q prefers doing the new A_2 (with the improved consequences) to the old A_1 (without the worsened consequences).

3.2. *The Matter of the Baseline*

Quong endeavors to parlay the Nozickian analysis of threats and offers into an account of the manipulateness of perfectionist state subsidies, by focusing on what manipulation and coercion have in common: the subjection of a person's will to the wishes of someone else. In that very respect, manipulation is similar to threats and is consequently subject to the harm principle. Yet, as Quong points out, this feature of manipulation may seem to be absent from perfectionist subsidies. Such subsidies are offers rather than threats. The furnishing of a subsidy to encourage people to engage in some worthy activity will have made the pursuit of that activity more attractive without having lessened the original attractiveness of any other options. Accordingly, the availability of the subsidy will have improved everyone's set of options (even though some people will not be inclined to take advantage of the improvement). Ergo, the provision of the

subsidy does not subordinate anyone's will to that of anyone else. It does not encroach upon anybody's autonomy.

If subsidies are indeed offers rather than threats, then they are not manipulative and are therefore not governed by the harm principle. Quong thus sets out to demonstrate that appearances are not what they seem. He argues that, despite the considerations adduced in my last paragraph, a government's subsidization of the arts or of other activities does render many people worse off. That is, any such subsidization alters their arrays of options in ways that are not to their liking (if they are rational). As a consequence, any such subsidization is manipulative and is thus subject to the constraint of the harm principle. Since the subsidies recommended by autonomy-centered perfectionists are designed to enhance people's lives rather than to prevent harm, they do not comply with that constraint.

Before we consider Quong's line of reasoning, we should take into account an important aspect of Nozick's discussion of threats and offers to which Quong does not explicitly advert. Given that Nozick construed the distinction between a threat and an offer as a contrast between a proposal that worsens an addressee's array of options and a proposal that improves an addressee's array of options, he needed to specify a baseline against which any changes in option-sets are to be gauged as impairments or enhancements. Nozick explored the matter of a baseline with prodigious subtlety and dexterity, as he highlighted two main candidates for the role: the morally legitimate course of events, and the usual or predictable course of events.⁵ Those two baselines diverge whenever a situation is such that some morally illegitimate conduct regularly occurs within it. (Nozick's most famous example is a situation in which a slaveholder administers a beating to his slave at the outset of each day. In that context, the usual or predictable course of events is such that the slave will undergo a beating each morning, whereas the morally legitimate course of events is such that the slave will no longer be a slave and no longer be subjected to beatings. Suppose that the master truthfully tells the slave that he will discontinue the daily thrashings if and only if the slave successfully performs some particularly disagreeable task. If the usual or predictable course of events is the pertinent baseline, the slaveholder has made an offer. By contrast, if the morally legitimate course of events is the germane baseline, the slaveholder has issued a threat.)

Nozick persuasively contended that neither the morally legitimate course of events nor the usual or predictable course of events is always superior to the other as a baseline for distinguishing between threats and offers (1969: 450). In most types of circumstances, however, the morally legitimate course of events is appropriate. Furthermore, in most types of circumstances the morally legitimate course of events will not diverge from the usual or predictable course of events. Albeit Nozick did not apply his threat/offer distinction to perfectionist state subsidies, his discussion reveals that the apposite baseline for gauging the character of such subsidies as threats or offers is indeed the morally legitimate course of events—which, in nearly all circumstances surrounding such subsidies, will coincide with the usual or predictable course of events at any rate. Thus, although Quong does not directly grapple with the matter of choosing between Nozick's two general baselines, and although he instead takes for granted that

⁵ Nozick 1969: 449-53. As Nozick was well aware, the task of identifying either of these courses of events can itself be formidably problematic in many cases.

the baseline for judging the character of perfectionist subsidies as threats or offers is the morally legitimate course of events, he has proceeded safely in so doing.

3.3. Quong on the Manipulativeness of Perfectionist Subsidies

When Quong takes for granted that the germane baseline is the morally legitimate course of events, he thereby correctly presumes that our assessments of perfectionist state subsidies as threats or offers (or as combinations of threats and offers) should identify the parties to whom various resources rightly belong in the absence of those subsidies. Having properly oriented his enquiry in this fashion, he endeavors to show that the initial appearance of perfectionist subsidies as offers is illusive. His argument, from which I will quote at length in more than one passage, dwells on the key differences between private subventions and public subventions. The first main strand of the argument is as follows:

There is a crucial difference between the case where person A offers to subsidize person B's opera ticket, and the case where the government offers this subsidy to its citizens. In the former case we assume that A is using his own money to make the offer to B. If we were to ask B whether he would like to move from the status quo to the post-offer situation, we assume the status quo is one where A keeps the money. But the case of perfectionist subsidies is different. If we were to ask citizens whether they would prefer to move from the status quo to the post-subsidy situation, we cannot simply assume the status quo is one where the government keeps the resources that would have been spent on subsidies. The government is not a person, and *the resources it spends do not belong to it in the way that resources can belong to an individual* (assuming a just distribution). How, then, should we specify the status quo in the subsidy case? Should we assume the government spends the money on something else: more schools, or cleaner streets? No, because these assumptions would mean we were not asking the right question. We do not want to know whether citizens would rather spend n dollars on schools as opposed to opera ticket subsidies. We want to ask the same question as we do in the two-person case involving A and B. In that case we do not ask whether B would prefer that A offer to subsidize his opera ticket as compared to his school fees. We ask whether B would choose, if he could, to have A make the offer, or would B instead choose to *let the resources lie where they otherwise would*, in this case, with A. The analogue to this question in the case of the government subsidy is thus: would citizens choose, if they could, to have the government enact the subsidy, or would they instead choose to *let the resources lie where they otherwise would*? The government gets its resources from citizens: government expenditure is simply the collective spending of citizens. And so if the government does not spend money on the opera subsidy, *the appropriate assumption to make is that those resources would remain with each individual citizen.*⁶

The italicized bits of this passage are all normative in their tenor. That is, when Quong identifies the parties to whom the tax-derived resources of governments belong, and when he talks about letting those resources lie where they otherwise would, he is referring to what he perceives as the morally requisite and morally

⁶ Quong 2011: 65. All the italics in this quotation have been added, except those on the first instance of "let the resources lie where they otherwise would".

permissible locations of those resources. In his view, the situation wherein citizens retain the funds that would be needed by the government for perfectionist subsidies is the morally legitimate course of events by reference to which the status of those subsidies as threats or offers is to be determined. He therefore draws the following conclusion:

Once the question is framed in this way, we can see the disanalogy clearly. The choice for citizens is between having the money to spend themselves [and] having the government take it from them and then spend it on subsidizing opera tickets. Since the latter option simply reduces what you can do with your resources, it would be irrational to prefer it.... By putting citizens in the post-subsidy situation, the government thus does attempt to subject the will of citizens to its own perfectionist judgement. Perfectionist subsidies are not like the offers one person might make to another: they involve the government taking funds from citizens in order to restrict the ways in which citizens can spend those resources. Nozick's distinction thus supports the view that perfectionist subsidies are a form of autonomy intrusion since, under normal conditions, they represent the government placing citizens in a choice situation in which they would not have chosen to place themselves, and so citizens' subsequent choices would be, on Nozick's account, not fully their own: they represent an attempt to subject citizens to the will of the perfectionist state.⁷

Crucial to Quong's condemnation of perfectionist subsidies, then, is his insistence that such subsidies are not to be evaluated on their own in isolation from the extraction of funds for them through the imposition of taxes. Though the subsidies in isolation are not coercive, the imposition of taxes is. Consequently, although the subsidies in isolation are classifiable as offers, the subsidies in combination with the taxation that makes them possible are offers conjoined with threats. Because the offers would not go ahead without the threats that precede or follow them, an assessment of any perfectionist subsidy will be distortively blinkered unless it construes the subsidy as a threat-plus-offer package. As such a package—to which the coerciveness of threats is integral—a perfectionist subsidy is an illiberal encroachment on the autonomy of each citizen. As Quong writes, the overall combination in which a perfectionist policy consists is “manipulation because the perfectionist state, in pursuing this conjunction of actions [namely, taxation and subsidies], intentionally attempts to induce citizens to make a particular choice, and the state does this by putting citizens in a choice situation they should rationally disprefer relative to what we assume is *an otherwise morally justified status quo* (i.e. a situation where the resources remain with the individual citizens to spend as they see fit). In sum, the state tries to get citizens to make a choice they would not otherwise make by putting them in a choice situation they would not put themselves in. In acting in this way the perfectionist state thus attempts to subject citizens to its will, and thereby appears to invade their autonomy” (2011: 66, emphasis added).

⁷ Quong 2011: 65-6. In the portion of this passage which I have omitted with ellipses, Quong states in a footnote that he is prescinding from the “special case of public goods and worries about free-riding”.

3.4. *The Upshot of the Argument about the Manipulativeness of Subsidies*

Of course, as Quong is well aware, the sheer fact that perfectionist subsidies are manipulative as combinations of threats and offers is not per se sufficient to establish that they are morally illegitimate. What it does establish, however, is that such subsidies are subject to the restriction laid down by the harm principle. Moreover, according to Quong, they do not satisfy that restriction. Autonomy-promotive subsidies are introduced not for the purpose of protecting the benefited individuals from being harmed, but for the purpose of encouraging sundry people to adopt more flourishing ways of life.

Quong therefore believes that he has exposed a deep inconsistency in Raz's autonomy-centered perfectionism. In particular, he contends that the following three Razian propositions cannot be jointly true: (1) The harm principle is a sound precept of political morality because conformity to it is promotive of personal autonomy. (2) Given that personal autonomy is impaired by manipulation as well as by coercion, any manipulative techniques employed by a government are subject to the harm principle just as coercive techniques are. (3) The perfectionist state subsidies and kindred policies advocated in *The Morality of Freedom* are not violative of any duties of political morality.

What is more, were Quong's critique sound, its import would extend well beyond Raz's perfectionist theory. Quong declares that "the objection pressed against Raz... applies to liberal perfectionist theories more generally" (2011: 71). As I have earlier commented, virtually any version of perfectionism will rely on tax-funded subsidies and other measures that affect people's incentives. If those subsidies and other measures were at odds with the harm principle, there would be a strong tension if not a downright inconsistency between perfectionism and liberalism. Hence, if liberal perfectionism in any form is to be upheld, Quong's critique of Raz's advocacy of subsidies has to be rebutted.

4. A Brief Interlude: A Supplement to Quong's Argument

Before this article ventures to repel Quong's attack on Raz's perfectionism, it will supplement that attack in one respect. As is evident, Quong's challenge to Raz relies heavily on the thesis that any assessment of the moral bearings of perfectionist subsidies will be unsatisfactorily distortive unless the subsidies are judged in combination with the mandatory payments of taxes that fund them. Because the extraction of those payments is coercive, the overall package of a subsidy and a payment is coercive as well.⁸ Having relied on this thesis about tax-funded subsidies, Quong has left open the question whether perfectionist state subsidies funded by voluntary contributions would be morally legitimate. He never really addresses that question, but in a footnote he laconically allows that "there will be atypical cases [of perfectionist state subsidies] which might meet the conditions necessary for the subsidy to be an offer. For example, funds secured by a state-run lottery might be used to provide perfectionist subsidies which would be genuine offers since the funds have been freely obtained from willing lottery players" (2011: 66 n63). In his book, Quong does not indicate whether the status of those perfectionist governmental subsidies as offers would render them morally legitimate. Though he elsewhere makes clear that his an-

⁸ This point is emphasized likewise in Gaus 2003: 146-7; 2009: 91-2.

swer to such a question would be negative (2014: 271-73), his principal line of argument against Raz—which I have recounted over the last several pages—does not supply a basis for deeming any lottery-funded subsidies to be morally dubious.

Many lottery-funded subsidies are indeed morally legitimate, and the standards for deeming them legitimate are undoubtedly somewhat more relaxed than the corresponding standards for the legitimacy of tax-funded subsidies (precisely because of the absence of a coercive element in subsidies of the former kind). However, even in regard to activities that are not themselves morally impermissible at all, governmentally bestowed subventions for some of those activities would be morally illegitimate irrespective of whether the funding for the subventions has come from taxes or from lotteries. Whereas Quong's argument highlights the coercive dimension of government, it does not touch on the expressive dimension of any system of governance. Quong therefore omits to explore another reason for balking at certain perfectionist subsidies that might be conferred by a liberal-democratic regime.

At least at the level of ideal theory (the level at which Quong's whole book is pitched), any liberal-democratic system of governance undertakes actions and delivers pronouncements in the name of everyone over whom it presides. Because such a system of governance derives its legitimacy and much of its composition from the input of the citizenry qua electorate, and because the system's officials are morally and legally obligated to exhibit equal concern for the fate of each citizen and equal respect for each sane adult, their authoritative measures are taken in the name of everyone. In their public roles, those officials purport and aspire to speak for the citizenry as a whole. Hence, certain perfectionist state subsidies—even if funded through lotteries or through other voluntary payments—are morally improper because they cannot credibly be furnished in the name of each citizen.

Let us briefly ponder here an example. Suppose that some particular country Pluralia is religiously heterogeneous. Numerous people in Pluralia adhere to sundry faiths, and some people are agnostics or atheists. With funds amassed through the proceeds of a lottery or through voluntary collections at church services, the government in Pluralia organizes and bestows an array of awards for young people who attend Catholic services regularly or who elect to enter the priesthood. It also erects many large crucifixes on the lawns of public buildings with accompanying billboards that exhort people to attend church regularly. Now, these measures are not coercive. The awards for young people are offers rather than threats, and the funds that cover the costs of those awards have been amassed through non-coercive channels. (We can assume that the purchasers of tickets in the state-run lottery are informed in advance that some of the proceeds will be used for the promotion of Roman Catholicism and the Christian religion more generally.) Similarly, however distasteful the crucifixes and billboards may be, they are not coercive either on their own or in combination with the techniques through which they have been funded. Hence, although Quong's line of argument does not entail the conclusion that these measures by governmental officials in Pluralia are morally legitimate, it does not explain why they are in fact morally dubious.

By contrast, when we take into account the expressive dimension of a liberal-democratic system of governance, we can readily discern why the measures in support of Catholicism (and Christianity more generally) by the officials in

Pluralia are illegitimate. In a society where everyone is an adherent of the Roman Catholic faith, those measures would be far less problematic. However, Pluralia—like virtually every other liberal-democratic country—is a land of many creeds, both religious and irreligious. Given as much, and given that the actions of the public officials in their public capacities are performed on behalf of everyone in Pluralia, their championing of Roman Catholicism through those actions is impermissibly sectarian. The officials purport to be adopting measures in the name of the citizenry as a whole by dint of their authoritative roles in a liberal-democratic scheme of governance, yet they are aligning that scheme of governance with one religious outlook in preference to others that are embraced by any number of people in the jurisdiction. In effect, the officials' measures commit their legal-governmental system to the proposition that the singularly esteemed outlook is superior to any alternative outlooks. By conveying that message of sectarian superiority through their favoritism toward Catholicism, the officials in the Pluralian regime have conducted themselves at odds with their obligations as officials to act in the name of everyone.

Of course, the message of sectarian superiority might not be a message of sectarian truth. The officials in Pluralia might place Roman Catholicism on a pedestal not because they believe it to be true but because they believe it to be serviceable for the promotion of good behavior or social peace. Yet, even if their preferential treatment of Catholicism is neutral in its justification, it is not neutral in its intention. A key element of the intentions of the officials is the favoring of Catholicism (even if they favor it purely as a means). Thus, since there is no plausible aspirational-perfectionist rationale for their departure from the constraint of neutrality, and since adherence by them to that constraint is quite feasible in this context—in contradistinction to a context where a policy on a matter such as abortion has to be settled—their sectarianism manifests grievous disrespect for much of the citizenry of Pluralia. Non-coercive though their sectarian policies are, the officials misrepresent the allegiances of many citizens by committing their system of governance to Catholicism even while the system's workings are supposed to be expressive of the affiliations of all citizens.

5. A Rejoinder to Quong

Let us return to Quong's critique of Raz. We should begin here by noting that each of the portions of Quong's text to which I have added italics in the lengthy quotations in § 3.3 above is a specification of the baseline for the application of the Nozickian threat/offer distinction. As has already been remarked, Quong assumes that the baseline (or, in his phrase, the "status quo") is to be ascertained by identifying the people to whom the funds for perfectionist subsidies would rightly belong if those subsidies were not undertaken. His claim, of course, is that the funds would rightly belong to the individual taxpayers from whom they have come. Individual taxpayers are entitled to the resources which they have acquired under conditions of justice, except insofar as the demands of justice themselves call for the imposition of taxes. With that claim, Quong undoes the homology between a perfectionist subsidy by the state and an offer by one individual to another.

5.1. Begging the Question

However, Quong's position simply assumes away what Raz has sought to establish in his perfectionist argumentation. Raz contends that the funds paid as taxes which enable the disbursal of perfectionist subsidies do not properly belong to the people from whom the tax payments have come. Rather, those payments are morally (and legally) required of citizens in fulfillment of their autonomy-promotive duties within a liberal-democratic society. That is, citizens are morally obligated to make those payments in support of the state's efforts to provide the public good of a social environment in which the autonomy of individuals will tend to flourish. Raz summarizes the matter as follows, in a passage which Quong partly quotes:

[T]he harm principle allows full scope to autonomy-based duties. A person who fails to discharge his autonomy-based obligations towards others is harming them, even if those obligations are designed to promote the others' autonomy rather than to prevent its deterioration. It follows that a government whose responsibility is to promote the autonomy of its citizens is entitled to redistribute resources, to provide public goods and to engage in the provision of other services on a compulsory basis, provided its laws merely reflect and make concrete autonomy-based duties of its citizens. Coercion is used to ensure compliance with the law. If the law reflects autonomy-based duties then failure to comply harms others and the harm principle is satisfied....

It is no objection to point out that the funds necessary for [perfectionist subsidies and kindred policies] are raised by compulsory taxation. I assume that tax is raised to provide adequate opportunities, and is justified by the principle of autonomy in a way consistent with the harm principle in accordance with the considerations described [in the paragraph quoted immediately before this one]. The government has an obligation to create an environment providing individuals with an adequate range of options and the opportunities to choose them. The duty arises out of people's interest in having a valuable autonomous life. Its violation will harm those it is meant to benefit. Therefore its fulfillment is consistent with the harm principle. Not every tax can be justified by this argument. But then not every tax is justified by any argument (Raz 1986: 417-18).

At a somewhat earlier juncture in *Liberalism without Perfection* (2011: 52-3), Quong himself adumbrates Raz's main line of reasoning as a sequence of steps which I here renumber:

1. Autonomous life is possible and valuable only when there is an adequate range of good options from which to choose.
2. We are all under *prima facie* moral duties to provide others with the minimal conditions necessary to lead a valuable autonomous life.
3. Therefore we are each under a *prima facie* duty to help provide others with good options.
4. Failing to provide others with what we owe them is a form of harm.
5. The harm principle permits us to use coercion to prevent harm.
6. Therefore the harm principle permits us to use coercion to raise the taxes which are used to fund an adequate range of good options.

Quong's outline of Raz's reasoning about perfectionist subsidies and the harm principle is quite accurate. What it reveals is that Quong has fatally

begged the question in his subsequent critique where he impeaches Raz's perfectionist subsidies as contraventions of the harm principle. That begging of the question can be exposed in either of two closely related ways.

First, Raz will reject Quong's specification of a baseline—his specification of the morally legitimate course of events that can serve as a point of comparison—for determining whether the aforementioned perfectionist subsidies are to be classified as threats or as offers (or as combinations of threats and offers). Raz does not accept that the germane baseline consists in a situation where citizens retain the funds which they would have paid as taxes to enable the disbursal of the perfectionist subsidies. He believes that any such situation would be morally illegitimate, for he contends that the funds paid as taxes to cover the costs of the perfectionist subsidies have rightly belonged to the government as the fulfiller of its own autonomy-promotive duties and of each citizen's autonomy-promotive duties. Thus, when Quong presumes that the relevant baseline for gauging the manipulateness of perfectionist subsidies is to be understood as he specifies it, he begs the question against Raz.

Alternatively, Raz can accept (at least *arguendo*) that such subsidies are manipulative in Quong's sense and are thus subject to the constraint of the harm principle. However, as is evident from the passage by Raz and the summary by Quong which I have quoted above, Raz will insist that the coercive collection of taxes to meet the costs of autonomy-promotive subsidies is in compliance with the harm principle. Were citizens to evade those taxes, they would be harming others to whom they owe autonomy-promotive duties. Hence, when a government threatens to impose sanctions on people who do seek to evade those taxes, it is not transgressing the harm principle. It is endeavoring to avert harmful actions (or omissions) on the part of the people to whom the threats are addressed.

Of course, Quong might wish to contest Raz's thesis that people are indeed under autonomy-promotive moral duties. After all, I myself elsewhere argue against the existence of autonomy-promotive moral duties of the sort which Raz envisages.⁹ Nonetheless, Quong's critique has not proceeded as an effort to impugn Raz's elaborate arguments in support of such duties. Instead, Quong purports to have uncovered a deep inconsistency in Raz's perfectionism. He purports to have demonstrated that Raz cannot consistently uphold all three of the propositions which I have enumerated in § 3.4 above. As has now become apparent, that putative demonstration of some deep inconsistency in Raz's theory is illusive. In reply to Quong, Raz can maintain that the perfectionist subsidies commended in *The Morality of Freedom* are not manipulative (insofar as their character as manipulative or non-manipulative is gauged against an appropriate baseline), or he can declare that those subsidies satisfy the harm principle. If Raz were correct in the lines of reasoning with which he endeavors to establish that autonomy-promotive moral duties are incumbent on us, then either of these ripostes to Quong would also be correct. Hence, instead of seeking to ferret out some deep inconsistency among Raz's positions, Quong should have sought to rebut those lines of reasoning.

5.2. *An Anticipatory Response by Quong?*

Quong might seem to have anticipated my objection to his critique of Raz,

⁹ Again, the relevant arguments are in *Liberalism with Excellence*.

when he mulls over some potential rejoinders immediately after he has mounted that critique. He writes as follows:

[A] perfectionist might protest that any given individual, P, is not being taxed to provide *his own* subsidy, but is rather being taxed to provide a subsidy for some other citizen, Q, and... Raz's view permits one individual to be coercively taxed in order to provide another individual with the necessary conditions for autonomous flourishing. On this view, P is taxed in order to subsidize Q and thereby provide Q with the conditions necessary for autonomous flourishing, and Q is taxed to subsidize P for the same reason, but neither is being taxed in order to subsidize *his or her own* access to the perfectionist good in question, and thus neither P nor Q [is] being manipulated in the way I claim. Each is only being required to fulfill their duty to the other—something which Raz's version of the harm principle permits. This reply on Raz's behalf, however, cannot rescue perfectionist subsidies from the charge of being invasions of autonomy. It remains the case that citizens are collectively being taxed in order to provide a collective perfectionist subsidy. Thus, we can reject this proposed defense of Raz by pointing out that P and Q *together* are being subjected to a choice situation (the post-tax and post-subsidy world) that they must rationally disprefer to the status quo alternative where each retains the resources that would be used for the subsidy to spend as he wishes (2011: 67, emphases in original).

My replies to this anticipatory response by Quong are twofold.

5.2.1. *Begging the Question Afresh*

First, the closing sentence in this most recent passage from Quong reiterates his question-begging assumption that the baseline for gauging the character of Razian subsidies as manipulative or non-manipulative is a situation in which individuals keep the funds which they would have paid as taxes for the bestowal of the subsidies. Raz does not accept that such a situation is a morally legitimate course of events that can fittingly serve as the point of reference for applying the threat/offer distinction to the perfectionist subsidies which he envisions. As has been emphasized, he contends that the payment of taxes to enable those subsidies is the means by which each person fulfills her moral obligation to promote the autonomy of her fellow citizens. Hence, the withholding of such taxes by anyone from whom they are due would be a breach of a moral obligation.

Now, of course, I am not implying here that Quong's question-begging assumption is false. I have not offered any arguments to demonstrate its falsity, and indeed (as has already been stated) I agree with Quong in thinking that we are not under the autonomy-promotive moral duties which Raz contemplates.¹⁰ My point, rather, is that Quong has neglected to substantiate his choice of a baseline with any supportive argumentation. By invoking that baseline without

¹⁰ My agreement with Quong on that score does not per se commit me to the proposition that his specification of a baseline is correct. If his baseline is to be construed as a situation in which no perfectionist duties have been recognized and fulfilled—no duties of aspirational perfectionism any more than of autonomy-centered perfectionism—then it runs contrary to the principal position of my forthcoming book. However, since his baseline is supposed to be a situation in which the prevailing distribution of resources is just, and since my forthcoming book argues that the fulfillment of aspirational-perfectionist duties is a matter of justice, I can probably endorse a variant of Quong's baseline.

any such argumentation, Quong has begged the question against Raz—for Raz has marshaled extensive arguments in favor of the proposition that the payments of taxes assumed away by Quong’s baseline are morally obligatory.

5.2.2. *Collective Goods*

In the passage most recently quoted above, Quong does not suggest that Raz himself would be inclined to reply in the manner posited. Instead, Quong suggests that an advocate of autonomy-centered perfectionism might reply thus in defense of Raz. Still, as an attempted vindication of Raz, the retort which Quong sketches (in order to rebut it) is strange. It bears very little resemblance to Raz’s own approach to these matters, and it quite strongly resembles the right-based moralities which Raz sustainedly rejects.

For Raz, the autonomy-promotive conditions that ensue from a government’s fulfillment of its moral obligation to foster such conditions are collective goods. That is, they are inherently public goods. In one of his many relevant statements of the matter, Raz declares that “personal autonomy depends on the persistence of collective goods.... Though an individual’s freedom, understood as personal autonomy, sometimes conflicts with the interests of others, it also depends on those interests and can be obtained only through collective goods which do not benefit anyone unless they benefit everyone” (1986: 250). As I have observed in note 7 above, Quong—in his critique of Raz on which I have been concentrating here—explicitly puts aside the issue of public goods and the problem of free-riding. Hence, the dialectical situation is rather murky. When Quong attempts to reinforce his critique of Raz by anticipating and parrying a possible defense, he appears not to be engaging with Raz’s perfectionism at all.

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Existence, Fundamentality, and the Scope of Ontology

Uriah Kriegel

Jean Nicod Institute

Abstract

A traditional conception of ontology takes existence to be its proprietary subject matter—ontology is the study of what exists (§ 1). Recently, Jonathan Schaffer has argued that ontology is better thought of rather as the study of what is basic or fundamental in reality (§ 2). My goal here is twofold. First, I want to argue that while Schaffer’s characterization is quite plausible for some ontological questions, for others it is not (§ 3). More importantly, I want to offer a unified characterization of ontology that covers both existence and fundamentality questions (§§ 4-5).

Keywords: meta-ontology, existence, fundamentality, grounding, primitives.

A traditional conception of ontology takes existence to be its proprietary subject matter—ontology is the study of what exists (§ 1). Recently, Jonathan Schaffer has argued that ontology is better thought of rather as the study of what is basic or fundamental in reality (§ 2). My goal here is twofold. First, I want to argue that while Schaffer’s characterization is quite plausible for some ontological questions, for others it is not (§ 3). More importantly, I want to offer a unified characterization of ontology that covers both existence and fundamentality questions (§§ 4-5).

1. Ontology as the Study of Existence

Textbook presentations of what ontology is virtually always characterize it in terms of existence questions. This is true of both ‘classic’ and more recent presentations. Recall the opening sentences of Quine’s (1948: 21) “On What There Is”:

A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: ‘What is there?’

More recent presentations by leading metaphysicians agree in essence. Here is van Inwagen (1998: 16):

One very important part of metaphysics has to do with what there is, with what exists. This part of metaphysics is called ontology. Ontology, that is, is the part of metaphysics that deals with metaphysical statements having general form like ‘An X exists’ and ‘There are Ys’.

And here is Sider (2007: 4):

Thus, we have very general ontological questions (existence questions) about objects... Other ontological questions include the question discussed above of whether properties exist, the question of whether numbers exist, and even the ‘metaontological’ question of what it means to investigate whether objects of a certain sort ‘really’ exist.

On this view, the goal of ontology is to produce a list of all things, in the broadest possible sense of ‘thing’—all entities, all quantifiabilia, all ontoids.

The thesis that the subject matter of ontology is existence is thus quite entrenched. One question is what sort of thesis it is supposed to be. It *could* be construed as a *stipulative* statement about how the term ‘ontology’ is to be used. Typically, however, it is meant as a *substantive* claim. One substantive interpretation of it might be as a *sociological* claim: that people calling themselves ontologists tend to work on existence questions. But again, the thesis seems meant as more interesting than that. The idea rather seems to be that there is a class of questions that seem to belong together—a ‘natural’ class of questions¹—and that the deep commonality among those is that they concern existence. It is something like this claim that Schaffer (2009) has recently contested.

2. Ontology as the Study of Fundamentality

According to Schaffer, a closer examination of the relevant natural class of questions reveals that the deep underlying commonality among them pertains not to existence but to basicness or fundamentality.

Consider nominalism about properties. It is possible to interpret nominalists as not really denying the very existence of properties. After all, they do not deny that there are *ways* concrete particulars are—that the table is rectangular, is brown, is wooden, and so on. Rather, what they deny the existence of are certain abstract objects (universals) that some identify properties with. Instead, nominalists claim that the table’s rectangularity consists in its belonging to a specific class or collection of exactly resembling concrete particulars; that the table is brown *in virtue of* belonging to another collection of exactly resembling concrete particulars; and so on.² That is, they insist that properties are *nothing but* collections of particulars—that a thing’s having a property is *grounded* in its

¹ Here the notion of ‘naturalness’ is that developed to handle various forms of (alleged) semantic indeterminacy—the notion worked out (e.g.) by Lewis (1984) and Sider (2011).

² Two comments are in order here. First, one way of understanding what a ‘collection’ is casts is as an abstract entity as well, though not a universal but a set. However, there are ways of construing ‘collection’ so that it is not abstract—say, if one used it the way the notion of ‘plurality’ is used in mereology. Secondly, I am focusing here on so-called resemblance nominalism; there are other versions, of course. Also, in most versions of nominalism the set is taken to include all *possible* exactly resembling particulars, not just all *actual* ones.

membership in such a collection.³ The view, so understood, is that there *are* properties, but their existence is grounded in that of particulars, which are therefore the more fundamental entities.

Schaffer's claim is that this diagnosis applies generally to ontological debates. Nominalism in mathematics is better understood not as the claim that there are no numbers, but as the claim that numbers are grounded more fundamental entities (perhaps collections of collections of particulars—3, for example, is but the collection of all three-object collections).⁴ The bundle theory of objects is better thought of not as denying the existence of objects but as grounding it in sets of co-instantiated properties, while the trope bundle theory grounds objects in sets of compresent tropes. Conceptualism about properties or numbers is the claim that properties or numbers are grounded in ideas, or idea types, in the minds of suitably engaged subjects. In general (2009: 347):

Metaphysics so revived does not bother asking whether properties, meanings, and numbers exist. Of course they do! The question is whether or not they are fundamental.

On this conception, the goal of metaphysics is not to produce a list of all entities. Rather, it is to identify the *ungrounded grounders* of reality: the primitive entities that do not exist in virtue of—are not grounded in—any other entities, but instead serve to ground the existence of others.⁵

Schaffer's case for this is threefold. First, he outlines an induction from several central ontological debates. Secondly, he argues that existence questions are trivial whereas fundamentality questions are nontrivial. Thirdly, he argues that the methodology standardly used to resolve ontological disputes cannot answer existence questions without also answering fundamentality questions. I will not rehearse the entire case here, but it is worth pausing to appreciate the second consideration (regarding triviality). Schaffer (2009: 357-9) notes that there are straightforward, indeed all too facile, arguments for the existence of numbers, properties, composite particulars, and fictional objects. We can reason that since there are prime numbers greater than 7, there are numbers; that since there are properties that people share, there are properties; and so on. The only nontrivial questions in the area are whether numbers, properties, composites, and ficta are fundamental and ungrounded or on the contrary grounded in other entities.

One compelling feature of the fundamentality conception of ontology is that it makes sense of central modes of argumentation in ontological texts.⁶ There are many examples of this, but perhaps the clearest pertains to the role of indispensability arguments in contemporary ontology, starting from Quine's

³ Here the notion of grounding is construed as the antisymmetric relation canonically designated by the 'in virtue of' location—the kind of notion worked by Fine (2001), Sider (2011), and others.

⁴ For details of how this might work, see Maddy (1980).

⁵ It is conceivable, though somewhat improbable, that there should be ungrounded entities that do not in turn ground any others. Identifying those would be part of ontology's task as well.

⁶ This too is a reasoning pertaining to the methodological underpinnings of ontology, but it is not the methodological argument Schaffer presents. Schaffer's argument is rather than the standard Quinean approach to resolving ontological disputes implies pervasive appeal to fundamentality considerations.

(1948) and Putnam's (1956) argument for mathematical entities. The claim is that we ought to believe in numbers because citing them is explanatorily and/or predictively indispensable to our best theory of the world. Setting aside wider issues regarding the epistemic status and merit of such arguments, observe that they can only be used to establish the existence of *fundamental* entities. Non-fundamental, grounded, 'derivative' entities could not be 'detected' by the indispensability test, since all the explanatory/predictive work they do is already done by the entities that ground them.⁷

It may be claimed that the most important mode of ontological argumentation—namely, from parsimony—tests for existence rather than fundamentality. Schaffer (2009: 361) rejects this, however, claiming that of the various parsimony principles we might wield in ontological debates, the most important is not “Do not multiply entities without necessity” but “Do not multiply *basic* entities without necessity.” This is because the multiplication of merely derivative entities is ontologically innocuous, since such entities are an ontological ‘free lunch’. This is not the place to consider whether non-basic entities are indeed ontologically gratis—that would take us too far afield. But note that *if* they are, and *if* the relevant parsimony principle is the one Schaffer cites, *then* certainly parsimony tests for basicness rather than existence.

3. Existence Again

Schaffer's treatment of ontology may be quite plausible for many typical ontological debates. But to some it does not apply very smoothly. When Romans came to believe that the frequency of rain did not depend on the whims of Jupiter, and in fact Jupiter did not exist, their new view was emphatically not that Jupiter turns out to supervene upon, or be grounded in, the chemical processes leading to rain. When as children we were told that there are no ghosts and no monsters, and that Santa Claus does not exist, again the news our parents broke to us was not about grounding and fundamentality. Likewise, when early modern scientists came to believe that the best explanation of life does not appeal to *élans vitals*, that the best explanation of disease does not appeal to miasma, and that the best explanation of combustion does not appeal to phlogiston, their ensuing beliefs were that there existed no *élans vitals*, miasma, or phlogiston—not that these putative entities turn out to be 'derivative'. Thus ontological claims about Jupiter, Santa Claus, ghosts, *élans vitals*, miasma, and phlogiston are very hard to interpret as claims about fundamentality; much more plausibly, they are claims about what they seem to be about—existence.

Some of these claims are not typically made by self-styled ontologists. But there are a host of debates in which self-styled ontologists do make claims that seem to belong to the same natural class of claims. Perhaps the clearest case is the debate over the existence of God. Atheists do *not* maintain that God trivially exists but is grounded in a certain collection or combination of ungodly entities.⁸ They hold that God's ontological status is the same as that of ghosts and mias-

⁷ For example, the conceptualist would have to admit that the relevant ideas explanatorily preempt mathematical entities, rendering them dispensable. Yet this conceptualist need not deny the existence of mathematical entities because of that—only their fundamentality.

⁸ An objection from Schaffer will be considered at the end of this section.

ma. Part of the reason for this is that, arguably, the very notion of God, or even a god, as existing in virtue of some ungodly, naturalistically kosher entities—subatomic particles, say—may be incoherent. Arguably, it is part of the *very notion* of God (and of a god) that He (it) somehow transcends the natural world. This is why Spinoza seems to us to *change the topic* in his pantheistic defense of God, and why Meletus in the *Apology* claims that Socrates denies the godly status of the sun and moon on the grounds that Socrates (allegedly) claims they are made of stone and earth (respectively).

This sort of ‘conceptual’ consideration—a consideration to do with the *very notion* of some putative existent—is almost universally appealed to by eliminativists in various areas. In the indented quote above, Schaffer mentions three putative entities whose existence is trivial: properties, meanings, and numbers. We have seen above that there are reasonably plausible ways of recasting ontologically skeptical claims about properties and numbers as claims about fundamentality rather than existence. However, the case of meanings is trickier. Ontological skeptics about meaning are often explicitly eliminativists—see Stich (1983) and Schiffer (1987)—and not merely due to confusion on their part regarding the real insight behind their reasoning. Such Eliminativists argue that there are two features that are (i) essential to meanings but (ii) nothing instantiates simultaneously. First, it is part of the very notion of meaning that meaning determines reference. Secondly, it is part of the same notion that meaning governs (the right) behavior. The meaning eliminativists argue that certain considerations about the nature of causation and relational properties suggest that nothing can have *both* these properties. So upon closer examination, the very notion of meaning entails, against the background of the relevant considerations about causation and relational properties, that there are no meanings.

The philosophy of mind has involved several ontological debates that concern existence questions proper—questions that, again, do not easily support reinterpretation as fundamentality questions. Opponents of Cartesian dualism genuinely deny the existence of an immortal soul; they do not simply argue that such a soul is grounded in brain processes. Eliminative materialists extend the same treatment to the mental at large. Part of their argument is that the dualist is right to deny the reducibility (or grounding) of the mental. Again, the reason for this is often partly conceptual: the *very notion* of the mental is claimed to involve features that nothing in fact exhibits. Rorty (1965), for example, argues that the mental is by definition private, but since nothing is in fact private in the relevant sense, nothing is mental. This is different from claiming that the mental is nothing but the cerebral. In fact, it involves using the principle of identity of indiscernibles to deny any such reduction or grounding claim: the mental is by definition F (private) whereas the cerebral is not-F.

In the background of many contemporary ontological debates in philosophy of mind and other areas is a commitment to a naturalistic worldview. It is this commitment that produces much of the dialectical pressure against souls, God, ghosts, etc. Yet this very commitment is best understood in terms of the denial of the very existence, and not just fundamentality, of certain entities—namely, supernatural entities.

I conclude that while for some existence questions there is a reasonably plausible interpretation that casts them as targeting fundamentality (numbers and properties being perhaps good examples), for many there is not (God, meaning, mind, and naturalism *inter alia*). This appears to undermine Schaffer’s

inductive support for the fundamentality conception of ontology. Furthermore, while some ontological methods (e.g., the appeal to indispensability) fit well in a fundamentality conception, it is not clear how that conception accommodates the role of conceptual analysis; whereas, as suggested above and argued more fully in the next section, a more inclusive conception of ontology might.

This leaves the issue of triviality. Recall that Schaffer's case for the fundamentality conception relied in part on the ready availability of 'trivial inferences' for existence (e.g., the inference from "There are prime numbers greater than 7" to "There are numbers"). In fact, suggests Schaffer, such inferences are available in virtually every ontological dispute. Discussing the debate over the existence of God, Schaffer (2009: 359) remarks: "I think even this is a trivial yes (and I am an atheist). The atheistic view is that God is a fictional character." What makes this 'a trivial yes', according to Schaffer, is that there are trivial inferences to the existence of ficta—e.g., an inference from "There are several existentially disoriented (fictional) characters in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*" to "There are (fictional) characters." Similar moves could be made for meaning, mind, etc. The fundamentality conception might be thus defended on the grounds that such trivial inferences demonstrate the triviality of existence questions. Since ontological questions are often nontrivial, they must concern something other than existence after all.⁹

My response has two parts. First an impression: the treatment of the ontological question surrounding God as not an existence question simply feels much less natural, and much more forced, than the parallel treatment of the ontological questions surrounding properties and numbers. On the face of it, the debate over God's existence is in the main *not* a debate over the existence of a fictional character. On the contrary, it is precisely a debate over whether God is fictional or not (read: real or unreal). Theists believe that God is no more fictional than Napoleon—both make an appearance in various texts, including works of fiction, but both exist text-independently. By contrast, atheists, often motivated by naturalistic considerations, believe that there is no God *period*—the whole thing is a piece of fiction.¹⁰ Furthermore, if we accept the trivial inference to the existence of ficta, then anything we conceive of automatically comes to exist—as a fictional object.¹¹ This is a remarkable power for us to have. It is also a limitless power: since we can conceive of impossible objects, those exist as well. (Consider: "There are some seriously cool impossible objects in M.C. Escher's paintings," therefore "There are impossible objects.") The first part of my response is simply to record the impression that something feels forced and unnatural about the interpretation of certain ontological questions as fundamentality rather than existence questions (through appeal to these trivial inferences)—while for other ontological questions that interpretation feels illuminating and instructive.¹²

⁹ Thanks to Jonathan Schaffer for pressing me on this.

¹⁰ The view that God exists *as* a fictional character is of course an epistemically possible option (as Schaffer notes, atheists are not committed to rejecting fictional characters), but there is nothing *trivial* about the view that this is a coherent view.

¹¹ Thanks to Carolina Sartorio for drawing my attention to this.

¹² It should also be noted that just as there are forced moves that can remove existence from the second group, so there are artificial moves that can remove fundamentality from the first group. Schaffer (2009: 365) considers such a move, one that packs information

The second part of my response is to infer that there appears to be some underlying dissimilarity among two types of ontological question here. Recall the status of the thesis that fundamentality rather than existence is the proper subject matter of ontology: it is not a stipulation and not a sociological claim, but a claim about an underlying deep commonality among ontological questions. The discussion in this section seems to suggest that there is no immediate commonality to begin with. There are, in fact, two very different types of ontological questions: those which can be reinterpreted as concerning fundamentality only through the use of ‘trivial inferences’, and those for which such interpretation does not rely *only* on those inferences. Once we conceive of ontological questions as dividing into (at bottom) two separate and quite different varieties, it is extremely natural to conceive of one variety as *fundamentality* questions and the other as *existence* questions. It is probably *coherent* to treat them as two different types of fundamentality question, or for that matter two different types of existence question, but there is little point in doing so.

4. Toward an Inclusive Approach

The philosophy of mind is a particularly instructive area, since debates between reductivists and eliminativists have often been explicit. The reductive materialist countenances the mental but denies the dualist view that it is fundamental; on the contrary, she claims that mental facts are grounded in (hold in virtue of) physical facts. The eliminative materialist takes herself to say something stronger: that there are no mental facts. The debate can be appreciated through a simple inconsistent triad of antecedently plausible theses:

- (1) The mental is not physical.
- (2) Something is mental.
- (3) Everything is physical.

Accordingly, there are three main positions in the debate: reductive materialism denies only (1) in this triad, eliminative materialism denies only (2), and dualism only (3). (So-called nonreductive materialism is based on separating the cases of tokens and types, or states and properties, rejecting (1) for the tokens/states and (3) for types/properties.)

My suggestion is that such a triad characterizes all typical ontological debates. In such a triad, there is always a reductive option, an eliminative option, and a primitivist option. Consider the ontology of objects:

- (1) Objects are more than just bundles of properties.
- (2) There are objects.
- (3) Everything is ‘made up of’ (grounded in) properties.

In his discussion of different versions of the bundle theory, Van Cleve (1985) ends with an articulation of an eliminative version that denies the existence of

about grounding into the description of putative entities. For example, instead of asking whether numbers exist (a simple existence question) or whether numbers are fundamental (a fundamentality question), we can ask whether fundamental (i.e., ungrounded) numbers exist (a sophisticated existence question). Schaffer offers two responses, but neither contests the feasibility of such a move, only the lessons we might want to draw from it.

objects altogether, *replacing* them with property bundles rather than *reducing* them thereto. The standard versions he discusses, however, are clearly reductive. These versions deny only (1) in the above triad. The more radical version he finally articulates denies only (2). More realist approaches to objects that posit them as fundamental existents deny only (3): they are primitivist about objects.

Similar treatments can be given to other central ontological debates. The debate over properties could be understood in terms of the following triad:

- (1) Properties are more than just collections of particulars.
- (2) There are properties.
- (3) Everything is grounded in particulars.

The reductive nominalist denies (1), the eliminative nominalist denies (2), and the proponent of universals (the 'realist') is a primitivist who denies (3). Likewise for numbers:

- (1) Numbers are irreducible to (collections of) collections of particulars.
- (2) There are numbers.
- (3) Everything is grounded in particulars.

At the same time, the debate over the existence of God can be framed in the same way:

- (1) God is not grounded in natural phenomena.
- (2) God exists.
- (3) Natural phenomena exhaust reality.

Schaffer's view that God exists as a fictional character would involve rejecting (1) here. The more standard atheist view involves rejecting (2). The theist view rejects (3).

The same treatment applies to ontological debates not discussed above. Debates on color tend to be torn between a variety of potential reductions (to reflective and refractive properties, dispositions to elicit experiences, categorical bases of such dispositions, etc.), denial of the very existence of colors (e.g., Maund 1995), and a primitivism about colors (e.g., Campbell 1993). Debates over causation involve a choice between Humean reduction to (broadly speaking) regularity relations (Lewis 1973), denying the very existence of causation (Russell 1913), and primitivist approaches that embrace a 'secret connexion' (Strawson 1989). Likewise, in addition to various reductive treatments of events (in terms of property exemplifications, trope pairs, etc.), there is the option of denying the existence of events altogether (Horgan 1978) or posit them as fundamental (Davidson 1967). Many other illustrations are possible.

In some cases, this way of organizing a debate may be *instructive*. For some contemporary debates have fragmented into several sub-debates concerned with different facets of the same subject matter. Thus, mereological debates revolve around (i) the scope of composition or (ii) whether composition is identity. But they could also be reunified through the following triad:

- (1) Composites are not identical to fusions of simples.
- (2) There are composites.
- (3) Everything exists in virtue of the simples.

Mereological non-nihilists (universalists and restrictivists) who deny that composition is identity reject only (1) in this triad; non-nihilists who maintain that composition is identity reject only (3); nihilists reject only (2).¹³

In all these triads, two types of entity are involved. One type concerns the entity in whose ontological status we are interested—the subject matter of the relevant debate. (This is the entity that shows up in the first and second propositions.) The other type of entity is one tentatively designated as fundamental, at least *more* fundamental—the type of entity that might potentially ground our subject matter. (This entity shows up in the first and third propositions.) The general form is thus as follows:

- (1) E is not grounded in E_1, \dots, E_n .
- (2) There exists E.
- (3) Everything is grounded in E_1, \dots, E_n .

Call this the *generalized triad* for ontology. My claim is that every ontological dispute can be represented by an instance of the generalized triad. The ontological debate forces on us a choice between grounding the subject matter, eliminating it, or positing it as ungrounded primitive.

It might be objected that I have run together a number of different ontological relations: grounding, reduction, identity, in-virtue-of, nothing-but, nothing-over-and-above, etc. In response, I plead guilty. My view is that the interrelations among all these notions is at present totally unclear, but the natural resemblance among them is clear. Accordingly, we can consider that there is a generic relation of ontological dependence of which they are all species. I entreat the reader to read the various expressions used above as informal glosses on ontological dependence. The generalized triad for ontology should forsooth be framed as follows:

- (1) E is not ontologically dependent upon E_1, \dots, E_n .
- (2) There exists E.
- (3) Everything is ontologically dependent upon E_1, \dots, E_n .

A full development of this would require an account of the ontological dependence cited in (1) and (3), but also of the existence cited in (2).

5. The Scope of Ontology

With this general characterization at hand, we can put in place an idealized (and doubtless somewhat simplified) procedure for generating coherent and stable ontological theories. To a first approximation, the procedure is this. In Step 1, we produce a comprehensive inventory of *putative* entities. In Step 2, we feed each item in this inventory into the generalized triad just described, with that item serving as a substitution instance of E and all other items functioning as E_1, \dots, E_n ; Going through each of these triads, we attempt to establish which values of E are such that the primitivist position is the most plausible for them. This produces a first outcome: a list of all ontological primitives. That is, it divides the set of all putative entities into two subsets: the primitive ones and the non-primitive ones. Moving now to Stage 3, we feed each member of the non-

¹³ This does leave a further question of how to choose between universalism and restrictivism as two different kinds of anti-nihilism.

primitive subset into a new triad in which E_1, \dots, E_n are given by the members of the primitive subset; here we attempt to establish which values of E are such that reductivism is more plausible than eliminativism for them. This produces a second outcome: a list of all ‘ontological derivatives’. That is, it divides the non-primitive subset into two further subsets: the derivative ones and the non-existent ones. The overall outcome is a structure that divides all putative entities into three classes. We might describe this structure as $(S_1, (S_2, S_3))$, where S_1 = the set of all ontological primitives, S_2 = the set of all ontological derivatives, and S_3 = the set of all *mere putatives*.¹⁴

As noted, this is only a first approximation. Various complications arise that make the procedure messier. One complication concerns guidelines for and constraints on what makes it into the initial list of putative types of entity. A deeper challenge concerns how reality as a whole is to be carved into putative entities (and entity types) to begin with. A third issue concerns the relationships between determinable entity types and their determinates within the overall structure. These complications, and others, underline the status of the procedure as (over)simplified and idealized.

Still, the basic idea here is that all typical ontological disputes involve a choice among a reductive, an eliminative, and a primitivist option. The important feature of the procedure, for present purposes, is that it addresses both existence and fundamentality questions: it involves both a choice between eliminativism and non-eliminativism and a choice between reductivism and non-reductivism (primitivism). With this in mind, call this the ‘inclusive conception of ontology’. Put in terms of natural classes of questions, the present thesis is simply this: there is a class of questions that seem to belong together ‘naturally’, such that the deep, underlying commonality among them is that they concern choice between a reductive, an eliminative, and a primitivist take on some putative entity.

Note that both the existence and fundamentality conceptions construe ontological questions as demanding a choice between *two* options: ‘exists’ or ‘does not exist’ in one case, ‘is basic’ or ‘is grounded’ in the other. The inclusive framework suggested here demands a choice among *three* options: ‘exists fundamentally’, ‘exists non-fundamentally’, and ‘does not exist’. There is no way, nor need, to insist on factorizing this into several two-option ontological questions. The three-option questions address *both* existence and fundamentality. Thus what the inclusive conception contends is that there is a natural class of three-option forced-choice questions that collectively delimit the domain of ontological inquiry.

In considering Schaffer’s case for the fundamentality conception, I have focused on triviality considerations and methodological considerations. Having discussed triviality in §3, let me end with a methodological consideration. I want to agree that some methods of ontology go to the choice between reductivism and primitivism—including, as we have seen, the appeal to indispensability arguments. Other methods, however, seem to go to the choice between reductiv-

¹⁴ Presenting this procedure has the unfortunate feature that we are quantifying over non-existents. Arguably, however, any kind of ontological theorizing has to start with *putative* existents, and would thereby be forced to speak of what may potentially turn out to be non-existents.

ism and *eliminativism*. In particular, this appears to be the central role of *conceptual analysis* in ontological debates.

Recall that the main eliminativist move in the debates considered in §3 was to argue that the very notion of x (say, God) is such as to exclude its grounding in the ys (say, subatomic particles). The only way to substantiate such claims about what flows from the very notion of an x is through conceptual analysis. This is precisely the role conceptual analysis is accorded by Frank Jackson (1998), through his ‘entry by entailment’ thesis: conceptual analysis helps us find a place (‘location’) in the world for non-fundamental entities. It does so by identifying analytic conditionals whose antecedents use exclusively terms for fundamental entities but whose consequents also use terms for non-fundamental entities. The goal of conceptual analysis is to determine whether such conditionals exist. If for some x they do not, eliminativism about x recommends itself.¹⁵ If they do, reductivism does. This is not the point to launch a defense of conceptual analysis so characterized. My present point is simply this: the fundamentality conception makes no room for conceptual analysis in ontological methodology; the inclusive conception does. (Doubtless this will be seen by some as a *strength* of the fundamentality conception, but for those of us who take conceptual analysis to be a genuine and central part of legitimate ontological theorizing, this recommends adopting the inclusive conception.)

Conclusion

Schaffer’s critique of the existence conception of ontology strikes me as overdue: in many areas of ontology, the central choice is between a reductive and a primitivist account of a certain putative entity. The existence of that entity is not really in question. Limiting ontology to existence questions would leave an enormous blindspot at the heart of the discipline. At the same time, moving away altogether from existence to fundamentality questions also misrepresents the structure of ontological debates. A correct conception of ontological debates, I have suggested, would be more inclusive. For such debates are typically three-dimensional and involve choosing at once among three options, not two: a reductive or grounding option, an eliminative option, and a nonreductive or primitivist option.¹⁶

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¹⁵ In some rarer contexts, conceptual analysis may combine with other assumptions to produce a *prima facie* case for primitivism. If an ontologist has independent reasons to believe in entity E , but there are no analytical conditionals from recognized primitives to E , then that ontologist will have obtained a *prima facie* reason to be a primitivist about E . Granted, though, in this case some other considerations must conspire with conceptual analysis, namely, those that make the ontologist fairly certain of E ’s existence to begin with.

¹⁶ For comments on a previous draft, I would like to thank Carolina Sartorio and Jonathan Schaffer.

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