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Contents

213. **Editorial: Two voices**

218. **Style and voice in Hume's philosophy**
Chris Kassam

230. **Do we have a natural right to our pre-tax income?**
Laura Biron

239. **Inverted / absent qualia and the problem of epiphenomenalism**
Edward Grefenstette

247. **Is there really a Cartesian circle?**
Guy Bennett-Hunter

255. **Can individuals be responsible for what is done by other members of their social group?**
James Souter

263. **Getting round to reading Wittgenstein: an introduction**
Robert Charleston & Andrew Stephenson

271. **Knowledge, scepticism and Wittgenstein's private language argument**
Robin Dunford

282. **Immediate concatenation in the *Tractatus***
Nick Tasker

296. **Wittgenstein, therapy and changing your philosophical attitudes**
Jessica Woolley

313. **Book reviews:**
Peter J. Richerson & Robert Boyd – Not by genes alone: how culture transformed human evolution
Elaine Yeadon
Philosophical dictionaries
Robert Charleston

331. **BUPC 2006**

332. **Subscribing and submitting papers to the BJUP**

British Journal of Undergraduate Philosophy, 1(3), July 2006

Two voices

Editorial

How should we write philosophy? It's a question that arises for me when one of my essays comes back with a lower grade than I might have liked, or I find myself stuck reading a difficult paper, or I sit in a lecture and find my attention wandering. Following the line put forward by Nigel Warburton, my Senior Lecturer at the OU, I've always thought that keeping things simple, unambiguous and plain is the best strategy. However, more recently I've begun to notice that – if taken absolutely – this approach has its limits.

Of course, it's still clear that the vast majority of the time, papers written with clarity, lucidity and accessible communication in mind are more successful in getting good marks, being accepted by reviewers, and – most importantly – actually being read and discussed. Clarity, lucidity, structure, originality, accessibility, enthusiasm – these are at the heart of BUPS and the BJUP's review processes and skills sessions, because they are among the hallmarks of the best papers we, and our faculty reviewers, have seen. But such focus on the desirability of these traits does not rule out there being occasions when it is simply not possible, or perhaps even desirable, to be as plain, clear, accessible etc. as we might be.

It's important to emphasise that this is just at the margins of everyday philosophy. But there *are* reasons why we might validly emphasise technical terms and deliberately inaccessible language in a piece of work. Most of us are engaged in an enterprise that has two distinct objectives: we are studying to become good philosophers, but also to get good grades. These two aims should ideally and usually be in harmony – the one implying the other. But realistically we know it is not always that simple. There are times when you find a lecturer or tutor who has very specific views on writing in a pronounced 'academic' style, and will not generally award the highest marks to essays that do not conform to that style. As undergraduates, we need those marks, so it seems the right

thing to do to put a few 'thusly', 'aforementioned', 'hence' and 'one might be not obviously wrong to say's back into your prose; but also to remember how alienating and unnecessary such devices can be when you have more choice over your (or your students') writing style in the future. Similarly, when marks or time are tight, an argumentative flaw can sometimes be 'plastered over' with an impressive, pseudo-scientific or ambiguous piece of phrasing. This is unpleasant for those of us who believe in living, accessible, world-investigating philosophy, but true. It will not work in the long-run, but if you've no time left in an exam to fix a flaw – or no answer to give – it can sometimes make a few marks' difference. Yet it is clearly a poor substitute for actually knowing your topic and being able to refute criticism. I've always felt a little ashamed when I know I've used it.

More importantly though, I'd like to suggest that there are times when difficult phrasing or language are a necessary and important part of the philosophical toolbox. This is more easily suggested in complex, technical areas. Logic is a simple example of how specialist techniques and 'inaccessible' formal language ('iff', symbolic logics, and so on) can be a valid, highly productive yet popularly-unreadable part of philosophy. Though, leafing through a few back-issues of *Analysis*, the notoriously hardcore logic journal, I cannot help but wonder if there are some perfectly-graspable, very interesting 'popular' ideas in some papers that miss out on gaining a wider audience through not later being given more accessible expression.

The two more controversial reasons I'd like to suggest fully justify less clear, more ambiguous, more technical and inaccessible treatment both stem from recent BUPS / BJUP papers. The first really came to light for me as we prepared this issue of the journal, with its three Wittgenstein papers by Dunford, Tasker and Woolley. I suspect I will have to read Wittgenstein for a few years to come before I know where I stand in the interpretative debate. However, one claim often made on his behalf made a great deal of sense to me. Translation issues aside, the phrasing and formal arrangement of Wittgenstein's prose often comes across as awkward or even obscurantist. This has led some people (me initially included, I must admit) to regard him as a poor communicator. But there is an argument that Wittgenstein was at great pains to write as he

did, so as not to repeat the conceptual and theoretical errors he thought were embodied / embedded in some of our usual ways of philosophically speaking about things. The more awkward, less accessible or easily-read phrasing is there to both avoid these errors and perhaps also highlight just how pervasive certain philosophical phrases – and the assumptions they embody – are in our (therefore question-begging?) philosophical discussions. I am horribly underqualified to extend or reject this claim for Wittgenstein's own work. But it seems very plausible to me that we might sometimes need to employ awkward, even somewhat tortuous, prose to avoid undesirable commitments being premises for our very discussions. There are debates in which the 'natural' terms we would use by default *load* the discussion – think pro-choice, liberal, rational, scientific. Arguments against these are often scuppered by the words themselves: 'How can you be anti-rational?', 'But surely you aren't advocating denying women choice?' It is not difficult to think there might be debate-loading metaphysical or epistemological viewpoints 'built into' certain philosophical terms, just as there are ethical or inferential viewpoints 'built into' any moral discussion that unquestioningly uses the terms above.

And this leads us to the second reason there may be for using awkward, less easily-read or -followed phrasing or terms. At the BUPS Skills Conference earlier this year I read a paper I've been working on for some time, suggesting that philosophy should be done as plainly, non-specialistly and perhaps as non-academically, as possible. It was a paper I was very excited about, part of a larger radio-programme project I was proud to be asked to contribute to. Unfortunately it was also, I realise, completely wrong. As a piece of translation of some complex philosophical ideas – including a couple from Wittgenstein and a sly dig at Derrida – into very, very plain English, I had thought it very successful. It experimentally also excised any philosophical jargon, references or citations in the text as being 'pointlessly academic'. The only problem is that now, reading the paper after resigning from the project, even I cannot identify which lines *are* the clever uses of Wittgenstein, or where the sly dig at Derrida *is*. I know from my notes roughly where they occur, but they seem to have disappeared in the

main text, so I cannot see that they will have been clear when I read the words out loud. Which rather means it is a failure as a paper.

The result of a lot of thought on this is a tentative theory: that a slight awkwardness, a certain technicality and non-everydayness is a crucial part of philosophy. It is perhaps ineliminable because without it what should be 'writing as enquiry' dissolves into 'writing as opinionated story'. I suspect we need to have individual pieces of technical jargon to let us know that a non-everyday thought is being articulated, and we need to i) pay more attention for the next couple of sentences, and ii) tie the idea described to the non-ordinary word being used. This is the flipside to the debate-loading terms noted above: unless we use non-ordinary words or phrases in a text, and express things in a way that requires at least a little more thought than background everyday conversation, it is not clear that a debate is being framed, a viewpoint taken, and that such ideas as follow are there to be discussed in abstract. In short, without the flags and markers of philosophy, the philosophy disappears. My paper was therefore conceptually doomed from conception.

We might therefore think that this is all good evidence for taking a 'middle way', balancing clarity and accessibility with technicality and less-accessibility in an ideal synthesis style. But I suspect this would not be a good conclusion. It would presuppose a central 'attractor point' of being just-this-accessible *across* philosophy, which seems unlikely given the wide range of topics and techniques philosophy has to offer. Logic and ethics seem to suit differing degrees of accessibility in expression, for example. But moreover it seems to presuppose that there is a static, stable entity called 'philosophy', which can proceed in an ideally constant way through time. The situation seems considerably more pluralistic and chaotic than that, with different, incompatible views of not only what philosophy's conclusions should be, but also how it ought to be written, expressed. And philosophy seems to need time and debate – it seems to have periods when more people read it, such as in the wake of Locke or Wittgenstein; and periods when fewer people grasp the works currently dominating academic philosophy and journals – as was the case in the early 1970s with analytic linguistic philosophy.

There are times when philosophers push for accessibility – such as, arguably, the last few years; and times when serious professionals establish a 'hardcore' philosophy cabal for more detailed technical, specialist debate. The ongoing ebb and flow, dialogue and clash between these two instincts seems to feed philosophy as a subject. I believe in the popularising, accessible side of this, but it seems clear to me now that technicality and a slight awkwardness of phrasing should continue to be a part of progressive philosophy. Nor should difficulties of communication preclude certain topics being pursued, or particular concepts and theories being articulated. Maybe there will even be a time when it will be most productive for access to philosophical debate to be more expertise-dependent for a while. Maybe all this has been clear to everyone except me in the past.

I think it is clear we need both instincts somewhere in our pursuit of this subject, and should enjoy the tension and clash of their priorities as a truly productive process. Clarity and accessibility are a virtue and a great goal to pursue. But philosophy does, and I suspect must always, speak in two voices.

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Style and voice in Hume's philosophy

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A number of recent commentators on David Hume have emphasised the importance of sensitivity to his style when trying to understand the meaning of his philosophy. Hume was one of the great English prose stylists, particularly in his sparkling *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*. In this paper I want to explore his first *Enquiry*, the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, both as a system of truth-claims and as the speech of a narrating 'I'. In the first *Enquiry*, as in all of Hume's writings, there are two mutually opposed currents of thought. On the one hand, there is an incisive sceptical reason which undermines our capacity for knowledge of the world. It therefore subverts the writing of philosophy, which has traditionally been seen as a system of objectively true statements spoken by a coherent subject – the 'philosopher'. On the other hand, there is a faith in empirically probable beliefs about the world which cannot rationally be justified. The conflict of these two currents takes place not only at a philosophical level, but also stylistically. Some stylistic devices undermine truth-claims and fragment the coherence of the narrative voice, while others strengthen precisely these features.

First, let's look more closely at Hume's sceptical argument. According to this, our knowledge of the world is attained by induction, inference from particular to general or from effect to cause. But the process of induction is rationally unjustifiable: if we see one billiard ball hit another and the second ball starts to move, we can't say with absolute certainty that it moves *because* the first ball hit it. Nor can we predict with absolute certainty that if one ball hits another in the future, the second will always move. We rely only on the fact that we have seen one billiard ball hit another a thousand times and the second has always started to move to infer that the first always *causes* the second to move. This inference is empirically sound but rationally indefensible: it stems

not from reason but from subjective belief. We cannot claim absolute knowledge of the world, and consequently we can't make definitive statements. So in its most radical form, this scepticism deprives us of the practical beliefs we rely on in everyday life. It also deprives us of any justification in speaking at all, because to make any statement is implicitly to make a truth-claim. Discussing such a radical sceptic, Hume comments 'were his principles to prevail, all discourse, all action would immediately cease'. In the milder form of suspension of beliefs, we may no longer make statements about what is beyond the immediately phenomenal world. Hume calls such metaphysical statements 'affirmative and dogmatical'. He identifies three forms of philosophy, each of which has its truth-claims subverted by scepticism: religious and metaphysical systems cannot claim knowledge of truth, because they 'proceed from particular instances to general principles'. Empiricism is by its very nature uncertain and probabilistic, and scepticism ends up suspending even itself: 'nothing can be more sceptical, or more full of doubt and hesitation, than this scepticism itself'.

Although Hume's own philosophy does not lay claim to metaphysical knowledge, it does practise the latter two types of philosophy, empiricism and scepticism, each of which entails its own type of truth-claim. Several stylistic devices therefore act to suspend these truth-claims in the first *Enquiry* and to make it very clear that Hume's philosophy is *not* metaphysical. Hume sees Platonic metaphysics as 'unintelligible to common readers' due to its 'metaphysical jargon', which illegitimately 'gives it the air of science and wisdom'. In contrast, Hume's non-specialised style dispels this oligarchic fug. The *Enquiry*'s most technical terms are 'Ideas' and 'Impressions', and Hume feels the need to excuse himself for adopting even these terms: he says that they require 'no nice discernment or metaphysical head to mark the distinction'. Despite this care in distinguishing his terminology from metaphysical jargon, he is nonetheless chary of it. The technical term 'Impression', which is printed in block capitals on its first appearance and has its first letter capitalised thereafter, is frequently replaced by the non-technical term 'sentiment', which is printed without capitalisation. So unintelligible, elitist affirmative metaphysics is suspended by clear sceptical reason, which Hume calls 'true metaphysics'. Any remaining

metaphysical intricacies are placed in parenthesis, and Hume encourages readers who do not 'love the abstract sciences' to skip them altogether. Hume also extends his suspicion of truth-claims to his own arguments, both empirical and sceptical. He admits that his empirical investigations are merely 'speculation, which, however accurate, may still retain a degree of doubt and uncertainty'. He thus practices the humility which he later praises as the 'doubt, and caution, and modesty, which ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner'. Likewise, the radical scepticism of the early part of the *Enquiry* eventually accomplishes its own destruction because it is dogmatically certain of its own correctness. So, although the sceptical paradoxes to which Hume's own argument leads him are rationally indisputable, he is very uneasy over their self-satisfaction, disliking the way they are 'pompously displayed' with 'triumph and exultation'.

We can see the effect of this stylistic suspension of truth-claims by comparing the first *Enquiry* to Book I of Hume's earlier work, the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Although this has almost exactly the same philosophical content as the *Enquiry*, there is no such stylistic humility. Hume shows no compunction about using jargon: he doesn't hesitate over Impressions and Ideas, and even delves into Relations, Modes and Substances. Unlike in the *Enquiry*, he delights in contrived paradoxes such as 'Any thing may produce any thing', which turns out to mean something quite different if we expand its grammar. His conclusions are reached not merely with self-satisfaction but with outright arrogance: at one point he loftily remarks 'I think it proper to give warning, that I have just now examin'd one of the most sublime questions in philosophy'. Compare the conversational, self-deprecating tone of the first *Enquiry*: at one point Hume writes 'I pretend not to have made any mighty discovery'. The contrast between the two lies not only in the *Treatise*'s grandiloquence but in its patronising narrative voice. The Hume of the first *Enquiry* asks for 'instruction, if any one will vouchsafe to bestow it on me' and promises to 'submit to the judgement of the reader': the narrator is speaking to a community of equals, even to his superiors. The Hume of the *Treatise*, on the other hand, thinks that his superficial readers will underestimate him due to their 'inadvertence' and so has to 'give warning' of his examination of 'one of the most sublime questions in philosophy'. He is the

philosopher conveying knowledge to his intellectual inferiors, just as the Platonic philosopher speaks to those trapped in a cave who can see nothing but shadows.

As a result, the scepticism which is developed in the *Treatise* undermines its own claim to truth. This culminates in the anguished implosion of the philosopher's voice in the Conclusion to Book I: Hume laments that 'When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. Such is my weakness, that I feel all my opinions loosen and fall of themselves. Every step I take is with hesitation, and every new reflection makes me dread an error and absurdity in my reasoning'. In the *Enquiry*, on the other hand, the narrator is fully aware of the paradoxical nature of what he is doing from the outset, and stylistically suspends his own truth-claims as he makes them. Intermediate between the two is the second half of the Conclusion to Book I of the *Treatise*, which was written after the rest of the *Treatise* was completed. Here Hume confesses his earlier arrogance, admitting that 'we are apt not only to forget our scepticism, but even our modesty too; and make use of such terms as *'tis evident, 'tis certain, 'tis undeniable*... I may have fallen into this fault'. He now counts the reader as his free conversational equal: 'If the reader finds himself in the same easy disposition, let him follow me in my future speculations. If not, let him follow his inclination'. Similarly, in the *Abstract* to the *Treatise*, which he wrote a year later, he admits that the *Treatise* is 'obscure and difficult'. He no longer addresses the 'few' but 'ordinary capacities', aiming to 'shake off the yoke of authority and accustom men to think for themselves'. The jargon-free, democratic clarity of the style of the first *Enquiry* follows logically from the sceptical philosophy of the *Treatise*, but it was only developed after the *Treatise* as a way of circumventing the paradox in which Hume found himself caught.

As a result of Hume's sceptical suspension of truth-claims in the *Enquiry*, including his own, there can be no single, privileged voice which conveys the truth. So the first Enquiry's arguments are undermined by a pervasive irony. If I speak ironically at the same time as making a statement, I also imply that it is not fully true or that it doesn't fully express what I think. Irony in a philosophical text such as the *Enquiry* therefore prevents us from ever taking one argument as

definitive. For example, in Section 1, a debate is staged between what Hume calls 'profound' and 'easy' philosophy, but the voices of the two are ambivalently balanced. Each one deploys equally-weighted arguments to rebut the other: 'profound' philosophy says 'What though these reasonings be abstract? This affords no presumption of their falsehood'. 'Easy' philosophy comes back with 'the abstractedness of these speculations is no recommendation, but rather a disadvantage'. At no point is one voice clearly preferable. Both speak the language of objective truth and even moral obligation: 'easy' philosophy claims that Nature 'prohibits' profound philosophy, but 'profound' philosophy defends itself by claiming that curiosity 'ought not to be despised'. Both even deploy the same Platonic metaphor of light and dark, sun and shadow, to claim ultimate truth on their side: 'profound' philosophy aims 'to bring light from obscurity', while 'easy' philosophy claims that 'abstruse philosophy vanishes when the philosopher leaves the shade, and comes into open day'. We are left uncertain as to which type of philosophy eventually wins the debate, and the rest of the *Enquiry* constantly moves back and forth between 'easy' and 'profound' philosophising.

This interplay of different voices within the *Enquiry* reflects the plurality and irrationality that Hume sceptically identifies in our beliefs. He argues that 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions' – irrational belief, not unitary reason, is the central mental faculty. Therefore, the self is neither unitary nor coherent; rather, Hume argues, it is 'in a perpetual flux and movement'. There can be no single voice, just as there can be no single statement of truth. Since Plato, the univocal rational self has founded itself – and its claim to power over self and others – on its knowledge of truth. Hume's undoing of traditional epistemology is thus equally an undoing of traditional psychology. In the *Treatise*, philosophical beliefs are not a matter of cool reason but of subjective passions. At the end of a lengthy section devoted to showing that 'we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses', Hume admits that 'I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am inclin'd to repose no faith at all in my senses'. Similarly, at the end of the *Enquiry*, immediately after recommending moderation in scepticism, Hume fanatically (and ironically) recommends that all books of metaphysics should be burnt.

So, because of Hume's sceptical denial of the primacy of reason, his style in the *Enquiry* is profoundly ironic. Irony suspends the rational voice's claim to power by subverting its truth-claims and preventing it from referring to things which really exist, rather than mere subjective beliefs. For Hume, philosophy is a matter of irrational belief irrespective of truth, words irrespective of things. So his philosophy is actually closer to the Platonic definition of poetry than to philosophy: Plato denounced poetry because he argued that it was intrinsically irrational and introduced a plurality of voices into the subject. Against the poet he sets the philosopher, who speaks in one voice only and has a rational knowledge of truth. At one point in the *Enquiry* Hume makes no attempt to prove his theories, but instead offers a disquisition on the poetic unities. For Hume, philosophy is replaced by poetry just as reason is replaced by belief.

But even though I can point to these examples of philosophical and stylistic incoherence, the *Enquiry is* generally homogeneous – even univocal – in terms of both argument and style. This implies a coherent narrative persona not threatened by its own radical scepticism, but instead able to stand at a controlling distance from it. This controlling distance is the second, perhaps more familiar form of irony, where we make an argument only in order to mock it and show that we think the opposite is true – it is closely allied to sarcasm. I have identified stylistic humility as a consequence of scepticism, which prevents the philosopher from thinking himself any closer to the truth than anyone else; but this humility is occasionally undermined by a hint of sarcasm. Hume is being not just humble but exaggeratedly servile when he assures us that 'I keep my mind still open to instruction, if anyone will vouchsafe to bestow it upon me'. The first form of irony, which I've been discussing as a stylistic consequence of Hume's scepticism, leaves us uncertain as to what is actually true, or even whether there is a truth at all – it sets two voices against each other and we don't know which is right. This second form of irony sets two voices against each other only in order to show that one of them is wrong and the other right – it strengthens a truth-claim by contrast, instead of weakening it by uncertainty. This second form of irony is directly opposed to Hume' scepticism, and is the stylistic consequence of the other current in his thought: a pragmatic, affirmative belief in the truth of precisely those

things which scepticism negates. It's only because of the moderating influence of such belief that Hume is not in fact a radical sceptic, who is unable to speak or to act – instead, he can live in the real world and even write philosophy. As he says in the *Treatise*:

> *Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling the clouds of scepticism, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find it in my heart to enter into them any farther.*

Radical scepticism is anticipated from the first section of the *Enquiry* and safely contained within a conditional clause: '*unless* we should entertain such a scepticism as is entirely subversive' – the implication being that of course we don't entertain any such notion.

Likewise, Hume does in fact make truth-claims, however probabilistic. Of course, according to his sceptical reason, these are rationally unjustifiable and must necessarily be founded upon rhetoric and persuasion, rather than on cold logic – but this doesn't stop him making them, even though he sceptically sneers at religious rhetoric for taking the weight of rational proof. For example, he argues in the *Enquiry* that human nature is essentially the same irrespective of time and place. He reaches this conclusion first by inducting from his own experience of men to the identity of human nature: in his experience of men, they are all alike, and therefore all men must always be alike. This induction is empirically sound but rationally indefensible – instead of proof, Hume relies upon rhetoric to excite belief in the similarity of all men. So in the sentence, 'The same motives always produce the same actions: the same events follow from the same causes', there is no proof backing up his claim (nor is there anywhere else) – instead, the repetitious parallelisms of 'the same...the same...the same...the same' rhetorically picture to us the eternal sameness of all men. So by means of rhetoric he makes us *feel* the sameness that the radical sceptic would demand to be *proved*. Of course, the empiricist would be quite happy with the argument that because I've always found men to be the same,

they must always be the same – but later in the same argument Hume does something the empiricist would see as totally illegitimate. Having inducted from his experience of men to human nature in general, he then deducts back to the phenomenal world and is willing to deny phenomena which disprove this inducted human nature. This is just as illegitimate as seeing a dozen white swans, assuming that all swans are therefore white and then calling anyone who tells us about a black swan a liar. But that's exactly what Hume does: he imagines someone reporting to us that he had found a race of men who were utterly different from any we had previously encountered, and says that 'we should prove him a liar, with certainty'. Hume himself points out the fallacy of this manoeuvre later in the *Enquiry* when he says that it's illegitimate to induct a perfect God from the imperfect world we live in and then to alter phenomenal reality to fit that perfect God by introducing the notions of Providence or Heaven. When Hume himself makes this argumentative move in his discussion of human nature, once again we're led to accept it not because of any rational or empirical proof but because of rhetoric. Hume deploys hyperbole to convince us that believing a story about an utterly different race of men is irrational and childish – we can prove whoever tells us such a story a liar 'with the same certainty as if he had stuffed his narration with stories of centaurs and dragons'. Hume's scepticism is right to suggest that these beliefs have no foundation in reason, but that doesn't stop him holding these beliefs and promoting them stylistically.

So on the one hand, we have a sceptical refusal to accept truth-claims which ironically undermines all arguments in the *Enquiry* and prevents any one voice from being dominant. On the other hand, we have a tendency to believe in precisely these truth-claims despite their rational illegitimacy, which tends to impose a single voice on the text and allows Hume to use a much more sarcastic, domineering form of irony. These two currents of thought are incapable of being reconciled – they are directly opposed to one another. Scepticism attacks the foundation of belief, and belief ignores scepticism's objections. However, they do reach an accommodation of sorts at the end of the first *Enquiry*. Neither one gives way to the other, but neither may completely dominate the mind. Instead, a middle ground of 'mitigated scepticism' is posited where the two may coexist and moderate each other's

excesses. Scepticism prevents us from being too dogmatically certain of our beliefs, and belief allows us to live in the real world without taking too much notice of sceptical uncertainties. It's at this point that we can really begin to see the importance of style to Hume's philosophy, because it is in the style of the first *Enquiry* that this middle ground really becomes feasible for the first time. The accommodation of scepticism and belief is a delicate, knife-edge process which requires us to act in a vacuum and believe in things we *know* we have no justification for believing. But the style of the *Enquiry* enfolds and contains the conflict of scepticism and belief *from the beginning*, and therefore gives us a model for precisely this accommodation – a voice, a self we can imitate. It's a model of negotiation, of finding provisional compromises between nihilist scepticism and blind belief. The broadest features of Hume's style are products of a compromise between scepticism and belief, holding in tension these two extremes. Hume sceptically rejects metaphysical truth-claims and refuses to employ the jargon of what he calls 'abstruse philosophy'; but he still presents a narrative persona in control of its material and willing to use rhetoric to excite belief; so his writing has a general *clarity* and lucidity, which satisfies the demands of both scepticism and affirmative belief. Similarly, we've seen that his *irony* has two registers: on the one hand, the juxtaposition of two voices we can't decide between, a form of irony which suspends truth-claims and subverts the coherent narrative self. On the other hand, the distanced citation of arguments of which a unitary narrator is always in control and is frequently mocking. Broadly speaking, the ironic lucidity of Hume's writing is determined from two directions at once. This stylistic accommodation prepares us for the philosophical accommodation reached at the end of the *Enquiry*, so that it doesn't seem like such a difficult solution after all – because we've been reading a voice which shows us how we could put it into practice for the past hundred and fifty-odd pages.

So style offers a space of accommodation between scepticism and belief – *writing* is not blind living-in-the-world unaware of the contingency of our beliefs and actions; but nor is it the silence and apathy to which sceptical reason must inevitably lead us. *Writing* is the halfway house between ignorant living and philosophical nothingness. In one of his *Essays*, *Moral*, *Political and Literary*, Hume envisages himself as an

'Ambassador' from the '*learned*' world of philosophers closeted in their studies to the '*conversible*' world of socialites and society ladies. If they are cut off from each other, philosophy becomes 'as chimerical in her Conclusions as...unintelligible in her Stile', while society preoccupies itself with 'gossiping Stories and idle Remarks'. Hume's function as ambassador is to 'promote a good Correspondence betwixt these two States', allowing each to moderate the other's excesses. How does he do this? By writing 'such *Essays* as these': the philosopher encounters 'Men of the World' in the space of *writing*. When the balance between scepticism and belief is temporarily tipped one way or the other, we find specific stylistic instances like those I discussed earlier; but Hume's generally clear, ironic style in the *Enquiry* witnesses to the broad success of the compromise. For example, when discussing Pyrrhonism (radical scepticism which denies our ability to know anything at all), Hume's irony negotiates between its two forms, the subversive plurality of voices and the sarcastic parading of a target for abuse. The Pyrrhonist is abusively parodied as someone who will not 'acknowledge anything', and his threatening philosophy is safely contained by being presented in the subjunctive mood and by the assertion that 'Nature is always too strong for such an extreme'. Here Hume the puppet-master is enjoying the 'laugh against' the Pyrrhonist, holding him up as a straw man in order to establish the correctness of his own position. However, at the same time he conjures up a bleak, nihilistic vision in his portrait of Pyrrhonism, which undermines his facile sarcasm. Our comfortable closure is disrupted at the end of the paragraph when Pyrrhonist uncertainty returns to show the arbitrariness of our beliefs, leaving us somewhat uneasy and unsure as to which voice is finally correct. The blurring of the two registers of irony here hovers between belief and scepticism, allowing them to remain in tension.

It is in offering this stylistic space of accommodation that the first *Enquiry* advances beyond the *Treatise*. The narrator of the *Treatise* attempts to dogmatically control his own writing – his own voice – but this attempt is increasingly disrupted by sceptical uncertainty and his own conclusion that reason is the slave of the passions. The *Enquiry*, on the other hand, offers a voice which acknowledges its own contingency from the outset but is nonetheless capable of meaningful speech. Hume's stylistic accommodation of scepticism and belief provides no

conclusive principles for life or for philosophy; but it does outline a *process* by which we may legitimately practise both. If we read Hume's philosophy with an eye to style and voice, we find that he's not so much making an argument or providing answers as 'taking a thought for a walk' – and that's why this eternal process of oscillation and accommodation can never cease.

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Do we have a natural right to our pre-tax income?

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Why should philosophers be interested in taxation? Surely questions about tax equity are best left to the experts: economists, lawyers and politicians? Aren't philosophers ill-equipped to participate in the technical debates that are the bread and butter of politics? Such questions might strike a chord with those sceptical of applying theory-laden political philosophy to the practical world of politics. In response to the sceptic, however, I will argue that philosophy has a great deal to contribute towards current debates about the legitimacy and limits of taxation. Discussion of tax equity in the practical world of politics takes place under the assumption of the truth of a theory called Everyday Libertarianism, a theory which argues that the money we earn prior to taxation – our pre-tax income – is something to which we have a natural right. In this paper I will examine the plausibility of this theory.

My discussion will focus on an oft-perceived tension in the tax system. Taxation is central to the organisation of any modern state. However, in raising taxes, the state infringes upon another important political value: the respect for, and protection of, private property. As a result, there is a tension between the need of the state to raise revenue, and the right of individual taxpayers not to have their property coercively taken away. This manifests itself in debates over the fairness of taxation – debates which raise important philosophical and practical questions: Does the state have an automatic right to tax its citizens? How far should the tax system discriminate amongst taxpayers? Are individuals justified in carrying out tax-planning activities which minimise the amount of money they pay into the tax system? In order to answer these and other relevant questions, it is important to begin by clarifying these two dimensions of taxation: (1) the individual right to private property,

and (2) the collective need of the state to raise revenue and redistribute wealth. The extent to which these two areas conflict is fundamentally dependent on how we view the moral status of private property.

I will begin my study of property rights by discussing libertarianism, which states that property rights are natural, inviolable and morally fundamental to individual liberty. Nozick (1974), the most famous proponent of this theory, argues that 'individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them without violating their rights'. According to the libertarian conception of property, property rights are defined independently of the state, imposing important constraints on state intervention at the level of the individual. Nozick derives his theory of private property, and his justification of the state, from a theory of individual rights to self-ownership (more on this below).

It is important to recognise the intuitive force of the libertarian notion of property, and its fundamental influence on our everyday thinking about tax policy. The everyday basis on which we carry out market transactions, which occur without noticeable state involvement, leads us to develop a firm sense of entitlement to our pre-tax income. This means that we are inclined to think that what we earn belongs to us in a full sense, without restriction, in such a way that we have a considerable degree of freedom to spend it as we choose, before allowing the government to take it away through taxation. This natural sense of ownership has remarkable power in shaping how we view the tax system, and it can be given a justification from libertarian theories of property. For in the pre-tax world, the libertarian assumes that our financial holdings are just. From this it is argued that we have a fundamental *moral* right to our pre-tax income, so that any evaluation of the fairness of a particular tax must be an analysis of what justifies a departure from this pre-tax baseline.

The assumption that we have a natural right to our pre-tax income, some of which the government then takes away from us in taxation, has enormous influence on our pre-theoretical conception of the legitimacy of taxation. Politicians often exploit the motives of taxpayers by appealing to libertarian considerations, describing tax increases as

'taking from the people what belongs to them'. This statement contains the implicit libertarian assumption that taxation takes away the legitimate property of individuals who are fundamentally entitled to their pre-tax earnings. We are then left with the view that tax cuts give us back 'our money' and that net income is what we are left with after the government has taken away some of what really belongs to us. In the analysis of tax justice, libertarianism therefore places the burden of proof on departures from pre-tax market outcomes, assuming that the initial market distribution is just, and that any deviation from it requires special justification.

How plausible is Everyday Libertarianism? In a recent book by Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel (2002), the notion of pre-tax income is explained away as a myth. The intuitive appeal of libertarianism rests on the 'psychological internalisation' of specific legal conventions that govern seemingly 'natural' property rights: ownership *seems* to be the most natural thing in the world, given that we are all born into an elaborately structured legal system governing the acquisition, exchange and transmission of property rights. However, 'any convention that is sufficiently pervasive may come to seem like a law of nature, when it is in fact its very pervasiveness that gives it its strength' (p.42). This in turn appears to rob the libertarian position of its moral force, as the central 'intuitive truth' it relies on for its power appears to depend not on a 'moral truth' but a merely contingent – if widespread – convention in property law.

To consider whether this objection is successful, it is worth examining the implications that libertarian and conventionalist theories have in terms of our second question: the place of taxation in redistribution of wealth. Theories of distributive justice concern the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. Taxation occupies an important position in such theories, since raising revenue is necessary in order for the state to provide individuals with *benefits* of social cooperation, and yet taxes are often perceived to be unfair *burdens*. The question we must address, therefore, is what constitutes a fair distribution of tax burdens, given that this distribution must be sensitive to theories of private property.

As we have seen, different theories of property rights offer competing accounts of the moral status of our income, and the baseline from which to evaluate the tax system. Libertarianism places severe constraints on the power of the state to levy taxes, with the consequence that redistributive taxation – taxation which transfers the state's wealth from the richer to poorer members of society – is illegitimate. Conventionalist theories of property, on the other hand, are compatible with more egalitarian theories of distributive justice, which allow the state wider powers to redistribute wealth through taxation. It is within this framework that we begin to appreciate the tension within the tax system between the right to private property on the one hand, and the state's need to raise revenue on the other – with the individual caught between the two.

One of Nozick's arguments in opposition to redistribution arises from a consideration of the moral significance of the market. It is argued that the government should make it easy for individuals to engage in cooperative economic activity, by protecting private property and seeing that contracts are enforced, and it should not constrain the forms of those activities with conditions like taxes unless absolutely necessary. The government's interrupting a transaction between private individuals, raising its cost by requiring that some percentage of what is exchanged be diverted to the treasury, is a significant incursion on personal liberty, controversially described by Nozick as follows:

> *Taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor…taking the earnings of n hours of labor is like taking n hours from the person; it is like forcing the person to work n hours for another person.* (1974, pp. 169–70)

According to Nozick, each individual owns himself: his body and its parts, his talents and his labour. He therefore owns whatever he produces with these talents. Moreover, he is entitled to do with them anything he wishes and (unless bound by contract) to refrain from doing with them anything anyone else wishes that he do with them. In Cohen's words, 'he possesses over himself, as a matter of moral right, all those rights that a slaveholder has over a complete chattel slave as a matter of legal right' (1995, p. 68). It is possible in a free market to sell

the products of exercising one's talents. Any taxation of the income from such selling 'institute[s] (partial) ownership by others of people and their actions and labor' (p. 172). Taxation of earnings is thus said to be inconsistent with self-ownership, especially when that taxation is justified by principles requiring redistribution of wealth.

Nozick's appeal to the moral legitimacy of the market assumes, without argument, that the pre-tax distribution of tax burdens is just. This results from the intuitive conception of self-ownership, spelled out through the view that a transaction is just if it is voluntary. This so far unquestioned assumption can be shown to have severe consequences for socio-economic justice. Murphy and Nagel summarise the resulting problem as follows:

> *A capitalist market economy is the best method we have for creating employment, generating wealth, allocating capital to production, and distributing goods and services. But it inevitably generates large economic and social inequalities, that leave a significant segment of society not only relatively but also absolutely deprived, unless special measures are taken to combat those effects.* (p. 181)

Many people intuitively feel that capitalism needs to be 'softened at the edges' to remove gross inequalities and meet social needs; left to its own devices, the capitalist market creates inequalities. But according to Nozick, taxation cannot be used as a way of redressing the balance because of the side-constraints that rights to self-ownership place on state intervention. By contrast, the conventionalist can support this intuition and justify redistributive taxation. One such approach is Rawls's liberal egalitarianism in which market inequalities are only permissible insofar as they improve the position of the worst off. There is some trade-off to be made between the different values we consider it important for the tax system to promote. Small losses of privacy and liberty are seen by Rawls as acceptable in exchange for a great deal of poverty alleviation. If the justice of the tax system is considered in terms of its wider implications for social justice, it seems to follow that the libertarian theory of justice, rooted in our intuitive conception of self-

ownership, is mistaken. Instead, there is reason to move towards the adoption of a more egalitarian theory of distributive justice.

As private individuals engaged in tax-planning activities and heavily influenced by everyday libertarianism, we intuitively believe that the pre-tax distribution of tax burdens is just. Yet, at the same time, many of us are likely to reject the theory of distributive justice that results from this conception of property, and feel that the government has a greater responsibility to provide welfare rights to others than is allowed by libertarianism. If we feel that it is a legitimate aim of government to maximise the general welfare, it seems that we must be prepared to countenance the use of taxes to finance this social goal. Our intuitions place us in a dilemma.

To consider the force of this dilemma in political debates, I will finish by considering the issue of tax avoidance. Libertarianism is highly influential in shaping our attitudes to tax planning, and has been appealed to in past cases. For example, the famous decision of Lord Tomlin in the Duke of Westminster case (1935) that 'each man is entitled to order his affairs so that the tax attaching under the appropriate Acts is less than it otherwise would be' is an expression of the libertarian notion of entitlement. An individual is entitled to reduce his tax liability, since the pre-tax world is presumptively just, and individuals therefore have an automatic right to the preservation of their income.

However, despite the widespread appeal to libertarianism in the justification of tax avoidance, both ethical and legal considerations point to the fact that it needs to be curtailed to an extent. The question is: how might the tax system incorporate our two conflicting demands? On the one hand, the system must accommodate the libertarian desire to minimise tax liability, and on the other, it must be sensitive to a broader egalitarian notion of fairness. Because I have argued for the primacy of libertarian considerations in shaping individual tax planning, it is not clear that considerations of fairness will motivate individual taxpayers to change their attitudes to the tax system, pointing to the fact that the libertarian motive of self-interest takes prominence in shaping taxpayer behaviour. Rather than condemning

the practice of tax avoidance as an expression of brute self-interest, politicians would do well to consider the implicit libertarian intuition that tax avoidance is the protection of a natural right.

Where do these considerations leave us? I began by analysing the notion of a property right to income, and pointed out how different theories of property rights have different implications for the legitimacy and limits of taxation. Everyday libertarianism – a tacit assumption in discussions of tax policy – argues that we are morally entitled to our pre-tax income, and the government bears a heavy burden of justification in taking it away through compulsory taxation. But when considering the overall fairness of the tax system, we noted the difficulty of appealing to libertarian theories of property rights. Whereas egalitarian considerations support the use of the tax system to reduce social inequality, this use is illegitimate on libertarian theories. These two theories of distributive justice – libertarianism and egalitarianism – can be shown to pull in different directions when applied to the motives that govern taxpayer behaviour.

This map of the relevant theoretical issues shows that political philosophy has much to contribute towards current debates over the tax system. The running theme is the idea that pre-theoretical intuitions are often given grounding in political theories. The firm belief that we have a natural right to our pre-tax income is rooted in libertarian theories of taxation. The force of this intuition shapes taxpayer behaviour, and understanding it is a necessary condition for understanding the difficult issues that surround tax compliance – moral, legal and psychological. I have explained the philosophical underpinnings of this intuition, and argued that it is at best only one important factor in evaluating a tax system. For when it underpins a wider theory of social justice, it has consequences that are widely deemed unacceptable. Yet it appears to be the driving force behind the private motives that shape taxpayer choice.

Murphy and Nagel express pessimism over the role philosophy can play in shaping public debates over the fairness of the tax system, similar in spirit to the scepticism I set out to refute at the beginning of this paper. They believe that the libertarian obsession with the legitimacy of pre-tax income is here to stay, regardless of its implications for social justice.

However, I have argued that uncovering the moral force of this pre-reflective libertarian intuition has a significant bearing on current debates, in particular concerning tax avoidance. Although libertarian intuitions are certainly ingrained in taxpayers' motivations, they need not be portrayed as 'obsessions'. Once made explicit, their plausibility *and limitations* can be assessed. In particular, the fact that they conflict with other deeply ingrained intuitions about distributive justice may be used to modify taxpayer behaviour. Despite being mundane, burdensome features of our economic lives, then, 'taxes…provide a perfect setting for constant moral argument and possible moral progress' (Murphy and Nagel, 2002, p.7).

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Inverted / absent qualia and the problem of epiphenomenalism

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When I see an apple, I am experiencing a specific shape, with a specific colour (red). Scientifically speaking, my eye is processing sets of photons it receives. In his paper 'What is it like to be a Bat?', Nagel argues this is not all there is to experience. Knowing everything there is about a bat and its brain will not tell what it's like to be one, to fly with your own wings and experience echolocation. This 'what-it's-like-ness' is what philosophers call *qualia* (sing. *quale*): the subjective component of experience. Qualia in philosophy are often put at the centre of the debate on functionalism, reductionism, behaviourism, and other problems of mind as arguments against these positions. In this paper I will be focusing on how qualia, or more specifically two arguments based on qualia-theory, *Absent Qualia* and *Inverted Qualia*, argue against physical reductionism of the mind and for epiphenomenalism. I will begin by explaining these concepts and how they are problems for reductionism, before critically assessing responses to them provided by Chalmers and Dennett. I hope to show that while epiphenomenalism 'stands a chance', the burden of proof is on the 'qualia-epiphenomenalist', who will most likely have to fall back on some form of dualism to maintain his beliefs.

Some terminology first: *Epiphenomenalism* is basically[1] the theory of mind which suggests that physical states determine mental states, but that mental states cannot affect physical states or other mental states. *Functionalism* in philosophy of mind is a theory which supports the idea that mental processes and states are defined in terms of functional roles. For example, pain is the end result, or output, of a function

[1] I acknowledge that there are nuances to this theory, but believe that the conclusions found in this paper apply to most (if not all) of them.

which takes certain stimuli as input (for example stepping on a nail). A functionalist would therefore describe C-fibres (the biological nerve fibres naturally involved in human 'pain' episodes) as having the functional role of producing pain when thus stimulated. Of course, one could argue that this function and subsequent state of pain could be realized by something with a similar functional role, such as a circuit wired to act like C-fibres firing in response to the same stimuli. This extension[2] of functionalist theory is called Multiple Realizability (MR), and is at the centre of Searle's absent qualia argument which I will soon examine.

Reductionism is a theory of identity which goes as follows. We say that state A (for example, pain) is reducible to a state B (for example: C-fibres firing), when there is no more to being in A than there is to being in B, and B therefore entails A. In philosophy of mind, physical reductionism of the mental is therefore the theory which states that the mind is nothing more than the brain states it is associated with. If you have the right brain states, you have mental states. Reductionist supporters of MR therefore believe there are a plethora of systems capable of having mental states, not just humans and animals.

Note that functionalism does not entail reductionism (nor vice-versa[3]). One can perfectly well support the idea that the mental world is functional without the brain itself having the same equivalent functions on a neural level. I have a bit of difficulty understanding how this does not involve some form of dualism, although I suppose one could argue the mind is a holistic product, so that a mental function corresponds to several – or several combinations of – neural functions acting together. Although in this case it could be said that the mind remains reducible to the brain state (or one of the possible states) which caused it. Anyway, despite this distinction, it is generally the case that problems

[2] Not all functionalists agree on whether MR is an extension of, or essential to, functionalism.

[3] If you argue against functions but support the idea that the mind is just neural. In some way Paul Churchland belongs in this category in that he believes functionalism makes concessions to folk psychology.

qualia-theory poses to functionalism are also problems for physical reductionism of the mental.[4]

The main problem qualia pose for reductionism is that of 'causal location'. Where are qualia in the mind? How are they causally related to the brain? Can it be possible for systems which are 'wired' the same way, which are *neurally isomorphic*, to differ in that one has qualia of one sort, and the other has either different qualia or no qualia? In his paper 'Epiphenomenal Qualia', Jackson argues that qualia are a by-product of experience, and that while they are caused by it, they are themselves causally passive[5]: they do not cause anything in return. This paints an epiphenomenal picture of the mind, where physical states cause mental states which cannot in return cause other mental / physical states. If this is so, then there is part of the mental which has different causal 'behaviour' than the physical brain states that cause it. Thus some mental states (qualia) are not reducible to brain states. To reinforce this epiphenomenal claim, qualia-theorists provide the following two arguments: Absent Qualia, and Inverted Qualia.

In his book *Troubles with Functionalism*, Block details the following thought experiment. The (many) people of China are given a communication device capable of sending signals to other devices. A display system in the sky coordinates the country via directives ordering individuals to send specific signals to other individuals. Essentially[6], China has become a function (or group of functions), with the sky directives being the source of experience (e.g: roughly equivalent to the photons received when seeing an object), and the signals being function-states, possibly leading to particular forms of output. Block argues that is seems very unlikely and counter-intuitive that this system has any form of qualia, so qualia cannot be strictly functional. To adapt this argument to the case of reductionism, assume the Chinese people

[4] And I will notify the reader in the cases where the objections do not 'port over'.

[5] By this I mean that they can only causally interact with other states in that they are affected (or perhaps even instantiated) by them.

[6] The analogies presented here may appear controversial to some. I partially agree that Block's arguments (and Searle's) may be attacked on this basis, as I believe Dennett (1992), amongst others, do. However, I will stick to discussing Chalmers' response to it, which is perhaps more relevant to the conclusions presented in this paper.

and directives are organized in a structure that mirrors the neuronal structure of the human brain. Signals in the sky now correspond to the sort of experience you might expect as a human, while the people correspond to individual neurons. Block would surely argue that likewise it seems unthinkable that such a Chinese Nation would be having qualia exactly like ours, or any qualia at all!

This class of argument is called an Absent Qualia argument (AQ). It states that beings functionally / neurologically isomorphic to a human would not have qualia, while the human[7] would. AQ thus states that there is something unique about humans that isomorphic systems do not possess, and that is thus independent of function and neural structure.

A slightly more extreme extension of this argument is the type-identity theorist's position. In his paper 'Minds, Brains, and Programs', Searle argues against biological multiple realizability, stating that it is because of the biological structure of brains that there are qualia, and that it has nothing to do with functionalism or reductionism[8] specifically. We will talk about this a bit more in depth later.

Also supporting the anti-reductionist position is the Inverted Qualia (IQ) argument. The strongest version, perhaps, is the one outlined by Dennett in 'Quining Qualia'. A neurosurgeon modifies your brain so as to invert your qualia. You wake up and experience a green sky and blue apples. There are two types of changes the neurosurgeon could have made: eye-level, or memory-level. In the first case, your eyes communicate inverted qualia to your brain, and you express surprise at seeing a blue apple. In the second, the surgeon either altered your memory of colours to match the inverted spectrum, or the way your mind 'writes' experience to memory (you still think things you perceive

[7] Whether or not animals have similar qualia or not is an interesting question, but not relevant to the debate at hand. Henceforth when I mention humans I imply 'possibly animals as well'.

[8] Bizarrely enough, one *could* conceive of a position which argues the mind *is* reducible to the brain *only* in the case of biological brain, and in other cases there are no qualia. I won't bother debating this point as it is tangential to the argument, but I will leave it to the reader to judge the absurdity (or defensibility) of such a claim.

as being blue are 'red'), so that either way neither you nor external observers notice a change (you perceive what others would call green, but believe it to be what you've always called 'blue'). If this is empirically possible while the 'inverted' person stays neurally isomorphic, then qualia are not dependent on neural structure, and are non-reducible to mere brain states.

Instead of talking of something as large as China, let's imagine a neural isomorph, 'Bob', that is a silicon copy of me. Bob's brain is artificial, but wired just like mine, so that Bob acts and reacts to stimuli just like I do.[9] In his paper 'Absent, Dancing, Fading Qualia', Chalmers proposes the following experiment[10] against Absent Qualia: Parts of my brain are progressively replaced by silicon processors which are neurally isomorphic to the parts replaced. Thus, step by step, I 'become' Bob. This raises the question: do my qualia fade away progressively, or do they just disappear at some critical point?

The latter case seems unlikely, says Chalmers. Such a thing *does* depend upon sudden loss of consciousness, but in a way that an observer would notice the disappearance of qualia as behaviour is, understandably, affected, and people would infer lack of qualia from lack of consciousness-indicating behaviour. Furthermore, the cut-off point concept seems completely arbitrary. How could I have perfect qualia at a certain moment during the replacement process, and then a few neurons replaced later have none left? Very few qualia-theorists would defend this (how could they?).

So we must therefore consider the fading qualia case. The question which bothers Chalmers is 'how do we know we have fading qualia?' We shift focus to self-consciousness here. If our ability to experience qualia is fading, then does our ability to know 'what it's like' to have qualia, our 'quale qualia', fade as well? Presumably it does, or systems like Bob (who I am 'becoming') must have 'quale qualia' as well! Qualia-theorists can't claim Bob has experience about lack of

[9] So you would not be able to tell us apart from our behaviour.

[10] N.B. I have modified Chalmers' experiment by specifying that the replacement brain cells are not only functionally isomorphic but neurally isomorphic. But rest assured, this new argument remains structurally isomorphic to Chalmers' (amusingly enough).

experience, thus it seems implausible that I have fully conscious realization of my fading qualia. It seems absurd that I should have *less* access to my mental states than others, thus fading (and absent) qualia seem improbable.

But, Searle argues, this argument misunderstands qualia. Qualia are epiphenomenal, so that when 'fading' occurs, what happens is that I notice discordance between my body's behaviour and my experience. My experience of colours slowly fades away till I experience nothing more, only darkness. Yet 'to my dismay', when asked what I'm seeing, my body happily answers 'It's an apple' as if nothing had happened. Searle might say therefore that, during the replacement, I am not 'becoming' Bob, I am merely becoming a system which is a physically isomorphic copy of Bob. Bob never had qualia to begin with, and my brain 'loses touch' with its qualia when I become him.

Chalmers might respond to this by modifying his experiment so that only parts of the brain cells are replaced by silicon structures so that the brain remains neurally isomorphic, and the cells functionally isomorphic. Thus the brain cells progressively become hybrid silicon / carbon cells. Is there something so special about carbon that it determines whether or not we have qualia? Do these hybrid cells become 'qualia-incapacitated' just because of minor modifications on an atomic level? It seems impossible to draw a final conclusion, but as Chalmers states for his original experiment, this view of the mind seems very improbable, and it seems Searle would have to rely on some form of dualism to justify the existence of non-reducible qualia.

Hopefully we've established that, barring dualism, it's fairly probable that Bob has qualia. But how do I know Bob has the same qualia as me, and that they're not partially / fully inverted despite his neural isomorphism? Chalmers offers the following experiment: let's replace Dennett's memory-level neurosurgical intervention by a copy[11] of the part of my brain which is subject to inversion. The copy is modified to

[11] We can produce a version of this argument where the copy is biologically like my brain in order to sidestep Searle's type-identity objection. However, here I am focusing more on the nature of the qualia, so I'll stick to the silicon circuit argument for consistency.

be inverted, while the original brain zone stays the same. The copy is then wired into my brain with a switch so that, when I flip it, the copy-zone takes over the functions of the natural zone. Chalmers argues that qualia-theorists must once again rely on 'quale qualia' to explain how I would be capable of noticing the change: 'There is no room for [this realization]'. Dennett adds that there is no standard to compare your experience to: it is as if you were born inverted. In fact, both philosophers would agree, it is completely possible that qualia shifts[12] or breaks[13] are constantly happening! We wouldn't notice. External observers wouldn't notice, as our behaviour would remain coherent. The only proof would be in the eventual physical trace of an inversion.

The notion of physical trace or change is useful for defenders of reductionism. If qualia inversion necessitates structural modification of the brain other than memory, then the system is no longer necessarily neurally isomorphic, thus consistency of experience is only contingent. If, on the other hand, it is memory which is modified, then the 'different' quality of inverted qualia is entirely dependent on a standard which varied between two neural isomorphs, and the mind remains reducible to brain states. To illustrate this: I have called object A a 'blorg' my whole life. Bob has always called object B a 'blorg'. When we meet, some mad scientist gives Bob 'B to A' glasses which cause Bob to see object B as object A. We now both refer to the same object as a blorg, although Bob is just matching a physical image to memory, something he could do if he had no qualia. In both cases, the most plausible explanation seems to be that there is no such thing as qualia. At least not as something which is non-reducible to brain states.

In conclusion, we have examined two of the strongest arguments qualia-theorists put forward, both of which hope to demonstrate that qualia are epiphenomenal and thus non-reducible to brain states. We have critically examined the responses provided by Dennett and Chalmers, and have come to the conclusion that while we cannot yet drive the final nail into the qualia-theorist's philosophical coffin, the very concept of absent or inverted qualia seems highly implausible. We

[12] Qualia inversion (to a variable degree), or any change in qualia.

[13] Absent Qualia, or any form of faded qualia.

therefore leave it to the qualia-theorists to provide us with stronger arguments for the existence of such a mysterious thing as qualia, lest they wish to be forced into admitting some sort of dualism.

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Is there really a Cartesian circle?

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I shall begin by outlining the claim that there is a Cartesian circle, and then go on to examine one way in which Descartes has been defended against this charge that has recently increased in popularity. This seems to me to be the most plausible defence, focussing on the way in which the notion of clear and distinct ideas is reinterpreted, a notion traditionally considered to be problematic. I shall point to the implications of this view with reference to Descartes' background in the history of scepticism. I shall suggest, in part because of these implications, that while this view may seem radical, it is not implausible, and conclude that the Cartesian Circle may not exist. It may still be objected, I shall claim, that the sceptical project, as traditionally conceived, does not by its very nature admit of a solution. This, however, does not prevent the alternative interpretation from being upheld.

Descartes' *Meditations* begin with a project of systematic scepticism during which he doubts everything that he has even the smallest reason to doubt and attempts to reconstruct his epistemic structure on firm unshakable foundations of certainty. Descartes, as a rationalist, believed that all knowledge, including empirical knowledge, was mediated through 'ideas': 'I am taking the word *idea* to refer to whatever is immediately perceived by the mind.'[1] It is this notion that Descartes wishes to convey when he discusses in the Second Meditation his perception of wax and says that when he believes he sees men crossing the square he actually sees no more than 'hats and coats which could conceal automatons' and concludes 'I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped

[1] *Third Replies* (CSM II 127-8) in J. Cottingham (ed.) *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), p132.

solely by the faculty of judgment which is in my mind.'[2] Further, perception of bodies 'derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood.'[3] It will be evident from these remarks that the answer to the scepticism in which Descartes has systematically engaged in Mediation I must, for him, lie in the nature of ideas. The truth of an idea depends on our being able to perceive it 'very clearly and distinctly;'[4] however, the genuine nature of any clear and distinct perception has yet to be proven. Descartes then brings in (the non-deceiving) God as, in Dancy's words, the 'epistemic Guarantor' to secure the truth of clear and distinct ideas.[5] The Cartesian circle is said to exist because Descartes argues from the presence of a clear and distinct idea of God in his mind to God's existence, yet with God's existence unproved (or at any rate not argued for) he has no right to assume the veracity of clear and distinct ideas that his argument for God's existence requires. It becomes apparent at this point that whether Descartes' argument is circular[6] depends upon the way in which the notion of clear and distinct ideas is interpreted and whether the veracity of such ideas is proven in Descartes' sense.

It seems to me that the most viable interpretation of Descartes' writing that absolves him of this supposed logical blunder is the 'psychological interpretation' which, broadly speaking, argues that Descartes was not concerned with objective, metaphysical truth and, on this basis, challenges the assumption that the nature of true clear and distinct ideas consists in an accurate correspondence with objective, metaphysical reality. Loeb suggests, in defence of this interpretation, that when Descartes speaks of the unshakability of beliefs he is not speaking in epistemic terms but in terms of 'descriptive psychology':[7] '[a]n unshakable belief has the psychological property that it cannot be

[2] AT VII, 32 in Cottingham, op. cit., p. 85.
[3] AT VII, 34, ibid., p. 86.
[4] AT VII, 35, ibid., p. 87.
[5] J. Dancy & E. Sosa (Eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p96.
[6] and, by extension, whether there is a way of overcoming the systematic scepticism mentioned above
[7] L. E. Loeb, 'The Cartesian Circle' in J. Cottingham (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes* (Cambridge: CUP 1992), p. 202.

dislodged by argument.'[8] Even scientific knowledge, Loeb argues, is 'identified with unshakable belief, and hence itself has a psychological characterisation.' This claim may be supported with references to passages where Descartes does, on the face of it, seem to be seeking objective support for his ideas and not merely an inner, subjective certainty:

> *the…most common mistake…consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble, or conform to, things located outside me. Of course if I considered just the ideas themselves simply as modes of my thought, without referring them to anything else, they could scarcely give me any material for error.*[9]

However, it is this criterion for the veracity of ideas that has great importance for the psychological interpretation and consequently to the question of whether the Cartesian circle exists. One would have to argue, for the interpretation to hold, that Descartes was not concerned (or at any rate was less concerned than traditionally thought) to establish the correspondence of ideas to objects and states of affairs in the external world. We should have to argue, with Loeb, that 'certainty' and, by extension, *truth* consist in psychological irresistibility and that the veracity of ideas consists in their clarity and distinctness itself and not in some relation of correspondence to the world: 'The psychological irresistibility of clear and distinct perceptions is caused by their *being* clearly and distinctly perceived, not by one's *believing* that they are clearly and distinctively perceived.'[10] In other words it is the state of *being convinced* that concerns Descartes, not the question of whether this conviction is metaphysically justified. Some textual support may be found for this view in the *Second Replies*:

> *What is it to us that…the perception whose truth we are so firmly convinced of may appear false to God or an angel, so that is, absolutely speaking, false? Why should this alleged 'absolute falsity' bother us, since we neither believe in it nor have even the smallest*

[8] L. E. Loeb, 'The Cartesian Circle' in J. Cottingham (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes* (Cambridge: CUP 1992), p. 202.
[9] AT VII, 37 in Cottingham, op cit., p. 88-9.
[10] Loeb, op. cit., p. 208.

> *suspicion of it? For the supposition which we are making here is of a conviction so firm that it is quite incapable of being destroyed; and such a conviction is clearly the same as the most perfect certainty.*[11]

If we accept, as Kenny does, that passages such as these are most characteristic of Descartes' aim in the *Meditations*, we may conclude that 'clarity and distinctness must be internal properties of ideas, not properties relating them to extra-mental objects.'[12] Descartes is able, then, to 'lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true' independently of and *before* his arguments for the existence of God.[13] The existence of God can therefore be justified by appeal to a clear and distinct idea of him. Since, according to Descartes, all knowledge and perception is mediated through ideas, we can have no way of comparing an idea with its correlate in the world in order to determine its veracity; in this case, 'perceptions to which no real objects correspond may be indistinguishable from true perceptions.'[14] This would be a problem for those who wished to claim that Descartes' project was factual or metaphysical since even his scepticism (enshrined in the statement 'the senses sometimes deceive us') logically depends on this non-existent ability to compare an idea with its correlate. A solution to this problem is given by the psychological interpretation, namely that clear and distinct ideas are, in a sense, self-validating because of their unshakability which, as is evident from some passages (see above), is all Descartes requires to guarantee 'certainty'. By its very nature and 'constitution' it is impossible for the mind to think of clear and distinct ideas as being false and therefore the mind is 'certain' of their truth. The existence of beliefs that are, at least in a sense, self-evident does not necessarily entail foundationalism and this will become evident as consideration is given to Descartes' background of the history of scepticism. This consideration can also endow force to the argument that, for Descartes,

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[11] Descartes, *Second Replies* in Cottingham, op, cit., p. 141.

[12] A. Kenny, *Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 197.

[13] AT VII, 35 in Cottingham, op. cit., p. 87.

[14] M. Williams, 'Descartes and the Metaphysics of Doubt' in J. Cottingham (ed.), *Descartes: Oxford Readings in Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), pp. 28-49, p. 46.

the truth of an idea cannot lie in its correspondence to metaphysical reality.

We can trace this notion of the correspondence of ideas to objects and facts back to the ancient Greek sceptics in whose tradition Descartes was operating. One of the reasons that Descartes gives for doubting the veracity of sense-perception is that the senses sometimes deceive us. It seems that Descartes is not entitled to make this claim (at least as a metaphysical proposition) and that the ancient Greek notion of equipollence is more apt. Equipollence or *isostheneia* is illustrated as follows:

(1) *x* appears F in situation S
(2) *x* appears F* in situation S*

where F and F* denote incompatible properties and S and S* different situations.[15] For example, a stick in water may appear bent and when it is taken out of water it appears straight. However, the sceptic has no right to assume, as Descartes seems to, which of these appearances would be veridical. To illustrate the supposed 'disparity between an object and its idea,' Descartes gives the example of the Sun, arguing that sense perception leads him to believe that the sun is small whereas 'astronomical reasoning' leads him to conclude that it is larger than the earth and concludes that 'the idea which seems to have emanated most directly from the sun itself has in fact no resemblance to it at all.'[16] The ancient Greek sceptics would not allow this claim,[17] since, as Sextus puts it, '[b]y *opposed accounts* we do not necessarily have in mind affirmation and negation, but take the phrase simply in the sense of *conflicting accounts*. By *equipollence* we mean equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts

[15] J. Annas and J. Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), p. 24.
[16] AT VII, 39 in Cottingham, op. cit., p. 90.
[17] The fact that astronomical reasoning is not a form of sense perception does not affect the argument here, since God also guarantees the truth of logical and mathematical propositions (AT VII, 36; Cottingham, p. 87). The question of the circle concerns the justification of knowledge by God whether *a priori* or derived from sense perception.

takes precedence over any other as being more convincing.'[18] Applied to our examples, this view entails 'suspension of judgment' since, for all we know, we may only be seeing the stick 'correctly' when it is in the water and our perceptions of it in other situations are illusory. Descartes does seem to claim that we are able to compare an idea with its object, but if he had the Greek notion of equipollence in mind, it seems plausible to suggest that he does not see the problem in purely metaphysical terms (as the charge of circularity presupposes) but rather conceives two systems, one of clear and distinct ideas which are self-validating, subjective and psychological, and the other of sense perception. The only real difference between the system of clear and distinct ideas and sense perception, Loeb claims, is that whereas the former is psychologically irresistible and internally coherent, 'sense perception on its own generates conflicting beliefs…internally incoherent.'[19] This claim may be made without any presupposed ability to compare ideas and objects and if we agree that this ability does not exist (given systematic scepticism) no metaphysical certainty is possible without circularity. On this view of two opposing systems, of equal status metaphysically, it seems that it is not unfair to call Descartes a type of coherentist. Neither clear and distinct perception nor sense perception can be objectively validated and his choice of the former lies in its internal coherence rather than its objective correspondence: 'in declining to exercise the faculty of clear and distinct perception, one deprives oneself of the means for resolving the conflicts that arise within sense perception.'[20] There is no metaphysical way out of scepticism without circularity or contradiction, as Ayer observes, but there may well be a *psychological* solution.

Loeb compares accepting clear and distinct perception on the grounds of its psychological irresistibility and internal coherence to swallowing a pill 'that induces an irresistible belief for which one lacks good evidence'[21] but concludes that deduction cannot be relied upon in the face of Descartes' total scepticism. As Ayer pointed out, 'if nothing is

[18] Sextus Empiricus, *PH*I 10.
[19] Loeb, op. cit., p. 233.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 222.

certain, then it is not certain that one statement follows from another.'[22] If we agree that Descartes was using deductive argument and seeking objective, metaphysical certainty, we must accept the charge of circularity since the idea of God can only be objectively proven if the clear and distinct idea of him is objectively, metaphysically true. I have shown that, in Descartes's rationalist system and the wider context of scepticism, the knowledge of such truth is impossible. In order to extricate Descartes from the charge of circularity and, by extension, from his own scepticism, we must suggest that attaining metaphysical certainty by deduction was not his aim, since this could only ever lead to the 'suspension of judgment' advocated by Sextus. We must claim that he sought, rather, unshakable beliefs interpreted psychologically. We may be unsatisfied with this solution to systematic scepticism but it seems, as Loeb claims, that a more 'adequate' metaphysical one is not possible: 'all known versions of the epistemic interpretations…fail to acquit Descartes of begging the question.'[23] If, indeed, it is the case that 'deduction is called in question, and deduction is vindicated by intuition' where 'intuition' is understood as psychological certainty, as I have argued, then there is no circle.[24]

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[22] Ayer, A. J., *The Problem of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p40.
[23] Loeb, op. cit., p. 223.
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Can individuals be responsible for what is done by other members of their social group?

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Consideration of whether individuals can be responsible for the actions of others in their social group can yield sharply conflicting intuitions. On the one hand, the question is closely linked with the concept of collective responsibility, an idea which may have become intuitively plausible through its frequent use in everyday discourse. Talk of governments and organisations bearing responsibility is common, and may have the consequence of implicating individuals not directly involved with the actions of other members. On the other hand, it may be easy to sympathise with Ton Van Den Beld's initial response to the consequences of the ideas of collective responsibility and guilt; that they 'have always been rather strange – and at times, even frightening – notions.'[1] It is also intuitive to see individuals as the only bearers of responsibility, ruling out the possibility of individuals being responsible for the actions of others. As our intuitions do not readily produce any clear answer to the question, careful analysis is needed. The concept of collective responsibility has strong implications for the question at hand: whereas an individualist who denies the existence of collective responsibility will also deny that individuals can be responsible for the actions of other individuals within their social group, a holist who affirms its existence may argue that in some cases individuals are indeed responsible for the actions of others. I shall examine each view in turn.

Individualism denies that it is possible for individuals to be responsible for the actions of other members within their social group. The starting points for many individualists are ontological, conceptual or logical

[1] Ton Van Den Beld, *Can Collective Responsibility For Perpetrated Evil Persist Over Generations?* Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2002) pp. 181 – 200 at p. 182

claims about the priority of individuals over groups. Indeed, these often have much initial plausibility, making it tempting to unreflectively agree with Jan Narveson's assertion that 'the basic bearer of responsibility is individuals, *because that is all there is*'[2] (my italics). It does seem as if individuals are at least conceptually prior to groups, because whereas groups entail the existence of individuals, individuals do not necessarily entail the existence of groups. In short, the claim is that there is nothing more to groups than the individuals that constitute them. If a group is responsible, then so are all the individuals within it. Furthermore, the individualist may rule out the possibility of collective responsibility with the following argument:

1. Social groups cannot choose to act, only individuals can
2. Responsibility only concerns chosen actions
3. Therefore, responsibility can be assigned to individuals, not to social groups

Another way of expressing this idea is by using Kant's dictum of 'ought' implying 'can', for in Robin Attfield's words, 'it is very hard to see what we can mean by saying that a government could have done otherwise unless it is that its members…could have done otherwise.'[3] In turn, the individualist can use this denial of the existence of collective responsibility to conclude that it is not possible for individuals to be responsible for actions by other members of their social group. This is because the whole idea of an individual being responsible for the actions of another member of their social group presupposes a link between the two individuals, which will be membership of the same group. If the group bears some responsibility, then so may the individuals within it. But as groups cannot be responsible, an individual therefore cannot be responsible for the action of another individual, whether they are in the same social group or not.

However, philosophers of a more holistic bent have pointed out certain weaknesses within the individualist position, and have argued that it is

[2] Jan Narveson, *Collective Responsibility,* The Journal of Ethics, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2002) pp. 179 – 198, at p. 179

[3] Robin Attfield, *Collective Responsibility,* Analysis, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1971) pp. 31 – 32 at p. 31

indeed plausible to hold individuals responsible for actions undertaken by other members of their social group. In order to undermine the individualist position, attention can be called to the first premise stated above, that

1. Social groups cannot choose to act, only individuals can

In order to question this premise, it is necessary to distinguish between different types of 'social groups'. Whether the individualist's argument works or not will depend upon how the term 'social group' is interpreted. It could be done so in at least two ways. The first type of social group, which Margaret Gilbert has described as 'feature defined'[4] groups, are those where individuals who may not actually have any contact with each other are grouped together by common characteristics such as nationality or race. It seems clear that if the first premise is interpreted as referring to this kind of social group, then the individualist's argument succeeds, as the individuals within 'feature defined' groups do not have any unitary aims or intentions so cannot choose to act. This kind of social group cannot bear responsibility for it is, as the individualist would say, nothing more than the individuals that constitute it. Responsibility is sometimes mistakenly ascribed to this type of social group, one example being groups of American backpackers who, fed up with being taken as responsible for their government's foreign policy, are supposed to have presented themselves to other travellers as Canadians. This kind of group can only be said to be responsible insofar as the individuals in it are responsible.

However, the second social group – a 'highly organised'[5] one – is the type often held up to be the one that can choose to act in a meaningful sense, and can bear responsibility. It is the members within this group that are most likely to be responsible for the actions of other members. This type of group has not been acknowledged by many individualists for they tend to view the issue from the objective standpoint alone. Objectively, it seems correct to view individuals as the only building

[4] Margaret Gilbert, *Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings,* The Journal of Ethics, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2002) pp. 115 – 143 at p. 124

[5] This phrase is taken from Virginia Held, *Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict,* Journal of Ethics, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2002) pp. 157 – 178 at p. 166

blocks of social life. Yet from a subjective or inter-subjective viewpoint we can perceive these 'highly organised' groups. To use the terminology of John Searle, these social groups can be constituted by the 'ontologically subjective'[6] phenomenon of 'collective intentionality.'[7] The individuals in such highly organised social groups identify themselves with it, pledge allegiance to it, share aims, intentions and values with the other individuals within it and have explicit procedures for decision making.[8] This type of social group roughly corresponds to the conception of social groups held by John D. Greenwood, who defines them as 'populations bound by shared social forms of cognition, emotion and behaviour,' which are 'represented by members of a social group as held and engaged by other members of the social group.'[9] Linking together these ideas of Searle and Greenwood, Margaret Gilbert's 'plural subject theory'[10] asserts that:

> *A population* P *has a collective intention to do* A *if and only if the members of* P *are* jointly committed *to intending* as a body *to do* A. [11]

Underlying the argument above is the idea that the possession of shared aims, values and decision making procedures means that we can see such groups as making choices and being able to bear responsibility, in a different way to when all the individual members bear responsibility. In this way 'highly organised' groups work as individuals do. The morally relevant capabilities of individuals are the same as those of 'highly organised' social groups. Margaret Gilbert has made a similar point by writing that:

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[6] John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London, 1995) p. 8

[7] *Ibid,* p. 24

[8] See Held, *Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict*

[9] John D. Greenwood, *Social Facts, Social Groups and Social Explanation,* Noûs, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2003) pp. 93 – 112 at p. 101

[10] Seumas Miller and Pekka Makela, *The Collectivist Approach to Collective Moral Responsibility,* Metaphilosophy, Vol. 36, No. 5 (2005) pp. 634 – 651 at p. 636

[11] Gilbert, *Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings,* p. 125

> *For two or more people to intend* as a body *to do* A *is for them as far as is possible to constitute a single 'body' which intends to do* A.[12]

This seems to amount to a refutation of the individualist's first premise that 'social groups cannot choose to act, only individuals can,' for although 'feature defined' social groups cannot choose to act, 'highly organised' ones can. The argument now must be amended as follows:

1. Highly organised social groups can choose to act
2. Responsibility only concerns chosen actions
3. Therefore, responsibility can be assigned to highly organised social groups

This appears to instantly rule out some of the claims made by individualists. For instance, Jan Narveson declares that 'Genocide involves thousands or millions of individual murders. The fact that all of the victims belonged to one group…and all the killers belonged to another…does not mean that the genocide is irreducible.'[13] Yet this only works when we restrict our attention to the objective 'brute facts[14]' of a social group. When we take into account all of the ontologically subjective considerations that will most likely have bound the killers together, then it is far more plausible to ascribe irreducibly collective responsibility to the killers as a 'highly organised' group.

Now a case in which collective responsibility is possible has been established, we may be in a position to see what implications this has for the question at hand. As was noted earlier, the whole idea of an individual being responsible for the actions of another member of their social group presupposes a link between the two individuals, which will consist in membership of the same group. If the group is responsible, then the individuals within it *may* be. An example used by Virginia Held may clarify the ways in which, by this account, an individual can be sensibly held responsible for the actions of others within the same

[12] *Ibid,* p. 126
[13] Narveson, *Collective Responsibility,* p. 179
[14] Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality,* p. 2

social group. If some individuals in a racist group attack individuals of another ethnicity, then all the other individuals in the group who did not carry out the attack but nevertheless hold the same racist attitudes are not necessarily guiltless, for, in Larry May's words, 'one's attitudes often are as important to the increased likelihood of harm in a community as one's overt behaviour.'[15]

However, there is one objection that can still be made against this view of 'highly organised' groups as bearing collective responsibility, and allowing for individuals to be held responsible for the actions of others within them. For example, Miller and Makela claim that Gilbert's theory entails that 'even if the agent never made any free decisions with respect to his or her own membership in the collective,'[16] then he or she is responsible simply by virtue of being a member of it. Similarly, Narveson believes that the holist will be quite often committed to blaming 'someone who is not only innocent but possibly praiseworthy in the extreme.'[17] However, the holist could reply in two ways. Firstly, it could be said that if the 'collective' that Miller and Makela describe is a 'feature defined' social group, then as we have seen, they are correct to argue that the individual in question is not responsible for what others do or have done in their social group. For example, a German who furtively saved Jews under Nazi rule cannot be held responsible for their extermination just by virtue of being a German. Secondly, Virginia Held has shown that even when individuals try to 'disassociate'[18] themselves from evil within their 'feature defined' group, but nevertheless remain within it, they will often find it very difficult to keep their hands completely clean, for 'one may be participating in the practices one opposes at the same time as one is opposing them.'[19] Thus, even a staunch anti-imperialist living in modern Britain may still in some small way be responsible for the harm done by the British Empire, as he or she continues to benefit from the economic conditions set up as a direct result of it. Therefore, even in 'feature defined' groups

[15] Held, *Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict,* p. 166
[16] Miller and Makela, *The Collectivist Approach to Collective Moral Responsibility,* p. 642
[17] Narveson, *Collective Responsibility,* p. 190
[18] Held, *Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict,* p. 167
[19] *Ibid,* p. 167

where no individual responsibility follows from the wrongdoing of others within it, the danger of being implicated still remains.

However, even in a 'highly organised' social group that bears collective responsibility, not every individual will be equally responsible, and some may not be responsible at all. Indeed, some advocates of *collective* responsibility claim that the concept has few consequences for *individual* responsibility: they are logically distinct. It is in this sense that Held describes the 'frequent error' of 'the inference from the responsibility of a group to the responsibility of all its members.'[20] Likewise, Margaret Gilbert asserts that 'the guilt of a group must be sharply distinguished from the guilt of any of its individual members.'[21] Contrary to Narveson's belief that the notion of collective responsibility can be used to absolve individuals of their crimes, the attribution of responsibility to a group does not entail that there is no individual responsibility, but just that they are two very different things. The judgment that a group is collectively responsible *does not specify which* individuals are responsible, or to what *degree* they are.

To sum up: it depends on what kind of social group the individual belongs to as to whether they can be held responsible for the actions of other individuals also within it. If the individual is a member of a 'feature defined' group, then they are unlikely to be held responsible for the actions of anybody else within it, unless they are actually benefiting from them. If, however, the individual is a member of a 'highly organised' social group, and that group bears some collective responsibility, then it is possible or probable that the individual is responsible to a certain extent for the actions of other individuals within it. If this conclusion is accepted, then even if we are not members of 'highly organised' groups who do harm, we may as citizens in such an interconnected world have to accept some small degree of responsibility for things we may personally abhor.

[20] *Ibid,* p. 162

[21] Gilbert, *Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings,* p.129

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Getting round to reading Wittgenstein: an introduction

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The following three papers deal with issues arising from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, so we thought it might be helpful to offer a general introduction to this highly influential, but often controversial, figure. Most people will have heard at least a couple of the Wittgenstein legends: that he beat the schoolchildren in his care, loved to relax by watching Westerns, once attacked Popper with a red-hot poker, and so on. But in a way these popular myths are the least interesting aspect of Wittgenstein's place in the modern philosophical canon.

As a man, he clearly embodied several tensions and even apparent contradictions: his work is often technical and relatively slow, and some of his Cambridge lectures were notably rambling and monotonous in delivery; but he was able to arouse great excitement and enthusiasm for philosophy in some of his students, and discuss very difficult ideas using relatively quotidian vocabulary and everyday metaphors. He knew many members of European intellectual high-society, and was held in very high regard at various times by the likes of Russell, Moore, Keynes, the Vienna Circle and Turing; yet he only published two books during his lifetime – and one of those was a children's dictionary. He gave away his inherited fortune; but made sure only to divide it amongst people who were already rich. Much of his life was taken up by university and academic work, yet he often advised his promising students to avoid academic philosophy as a career. It is this embracing yet distancing, conformist yet usurping, character of Wittgenstein's life and work that simultaneously lies behind his wide-ranging influence

and fame in modern philosophy, and also makes his status ambiguous and his reputation controversial.

It is not easy to categorise Wittgenstein's philosophical output. The dense, condensed form of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – Wittgenstein's first major philosophical work – contrasts with the longer, more peripatetic *Philosophical Investigations*, his later major work. Studying Wittgenstein is often quite a different experience from studying Russell, Moore or anyone else for that matter, and it presents its own pronounced challenges. It is often not immediately clear what the text being studied is saying – so even exegesis becomes a matter of philosophical argument. Furthermore, it is often not clear that the text being studied unambiguously reflects what Wittgenstein would want to say – much of the material we have was only posthumously published, and was left by Wittgenstein in the form of notes rather than manuscripts for public consumption. Wittgenstein is also a paradigm case of a *systemic* philosopher – that is, he offers a complete system of philosophy, of interlinking epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind and language. So it is often not clear to what extent you have to accept or reject *the whole project*, or whether single ideas or examples can be criticised, reformed, or extracted and made to stand free in a different philosophical context.

These difficulties have led to a wide range of opinions on the status and proper evaluation of Wittgenstein and his work. There are those who consider him to be something of a charlatan, and regard the difficulty of interpreting and formalising his work as a deliberate smokescreen device to cover an essential vacuity in his central ideas. There are others who see him as amazingly clear and communicative, when it is realised that he wrote under the harsh constraint of attempting to express philosophically revolutionary ideas without falling into old linguistic (and therefore conceptually – and theoretically – misleading) traps. The interpretative effort required in reading Wittgenstein; his concerns with language, meaning and representation; and to a certain extent the form of certain pieces such as the *Tractatus* and the fragmentary notebooks have led other subjects such as literary criticism, literary theory, poetics and sociology to claim Wittgenstein as 'really' one of their own. This has not overly impressed those philosophers who hold a sceptical stance

towards such other subjects' ability to grasp the work of a man who was clearly – in professional life – identified as a *philosopher*. However, such similarities of concern between certain aspects of Wittgenstein's work and literary criticism and theory may well explain why philosophers from the Continental tradition are as drawn to Wittgenstein's work as those from the analytic tradition. So, not only are there very different readings of Wittgenstein that can result from an examination of his texts – there are also very different theoretical backgrounds from which philosophers undertaking those readings may start. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that very different understandings of Wittgenstein's work have emerged in various areas of philosophical commentary over the last few decades.

In this introduction, we shall focus primarily on two particular readings which might at first glance appear to be extreme opposites. However, it is representative of the overall complexity of interpreting Wittgenstein that although the two can appear to be in polar opposition, both are essentially unified under what we shall call the *continuity* thesis. This is the idea that Wittgenstein's two major works, the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, may *seem* very different, but on closer examination can be seen to exhibit crucial similarities in method and content, and even style and argument. So the thirty-year period in which the interim *Blue Book* and *Brown Book* were produced is read as a period not of reversal of Wittgenstein's thoughts, but rather of their *development*. The corollary position to this, which we shall not be discussing at any length in this particular introduction, is the *discontinuity* thesis: that the two major works in fact indicate a fundamental and absolute change of Wittgenstein's mind, and indeed perhaps even character.

Within the continuity thesis, there is of course plenty of room for disagreement about what the crucial similarities between the two periods of work *are*, and what constitutes their relative merits. On these questions, the two main readings we will be considering have very different opinions. For clarity, we will be referring to these as the analytic and Continental readings respectively, but it should be clear that such classifications are far from absolute. The names should not be taken to necessarily indicate too much about the content or methods of the two positions. It is quite common to use these names, but the

relation of the names to the two interpretations may be a matter more of family resemblance rather than a shared axiomatic methodology between each interpretation and the two main Western philosophical traditions.

Whichever interpretation you subscribe to, it is clear that one of the *Tractatus's* key insights is its theory of tautology. Indeed, this now-famous argument found favour with a frankly astounding range of respected thinkers such as Russell, Ramsey and Neurath. Our description of this theory will have to be brief and superficial, as will our usage of Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning, so we will be horribly over-simplifying the ontology and principles involved. We would recommend you turn to the specialist literature cited in the following three papers if you are interested in a more accurate specification of the issues and axioms. Briefly, Wittgenstein suggested that all true propositions in logic are tautologies. In other words, they have *logical* necessity and so say nothing, *absolutely* nothing, about the world. This became a widely-followed theoretical axiom, and the theory of tautology remains a popular and successful position in philosophical logic even today.

By most modern analytic readings of Wittgenstein, the central aim of the *Tractatus* was to show the relation of language to the world. The theory of tautology plays a key role in this, by showing that no matter how we analyse our thoughts and language-usage, all we can do in such logical analyses is *say* things that have mere tautological – rather than the intended intentional – truth. All this *tells us* is how bits of language relate to one another. So first, anything that we say that cannot be broken down into logical propositions must be nonsense. And second, anything that *can* be analysed in such logical terms must result in an analysis that technically says nothing about the world, so must be non-sense. Philosophy as a formal exercise cannot, as it were, get a grip on the world. Though we might, in ourselves, be able to appreciate the way the world is without being able to speak of the way the world is. The complex and difficult world-defining relations Wittgenstein sketches of simple objects, independent facts, resemblance, compound propositions, and names cannot – strictly speaking, since the *Tractatus* is itself a set of logical expressions, and therefore really just a series of

tautologies – *say* anything about the world or how it really is (this problem is tackled in far greater depth in Tasker's paper). However, it can – even given these constraints – *show* us that it is so. This is the realist, analytic, logical reading of the *Tractatus*: philosophy is about logical relations *only*. Other language usage and analyses may be useful, but they cannot be *true*. Philosophy can express the relations between logico-linguistic terms, and so is a completable project (indeed, Wittgenstein claimed he had completed it in the *Tractatus*), but it cannot *say* anything about the world.

It is easy, in light of such ideas, to see how and why the logical positivists interpreted Wittgenstein as a fellow anti-metaphysician, and saw him as a guiding, clarifying light in the confused, muddled darkness of contemporary philosophy. If propositions are combinations of named simple objects – that is, they consist in expressed positive facts about possible states of affairs – then whatever does not consist entirely in combinations of names of simple objects cannot be a proposition, and so cannot be meaningful. Traditional philosophy's most intensely problematic areas – its value-laden and metaphysical theories – can therefore be safely categorised as *meaningless*. The problems of aesthetics, ethics, religion and so on are unadulterated, muddled non-sense. Logic is (philosophically) *all*. Such a reading also gives a modicum of plausibility to the outrageously egotistical proclamation in the preface to the *Tractatus* regarding Wittgenstein's claimed absolution of *all* the problems of philosophy. One way to solve a problem is to brand it meaningless, to declare it a non-problem.

So, on the analytic reading the *Tractatus* has a decorated place – also including as it does key insights in the foundations of mathematics and solipsism – at the core of early modern analytic philosophy. There are many other views that can be taken, though. For example, there is a related but different analytic 'history' which focuses on the individuated ideas and arguments of the *Investigations*. Again these ideas and arguments are seen as firmly belonging to the analytic tradition, and again the problem of other minds, language and world are seen as crucial themes, most notably in the *Investigations*' arguments for the impossibility of private language. So Wittgenstein is again seen as an

early and pioneering analytic philosopher, but perhaps not quite so early or so pioneering as the *Tractatus*-focused reading above sees him.

But even within *this* reading there can be further readings and interpretations of why Wittgenstein is analytic and important, and how his arguments influence our analytic views today. For example, Wittgenstein's concerns about the linguistic determination of sensations are most commonly taken to be behind the private language argument which the *Investigations*-focused 'history' of analytic philosophy reading takes to be so important. However, Kripke is not clearly *wrong* when he sees the private language argument as developing from Wittgenstein's concerns about rule-following instead (as covered in Dunford's paper after this introduction). This is a significantly different reading, which can in turn be seen as influential for modern analytic philosophy of mind: if taken this way, the relevant sections of the *Investigations* read as essentially an attack on the status of inner processes. The influence of Wittgenstein read in this way has been massive and lasting: just consider Gilbert Ryle's systematic attack on the idea of the ghost in the machine in *The Concept of Mind*, and the clear link from Wittgenstein's *Investigations* to the wider attempt to debunk epistemology as 'first philosophy' that can be seen even in later work by Jonathan Lowe (amply covered in his paper at last year's British Undergraduate Philosophy Conference).

So it seems fair to say that Wittgenstein's work – read in a certain way – definitely contributed to and influenced the analytic tradition in philosophy. But there are also reasons to see Wittgenstein as a very 'un-analytic' kind of philosopher. After all, as Ayer noted, reading Wittgenstein's work often leaves the impression that his mature conception of philosophy was as a discipline devoid of solvable problems – a radical conception, to say the least. So far we have dealt with what could fairly be called the 'traditional' reading of Wittgenstein, at least in Britain. Needless to say, other readings abound, such as is manifest in the third of the Wittgenstein papers that follow this article. This so-called *therapeutic* reading has been endorsed wholeheartedly, and controversially, by Rorty amongst others. Roughly, the reading suggests that Wittgenstein was trying to get us to stop worrying about the intractable, insoluble difficulties that arise from our

ambitious philosophical investigations into our position, our minds, knowledge and our world, as represented in our philosophical theories and concepts. That he wanted to help us stop trying to do the kind of philosophy that makes claims about the world (rather than just limiting ourselves to recombination within our linguistic framework) and so leads us into frustrating but necessary failure. That his method for doing this was to write in such a way as to help us steer our own way through a conceptual transformation, a personal mental journey, through which we cannot be led (or forced) by logical argument alone. That acknowledging and comprehending the problem helps us be alleviated of the burdensome drive to engage with such metaphysical-theory-forming activities.

This has been openly laughed at by certain philosophers who take the traditional analytic reading of Wittgenstein. But there is some evidence that at least one credible figure within the analytic movement could agree with a relatively limited reading of this nature: in *My Philosophical Development*, Russell himself observed scathingly that in his later works Wittgenstein 'seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary'. This is of course not intended as a benevolent judgement of the *Investigations*, but then benevolence may well be irrelevant. The quotation from Russell is a negative take on a reading that many from a more Continental background have taken positively: that Wittgenstein's work is therapy, a tranquilizer (or medicine?) designed to placate the troublesome and tiresome penchant for 'serious' thinking that we display – a need and a desire, it might be suggested, that so mars our existence (an issue covered by Woolley's paper).

For Rorty, Wittgenstein shows us how the irksome traditions of Western metaphysics from Socrates to Kant and beyond must all be entirely transcended, and philosophy should aspire to act as poetic therapy, unburdened of (and unburden*ing* of) normativity and universalism. And less radically (and perhaps more plausibly) for Cavell only human acknowledgment, not knowledge, can solve the problem of other minds. Since these readings, and others like them, have come to light, certain philosophers' eyes have been drawn back to those passages in the *Tractatus* that we only now realise were seriously bothering us:

Wittgenstein's ladder by which we are supposed to climb above his true propositions in order to finally realise they are themselves nonsense; the claim that once all the problems of philosophy have been solved, extremely little has been achieved; the references to mysticism; and, in places, the indisputable influence of such a seemingly un- or even *anti*-analytic-style philosopher as Schopenhauer. Again this reading finds a continuation of crucial similarities in style and concern from Wittgenstein's earlier to later works. But they are very different continuities from those identified by the analytic readings above. We hope it is clear that there are a great number of positions to be considered here.

We have of course roughly gestured at far too much in this introductory article, and specifically said either far too little, or claimed to say far too much, depending on how you look at the material. But as we said at the beginning, exegesis is no simple matter with Wittgenstein. Reading Wittgenstein, or papers written on Wittgenstein, can lead to cries of indignation or gasps of realisation. But we hope it's clear that at some point we – as students of philosophical traditions so heavily influenced by readings of the man's work – really *should* read Wittgenstein, *and* a fair selection of papers *on* Wittgenstein. The different readings matter, and far more of them have something to add, and some evidence to support them, than any of us are likely to feel entirely comfortable with. However you read him or don't read him, Wittgenstein is a force to be reckoned with. We hope the following papers, and to some extent this introduction, might offer a reasonable starting point.

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Knowledge, scepticism and Wittgenstein's private language argument

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Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument (PLA) is a series of interconnected arguments or remarks, which aims to show the impossibility of a logically private language (PL), known and knowable to a single person only. I offer an interpretation of the PLA as a series of deductions[1] from Wittgenstein's general views on Language, with which I begin. From this conception of language, I expound two[2] deductive arguments against a PL: first, that there is no criterion of correctness for a PL, so that one cannot be following rules, and so cannot be creating a language; and second, a private reference to a particular sensation has no practical consequence or use, and as meaning is defined and shown through use, does not constitute language. I go on to show how the PLA relates to two forms of knowledge and scepticism. First, I argue that the private language argument can be read as a transcendental proof of the existence of a

[1] Presenting Wittgenstein's arguments in a standard deductive form may do damage to Wittgenstein's purposes. In spite of this concern, the arguments still seem to work most effectively in such a form.

[2] Within the PLA there is a third argument against PL, which suggests that PL either presupposes elements of a public language (Wittgenstein (1963) 28-34, 257, 261 etc.), or is genuinely *sui generis*, but accordingly cannot introduce a new term (Stern (1995) p.18) (Wittgenstein (1963) 261, 293 etc.), and cannot be a language. This argument is undeniably of great importance, but there is unfortunately not room to cover all of the arguments against private language in this essay. The reason for choosing to exclude this one as opposed to the other two are first that the other two arguments are deduced from the aspects of Wittgenstein's account of language discussed in this essay, whereas this argument is deduced from his comments on the impossibility of ostensive definition as the starting point for language *learning*. Second, the arguments included in this essay are directly relevant to the arguments I offer regarding scepticism and knowledge, whereas this one is only relevant in so far as it offers a refutation of the idea of a private language (which the other arguments also do).

social sphere outside the self. Second, I follow Kripke's argument that Wittgenstein has uncovered a new form of rule scepticism, to which he offers a sceptical solution through his remarks on the irreducibly social nature of language, and the consequent impossibility of a PL.

I begin by offering a brief account of the later Wittgenstein's conception of what constitutes 'language'. Generally speaking, language is a stable set of rules that both govern future linguistic behaviour and delineate meaningful communication. A set of rules necessitates a normative criterion for correct and meaningful utterances; it must be possible for me to be right or wrong in attempting to follow the rules of a language. Where do we locate this normative criterion? In direct contrast to the *Tractatus* view of language, that language has a singular autonomous structure, and that a proposition is meaningful if it corresponds to a possible fact in the world,[3] the later Wittgenstein suggests that language is a 'complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing.'[4] A word or rule can have a diversity of potential meanings or applications. To show this, Wittgenstein imagines asking a pupil 'to continue a series (say +2) beyond 1000 – and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008'[5] etc. In such a case, we have no way of showing logically what 'the right step to take at any particular stage'[6] is without recourse to other rules, for instance '+ means...' which themselves require a further justification. The same applies to words, pictures, and so on.[7] Consequently, if we rely solely on interpretation of the rule[8] (or word etc.) itself, 'no course of action could be determined...because every course of action can be made out to accord

[3] Wittgenstein (2001)

[4] Wittgenstein (1963) 67. This comment is made in regard to games, but in a section where Wittgenstein is comparing language to games, and describing language in terms of games, and therefore it seems fair to apply this comment to language.

[5] Wittgenstein (1963) 185

[6] Ibid 186

[7] Wittgenstein imagines a picture of 'an old man walking up a steep hill leaning on a stick,' and suggests that such a picture could equally be interpreted as a man 'sliding downhill' (Wittgenstein (1963) 139B. There is nothing in the picture which suggests that it should represent one thing and not another, and therefore 'we are at most under a psychological, not a logical, compulsion' (ibid 140) to interpret it in the way we do.

[8] Wittgenstein (1963) 201

with the rule.'[9] What makes a particular way of following a rule or a particular meaning right and another wrong must therefore lie outside of the object or rule itself.[10] For Wittgenstein, the answer to why we mean, and ought to mean one thing and not another is 'the use we make of the word'[11] or *rule* in our complex and diverse range of language-games. Placing our rules within the customs and practices of a linguistic community is the only way that we can have a fixed, stable meaning for rules, utterances and so on.[12] Given that the meaning and application of utterances and rules is found within the customs and practices[13] of the community, we can say someone is using language correctly if they use the rule or word in accordance with custom.[14] They show that they 'understand a language,'[15] and therefore that their utterances mean something, and that they are following rules by being a 'master of a technique'[16] of using the word or rule in the appropriate language games.

The first argument against a PL is that it can have 'no criterion of correctness'[17] with which to judge whether future uses of a privately defined term (say, sensation 's'[18]) refer to the same sensation as that to which the definition was initially attached. A criterion of correctness is necessary in order that we can check whether our use of the term is right or wrong.[19] Without such a criterion, 'whatever is going to seem right… is right' which means that 'here we can't talk about right,'[20] and

[9] Ibid

[10] And also outside an independent reality which gives truth conditions for meaning.

[11] Wittgenstein (1963) 138

[12] Stern (1995) p.177

[13] 'Obeying a rule is a practice' (Wittgenstein (1963) 202)

[14] For example, if they say 1000, 1002, 1004 etc when asked to add 2s from 1000. Wittgenstein does not mean by this that humans decide what is true and false – 'It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use.'

[15] Wittgenstein (1963) 199

[16] Ibid

[17] Wittgenstein (1963) 258

[18] Ibid

[19] Taylor (1972) p.153

[20] Wittgenstein (1963) 258, A similar remark is made in 202, where Wittgenstein says 'to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule "privately": otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it.'

since normativity is essential for linguistic rules, we cannot have a linguistic rule or language. What must now be shown is that it is impossible to have a criterion of correctness in a PL. 'Subjective justification,' [21] or 'appeal from one memory to another'[22] does not provide a PL with a criterion of correctness as looking from one memory to the other would simply shift the question back on to whether the other memory is reliable, and could not 'confirm the correctness of the first memory.'[23] Therefore 'justification consists in appealing to something independent;'[24] a criterion of correctness must be found outside of the individual. Therefore subjective or internal justification still causes following a rule to collapse into thinking that one is following a rule,[25] and consequently means that we still cannot be right or wrong in our linguistic practice. (i) Language requires an element of normativity. (ii) Normativity requires some criteria to ensure that we are right in following a rule. (iii) A PL cannot have such criteria. Therefore (iv) PL lacks normativity, by (ii) and (iii). Therefore (v) PL cannot be language, by (i) and (iv).[26]

I will now move on to Wittgenstein's second argument against a PL. Whilst looking at Wittgenstein's discussion of language, we saw that language's purpose or role is to delineate meaningful conversation, and that the meaning of a word is found in its use within a community's language games. It directly follows that for a term to have any meaning, and consequently to be considered part of a language, it must have some kind of use or 'function.'[27] Attempting to create a private language by inventing 'a name for a sensation' which has 'no outward

[21] Ibid 265
[22] Ibid
[23] Ibid 258
[24] Wittgenstein (1963) 265
[25] Ibid 202
[26] I do not address the question of whether this particular argument against PL depends on a form of scepticism regarding memory for three reasons: (i) space constraints, (ii) even if Wittgenstein does make such an assumption, I see it as perfectly reasonable (one needs only to look at an elementary psychology text book to see that memory is unreliable), and (iii) the other arguments against PL offer a refutation that does not depend on scepticism regarding memory.
[27] Wittgenstein (1963) 260

sign'[28] fails to offer a use for the term. The use for a term cannot be found in referring inwardly to the sensation itself, because the meaning of a word is not 'an object for which the word stands,'[29] but is instead located in its use within various language games. Inner ostensive definition[30] of a sensation does not offer such a use in the same way that referring to a publicly accessible object or term does. For example, the colour red can play many roles in many different language games, for instance, 'describing a sunset…controlling traffic'[31] etc. A privately defined term, on the other hand, cannot (by definition) be known by others, and therefore can have no collective use. When someone claims to have referred inwardly to a sensation, we may wish to say 'well, and what of it?'[32] as this action does not have 'the further practical consequences'[33] of giving the term any use within public language games, and therefore has not given it any meaning. It follows from this that 'introspection can never lead to a definition,'[34] and that a private language is therefore impossible.[35] (i) Language delineates meaningful communication. (ii) Meaning is collective use in language games. (iii) A PL has no collective use in language games. Therefore (iv) a PL has no meaning, by (ii) and (iii). Therefore (v) a PL is not a language, by (i) and (iv).

Now that we have an account of Wittgenstein's PLA, and how it can be soundly deduced from Wittgenstein's remarks on language, we can go on to look at two ways in which the PLA relates to knowledge and scepticism.

> *It still remains a scandal to philosophy and to human reason in general that the existence of things outside of us…must be accepted*

[28] Ibid 257
[29] Hanfling (1989) p.90
[30] The same applies to a privately defined description, as 'descriptions are instruments for particular uses.' 291
[31] Hanfling (1989) p.110
[32] Wittgenstein (1980) 212
[33] Ibid
[34] Ibid
[35] The claim that introspection can never lead to a definition is given further support by the argument against private language that is not covered in this essay (see footnote 1)

> *on faith, and that if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by a satisfactory proof.*[36]

Wittgenstein's PLA can be seen as a transcendental solution to the above scandal, and can (if it is correct) prove both that things outside of us exist, and that doubting their existence is contradictory and non-sensical. If a PL is impossible, and language instead emerges from our customs, practices, and 'form of life,'[37] and we are taught to have a language by being trained to use the appropriate words or follow the appropriate rules in the appropriate language games, then language itself presupposes a fairly complex web of social matrices, from which it necessarily emerges. If we are to accept that language exists, we must also accept that a social sphere with a sophisticated form of life exists. We therefore have a transcendental proof of, and consequently knowledge of and evidence for the existence of 'things outside of us.'[38] Furthermore, sceptical doubts concerning the existence of things outside of the self, or our knowledge of things outside the self can only be thought of or discussed in some kind of language. Since language presupposes a sphere outside the self, 'the game of doubting' the existence of things outside the self 'itself presupposes certainty'[39] of that which is being doubted, and is thus both contradictory and self-defeating. Therefore it does not make sense to say that there is nothing outside of the self, or that we can know of nothing outside the self, giving us a 'counter to his [the sceptics, or a solipsist's[40]] doubts' regarding the "existence of things outside of us".'

I now move on to show how the PLA emerges in part from a sceptical response to the rule and meaning scepticism that Kripke[41] finds in

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[36] Kant (2003) p.34/B.xl

[37] Wittgenstein (1963) Various, including p.226e

[38] Kant (2003) p.34/B.xl

[39] Wittgenstein (1995) 115

[40] It should be clear that this transcendental argument for the existence of things outside of us proves both the existence of, and evidential grounds for, the existence of things outside of us, and therefore refutes both solipsism (the belief that there is nothing outside of us), and scepticism concerning things outside of us (the doubt that we have evidential grounds for believing in anything outside of the self).

[41] Kripke (1982) It is important to note that the rule scepticism and sceptical solution that Kripke finds in Wittgenstein are not intended to constitute a purely objective

Wittgenstein. This form of rule scepticism essentially suggests that since 'no rule can ever determine how the rule is to be applied,'[42] one can never mean anything by what one says. Kripke explicates such scepticism with the example of 'quaddition.'[43] Kripke asks us to imagine a 'computation that' we 'have never performed before,'[44] say, 68+57.[45] We unhesitatingly answer '125', and initially seem to be entirely correct to do so. But suppose a 'bizarre sceptic…questions' our 'certainty about' our 'answer'[46], suggesting that as I used '+' in the past, the answer to 68 + 57 ought to be 5. The sceptic suggests that all the time I have been using 'plus', I have meant '*quus*'[47], and instead of addition, '*quaddition*'. Quaddition works as follows:

X quus Y = x+y, if x, y < 57.
= 5 Otherwise[48]

The sceptic then asks me two questions: 'whether there is any fact that I meant plus, not quus,' and 'whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer 125 rather than 5.' To answer these questions I must locate a fact in my past 'that can act as evidence' of my having performed addition rather than quaddition.[49] This fact must be 'non-semantic and non intentional,'[50] as to give an intentional fact regarding why I followed a rule would collapse obeying a rule into seeming to obey a rule, which Wittgenstein explicitly rejects.[51] All of my past action is compatible with both quaddition and addition (for I have never performed a computation involving numbers above 56

interpretation, but to represent 'Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke' (Kripke (1982) p.5)

[42] Quoted in Kusch (2004) p.572 as: Lynch, M. (1992) Extending Wittgenstein: The Pivotal Move from Epistemology to the Sociology of Science, In Pickering, A. (ed) *Science as Practice and Culture,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press: pp215-265

[43] Kripke (1982) p.11 Quaddition can be seen as a development of Wittgenstein's earlier example of a child adding two's and getting 1004, 1008 etc.

[44] Kripke (1982) p.8

[45] Ibid. I stick to the same example that Kripke offers

[46] Ibid

[47] Ibid p.9

[48] Ibid

[49] Kusch (2004) p.573 Kripke (1982) p.11 asks a similar question.

[50] Kusch (2004) p.573

[51] Wittgenstein (1963) 202

before), and therefore there are no 'truth conditions'[52] which I can refer to in order to prove my meaning addition not quaddition. The only way for me to justify my meaning plus not quus would be to introduce a 'rule for interpreting a rule,'[53] which could be subjected to the same sceptical doubt. We consequently have a 'sceptical paradox,'[54] which suggests that 'no form of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action could be made out to accord with the rule.'[55] The sceptic therefore concludes that 'the entire idea of meaning vanishes into thin air.'[56]

Wittgenstein's denial of truth conditions for meaning renders a straight response (one that attacks the sceptical argument that we cannot bridge the gap between a rule and its application through truth conditions) impossible. We can, however, offer a 'sceptical response'[57] by attacking the sceptic's presupposition that there is no alternative to a truth conditional approach of meaning.[58] Instead of deriving meaning from truth conditions, Wittgenstein located meaning within a complex form of life. Consequently, to ask whether something is meaningful, we should ask: (i) 'under what conditions may this form of words be appropriately asserted' and (ii) 'What is the role, and the utility, in our lives or our practice of asserting…the form of words.'[59] Such a move shifts meaning away from truth condition, and relocates it within 'assertability conditions.'[60] This move falsifies the sceptical presupposition, and therefore provides us with a sceptical response to rule / meaning scepticism.[61] It should now be clear how the sceptical

[52] Kripke (1982) p.72
[53] Cited as Wittgenstein in Kripke (1982) p.17. No reference given.
[54] Ibid p.21
[55] Wittgenstein (1963) 201
[56] Kripke (1982) p.22
[57] Ibid p.4
[58] Kusch (2006)
[59] Kripke (1982) p.73
[60] Kripke (1982) p.74
[61] It is locating meaning in conditions of assertability that makes understanding a mastery of the technique of following the appropriate rules and making the appropriate utterances in the appropriate language games. Once we have mastered this technique, we can act 'without reasons… quickly, with perfect certainty' (Wittgenstein (1963) 211-212). Clearly locating meaning in shared practices and forms of life requires the brute fact of agreement. Wittgenstein suggests that 'we might give thanks to the Deity'

response relates to the impossibility of a private language. We can clearly see that in replacing a truth-conditional account of meaning with an account that turns on the appropriateness, and in (ii), utility of a certain utterance in certain collective language-games, we are led directly in to the two objections (lack of external criterion of correctness, and lack of use) to PL offered above. Therefore the sceptical solution to rule / meaning scepticism directly leads to the two objections towards PL offered above.

In conclusion, I have briefly outlined Wittgenstein's conception of language, and shown two arguments against a PL: namely that it can have no external criterion of correctness, and that no use or function can be deduced from it. Subsequently, I have shown how the PLA relates to scepticism and knowledge in two ways: first, it offers a transcendental proof of things outside of us, and a refutation of scepticism concerning the existence of and evidence for such things outside of us. Second, it removes meaning from truth conditions and relocates it in conditions of assertability. So the impossibility of a private language enables a sceptical response to the rule and meaning scepticism that Kripke finds in Wittgenstein.

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for such agreement (Wittgenstein (1963) 234). Agreement 'in definitions… [and] in judgments' is necessary 'if language is to be a means of communication' (Wittgenstein (1963) 241.

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Immediate concatenation in the *Tractatus*

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Strands of reasoning connect all parts of the *Tractatus*. The account of immediate concatenation (IC) is such an integral feature that I could say that without IC, *every claim in the book* would be a problem. In particular, there are at least three problems, three logical voids, for which IC was designed as a solution. These are:

(1) Wittgenstein claims that (i) objects must be simple, and (ii) the world is composed of states of affairs. I contend that the conjunction of (i) and (ii) requires IC. (2) The Picture Theory requires there to be something in common between a picture and what is pictured if representation is to be possible. IC supplies this common element. (3) Propositions are composed entirely of names, of a multiplicity equal to the number of objects in the state of affairs it represents. Without IC, there is no possibility that propositions represent relations between objects.

More generally, IC is supposed to solve all the problems of philosophy. According to IC, reality is simply the configuration of objects, and language is capable of representing all and only such configurations. Philosophical questions contain notions like 'value' which are nonsense because they do not correspond to configurations of objects. IC shows that philosophical speculation overreaches the capacities of language.

In this paper, I discuss problem (1) but we will never be far away from the other problems. To give a sense of the problem's force I will reconstruct the reasoning which leads to it. Throughout this discussion, and through the discussion of how IC solves problem (1), the exact nature of IC will be clarified, along with many other central theories of the *Tractatus*.

Facts and simple objects

> *1.1* *The world is the totality of facts, not of things.*
>
> *2* *What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs.*
>
> *2.01* *A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things).*

These statements reveal a metaphysics with only two categories: fact and object. The world is composed of facts (1.1); a fact is the existence of states of affairs (2); a state of affairs is a collection of objects arranged in a determinate way (2.01). The world is not identical with the totality of its objects, for those objects differently arranged would be a different world. The world is identical with its objects *arranged as they are*.

A fact – something which is the case – is a configuration of two or more objects, while a state of affairs is a possible (actual or non-actual) fact. An understanding of the precise nature of such configurations is our target in developing the concept of IC. In the meantime, I'll be discussing Wittgenstein's claim that objects are simple, aiming to clarify what he means by 'object' and 'simple' in order to unpack the implications of his position.

> *2.02* *Objects are simple.*
>
> *2.021* *Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite.*
>
> *2.024* *Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case.*
>
> *2.0271* *Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable.*

The possibility of change requires that there be something which changes and something which stays the same. If one situation is succeeded by another with no common element between the two, we cannot say that a change has occurred, but must admit that the former passed out of existence, and a new one came in. (Wittgenstein subscribes to this premise in 6.431: 'So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end.') States of affairs – the configuration of objects – occupy and exhaust the realm of the changeable, while objects supply the unchanging element, that which subsists through change (2.0271). What subsists through change is substance, and this must be independent of what is the case (2.024). So, 'Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same.' (2.027)

The totality of possible states of affairs is logically given by the totality of objects and their possibilities for combination. Which of these states of affairs happen to hold – which of them are facts – is accidental. (The clothes in your wardrobe determine all the outfits you might wear, but the outfit you are actually wearing is contingently selected from those possibilities.) An accident is something which might not have been as it is. So we can always say of configurations of things that they might have been configured differently, that they are susceptible to change. Further, only composite things can change, for that which has no parts can only pass in and out of existence. That is why in 2.0271, Wittgenstein means to imply that the configuration of objects exhausts the realm of the changeable.

If composite things are all susceptible to change, and are the only things that change, then whatever is unchanging must be simple. Given that change does occur in the world, there must be an unchanging element. Therefore simple objects exist. 2.021 informs us that the totality of objects comprises the substance of the world. An object is an instance of the world's substance, and if one subtracts the totality of objects from the notion of substance, there is nothing left over. For an object to be simple means that it cannot be analysed as a composition of other objects. If a thing has no parts, but is simply a whole, then it is simple.

What are simple objects like? What qualities do they have? Since Tractarian metaphysics posits only fact and object, qualities do not exist

so objects do not have qualities. This is what Wittgenstein means by 'In a manner of speaking, objects are colourless.' (2.0232)

> *2.0231 The substance of the world can only determine a form, and not any material properties. For it is only by means of propositions that that material propositions are represented – only by the configuration of objects are they produced.*

Understanding this point about simple objects requires familiarity with Wittgenstein's theory of representation. A proposition is composed of proper names. A proper name corresponds to a simple object. That object is the name's meaning, its referent, or '*Bedeutung*'. For a proper name to have meaning is precisely for its referent to exist. A proposition is a configuration of names such that the proposition mirrors, or pictures, the configuration of the objects for which the names stand. Names refer to objects, and configurations of names show the configurations of objects. A proposition which represents a state of affairs (whether or not that state of affairs obtains) has sense, or '*Sinn*'.

It follows that substance cannot determine colours, smells, and all other material properties, which is to say that objects do not have those properties. For language is only capable of representing these properties in propositions, i.e. through the configuration of names; names in isolation are insufficient. Therefore, correspondingly, material properties consist only in the relations between objects.

Simple objects do have some properties. An object's 'external properties' consist in the relations an object bears to other objects. It is in these relations that material properties are produced (2.0231). An object's 'internal properties' are its possibilities for combination with other objects (2.0123, and 2.01231). We are working towards a full discussion of the internal properties of objects, but for now let's consider an important argument for simple objects. Call this the Regress Argument.

2.0211 If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true.

2.0212 In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false).

Below is my reconstruction of this argument:

A = The world contains no simple objects.
B = Whether a proposition has sense depends on whether another proposition is true.
C = We cannot sketch any picture of the world.

If A then B.
If B then C.
Not C.
Therefore not B.
Therefore not A

The idea is that we are able represent the world, therefore it can't be that the sense of a proposition always depends upon whether another proposition is true. Therefore the world contains simple objects. Let's go through the argument.

If A then B

Consider 3.203: 'A name means an object. The object is its meaning.' Suppose there are no simple objects; every object is complex, so every name refers to a complex object. A name has meaning just in case its referent exists, therefore the meaningfulness of a name depends upon the existence of a complex object (3.203). Since the meaningfulness of a name is a condition of a proposition which contains that name having a sense, it follows that a proposition's having a sense depends upon the existence of some complex object. But the existence of a complex object depends upon its parts being arranged as they are, and its parts will only be so arranged if some proposition which describes that arrangement is true. Therefore, on the supposition that there are no simple objects,

whether a proposition has sense depends on whether another proposition is true.

If B then C

First of all, note that a proposition's having a sense is a necessary condition of its being true (this is obvious). Now suppose B is true: a proposition's having a sense depends upon another proposition's being true. This generates an infinite regress: a proposition's being true depends upon its having a sense, and its having a sense depends upon some proposition's being true, and so on. Given this regress, there is no coherent notion of truth nor of meaning. Propositions which purport to represent reality will fail to have a determinate truth value. Therefore, on the supposition that B is true, we cannot sketch any picture of the world.

Not C

This is the assumption that we are able to sketch pictures of the world.

Wittgenstein's conclusion follows: there are simple objects.

The problem of combination

If there are relations between simple objects there must be something inherent in the nature of objects which allows for the possibility of combination. Otherwise states of affairs require the existence of some further set of objects to bind simples together. Since we have supposed that simple objects are inadequate, this further set of objects must be composite. But then the world would not consist in relations between simple objects. Call the thesis that simple objects can combine to form states of affairs the Construction Thesis (CT).

Consider the 'Principle of Unmediated Combination' (PC): Where Φ is a set of similar objects of a defined type, and given an explicit definition of 'combination', the possibility that entities $x_1 \ldots x_n$ drawn from a set Φ, where $n > 1$, can combine without the mediation of some third object not drawn from Φ, requires that $x_1 \ldots x_n$ possess the capacity for

combination (on the specific definition of 'combination') among their internal properties.

Imagine a box containing a few marbles. The marbles are similar objects drawn from a single set, the set of marbles. Due to their shape and material, marbles cannot be combined, when combination is construed as the coagulation of marbles into a straight line which will not be disturbed by jostling the box. Now think back to Tractarian simples. There we had the precondition that objects are combined in the sense that they form states of affairs. An analogous condition here would be the condition that the marbles in the box *do* exist in robust straight lines. The only way to accommodate this fact, given that the nature of the marbles does not facilitate the bonds necessary to form such lines, is by asserting that the box contains some non-marble object, an object drawn from outside the set of all marbles. Say, a tray with semi-spherical indentations. Put the marbles in a neat row in this tray, and suddenly the marbles are combined in the defined sense of the word.

The temptation will be to explain the possibility of states of affairs by positing the existence of some mediating object drawn from outside the set of simple objects. Any such move will violate 2.01. The only other way to satisfy CT is to give an account of the inner nature of simple objects, such that they are capable of combining into states of affairs without mediation. We must now scrutinise IC to see whether there is a coherent notion of a simple object with internal properties sufficient to satisfy CT.

States of affairs and the internal properties of simple objects

> *2.03* *In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links of a chain.*

A chain is a composite object made up of basic constituents in a determinate configuration; its components have an inherent capacity to be interlinked. The chain holds together without string or magnetism, simply because its links *fit* together. If simple objects are like the links of a chain, then Wittgenstein will have solved the problem described above. The arguments for the Construction Thesis provide some

motivation for endorsing IC, but Wittgenstein must show that IC is a coherent notion.

Everywhere in the *Tractatus*, ontology mirrors language, and this derives from Wittgenstein's assumption that there must be an immediate correspondence between language and reality as a precondition for the efficacy of language. We have arrived at the watershed between the analysis of language and metaphysics. The doctrines of the *Tractatus* flow outward from here. Wittgenstein's theory of propositions – the concatenation of names, and the corresponding account of objects – can be seen as an experiment in the viability of the assumption that language can represent the world. Relying on the correspondence between language and reality, we can turn to the theory of the general form of the proposition to elucidate IC.

To know the essence of a proposition – to know the internal properties of names and to understand their capacity for combination – would be to know the corresponding internal properties of objects, and *their* capacity for combination. Wittgenstein tells us:

> *5.4711 To give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world.*

The account of how names fit together to form propositions, is also the account of how objects fit together to form states of affairs, all of which is precisely the account of immediate concatenation. (It is the symmetry between states of affairs and propositions which allows for an answer to problem (2) (see 2.18).) The search for the essence of a proposition immediately becomes the search for the general form of the proposition, because 'The general propositional form is the essence of a proposition,' (5.471).

In ordinary language the set of propositions is determined by a more basic set, the elementary propositions. Non-elementary propositions are truth functions of elementary propositions, and elementary propositions are (trivially) truth functions of themselves. An elementary

proposition is made true or false by the existence or non-existence of the state of affairs it pictures. In ontology, the set of all possible states of affairs is determined by a set of more simple states of affairs, those whose components are objects, and never objects in combination. So what is an elementary proposition, and what is its ontological correspondent?

> 4.21 *The simplest kind of proposition, an elementary proposition, asserts the existence of a state of affairs.*
>
> 4.22 *An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names.*
>
> *4.221 It is obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consist of names in immediate combination. […]*

That the combination of names is 'immediate' means that the names occur contiguously. A proposition contains *only* names, so there is nothing to stand between them. Similarly, states of affairs are objects in immediate combination. This is a necessary feature of IC because if the relation between names in a proposition were mediated by some thing drawn from outside the set of proper names, the relation between simple objects would have to be mediated by some thing drawn from outside the set of simple objects. As I have made clear above, this would violate the Construction Thesis.

> 4.221 *[…] This raises the question how such combination into propositions comes about.*

This question is the question of what the internal properties of names and objects are such that they can be combined without mediation.

It is a necessary feature of the inner nature of objects that they should be capable of bearing relations to other objects. An object whose internal form lacks the capacity for combination is ruled out because it contributes nothing to Wittgenstein's system: it has no place in the way things are. Such an object would not participate in any states of affairs,

and a name correlated with such an object would not participate in any proposition. Useless signs are meaningless (3.328) and meaningless names are names whose referent does not exist.

> *2.012 In logic, nothing is accidental: if a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself.*

Which state of affairs holds is accidental, but the totality of possible states of affairs is given by logic, and these possibilities are inscribed in the objects themselves. If *a* refers to a speck of green in the visual field, and *b* refers to a speck of red, it is a matter of convention that we might represent *a*'s being to the left of *b* by writing '*ab*', but once set, it is a matter of logic how we employ that convention. We could not, for example, write '*aa*', because it is inscribed upon the nature of the speck of green that it cannot be to the left of itself. If '*ab*' makes sense, that is only because *a*'s standing to the left of *b* is one of the possible states of affairs determined by the internal form of the objects *a* and *b*. That '*ab*' means such and such is a conventional feature of '*ab*', but *that that* '*ab*' means such and such is a formal feature of the names *a* and *b*.

> *2.014 Objects contain the possibility of all situations.*
>
> *2.0141 The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object.*

Each object contains the possibilities for its combination with other objects. Therefore, the totality of objects contains the possibility of all situations (2.014). The possibilities for combination contained in an object together make up the internal form of an object (2.0141). This *is* the form of an object: simply that it can be combined in such a way with such an object. The totality of objects gives a logical matrix, where every possible state of affairs corresponds to a node on the matrix, and the facts are those nodes which are occupied. This is the meaning of 'The facts in logical space are the world.' (1.13)

Imagine a box containing a number of cube shaped blocks. Which parts of the box are occupied is accidental, but the totality of positions

wherein the blocks could reside is determined by the dimensions of the blocks. The form of the blocks determines all the relations in which the blocks might stand. This illustrates how the form of simple objects determines the possibilities in the logical matrix. Think of simple objects as having logical dimensions in which they fit together with other objects, just like the links of a chain have spatial dimensions by virtue of which the chain holds together.

Let's have another illustration. It is inscribed upon the inner nature of Tony Blair that he might be either short or tall. These are some of the possibilities which Tony Blair might satisfy. Which of these possibilities he satisfies is accidental. Clearly, Blair cannot be both short and tall. This is a notion which is logically forbidden; there is no corresponding node in the logical matrix. Notice it is a feature of both illustrations given – Tony Blair and cube shaped blocks – that neither of these appear to be simple objects.

Proper names correspond to simple objects. If 'Blair' is such a name, then Blair, the person, is the meaning of 'Blair'. So if Blair were sent to the guillotine, 'Blair' would cease to be meaningful. The sentence 'Blair is boring' has sense independently of Blair's existing, and no sentence with sense contains a meaningless name. But if Blair does not exist, 'Blair is boring' contains a meaningless name. So the supposition that 'Blair' is a proper name leads to a contradiction: the sentence contains and does not contain a meaningless name. Therefore, Blair is not a simple object.

This reasoning works on any nameable object. Wittgenstein offers no examples of simple objects, but he insists that they exist and describes their nature. This seems rather fanciful, a feeling reinforced by the fact that Wittgenstein later abandoned the notion of simple objects. These are the curious lengths to which one is forced when one embarks on philosophical system building; they encourage us to re-examine the preceding arguments.

Do simple objects exist?

Wittgenstein never claimed to have empirical evidence for simple objects; he deduced their existence from his reflections on the possibility of language. If the *a priori* argument were sound, examples would be superfluous. It is the *a priori* argument which we must examine.

Wittgenstein follows his deductions down to the existence of simple objects and back up to states of affairs. On the way, we get IC as a logical implication of these other considerations. Without IC, there would be a paradox in the heart of Wittgenstein's metaphysics; that IC renders the Construction Thesis tenable is its main appeal. But to be judged successful, IC has not only to plug the gap in CT effectively; the critic must also be satisfied that the reasoning is sound which led to the problem from which IC sprang as a solution. In what follows, I examine the case for the existence of simple objects. There is space here only for a discussion of the Regress Argument.

The Regress Argument is valid, being an iterated *modus tollens* argument. My contention concerns the premise that if a proposition's having sense depends upon the truth of another, then we cannot represent the world. The argument for that conditional turned on the regress ensuing from its antecedent. However, the regress may not be vicious. If 'sense' is stripped of its Tractarian features, whereby a proposition with sense divides the totality of states of affairs into two classes – one of which it asserts to be a fact, the other it denies – then the explication of truth in terms of sense and sense in terms of truth might contribute to a harmonious, coherentist solution, in which propositions do have determinate truth values. This objection stops the argument at the 'if B then C' stage. But perhaps there is a better argument that a proposition's having sense cannot depend on another proposition's being true. Such a conclusion re-enters our schema at the Not-B stage. Not-A (simple objects exist) would follow.

> *4.024 To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true.)*

It is not a precondition of understanding a proposition that one know whether it is true or false. This is a general fact about understanding propositions. However, it *is* a precondition of understanding a proposition that the proposition have a sense. Therefore, understanding a proposition requires knowing it has sense. Now suppose that a proposition's having sense depends upon some other proposition's being true: consequently one can only understand a proposition if one knows that another proposition is true. So the supposition leads to a contradiction with the assumption in the first sentence of this paragraph. We discharge the supposition and get that a proposition's having sense does not depend upon the truth of another proposition.

This argument is not valid. The move from understanding a proposition to necessarily knowing that another is true relies on the inference: I know p, q is a precondition of p, therefore I know q. This pattern has many counterexamples. My four year old niece knows that she will feel pain if she picks up a burning coal. It is a precondition of her feeling pain that she has a functional nervous system. Nevertheless, she does not know she has a nervous system at all.

This discussion hardly disproves the existence of simple objects, but it is a gesture in that direction. It shows that we are not irrevocably condemned to accept the strange metaphysical conclusions of the *Tractatus* – the logical atomism in which IC features. But in as much as we think the *Tractatus* is the deductive working out of our everyday assumptions about truth, meaning and representation, the rejection of Wittgenstein's conclusions will require important revisions to our naïve understanding. The above suggestion that we might seek a coherentist understanding of sense and truth is an example of the revisions which rejecting the *Tractatus* might entail.

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Wittgenstein, therapy and changing your philosophical attitudes

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> *DIFFICULTY OF PHILOSOPHY NOT THE INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTY OF THE SCIENCES, BUT THE DIFFICULTY OF A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE. RESISTANCES OF THE WILL MUST BE OVERCOME.*[1]

These words seem to suggest the following picture of philosophy:

Philosophy is a discipline that takes itself, like science, to be concerned with the study of reality and the activity of investigating certain problems of reality. However, in a large number of cases where philosophers think that they are engaged in identifying and solving logical or real problems, all that they are actually doing is creating psychological tangles. Thus the difficulty of philosophy lies not (as with science) in the discovery and intellectual resolution of problems, but in the alteration of our own philosophical attitudes to a state in which we feel able to dissolve and overcome the psychological delusions which compel us to approach our own self-created confusions of understanding as if they were obscurities of reality.

Under the influence of this illustration, we might be tempted to say of the initial quote that it embodies an essence of Wittgenstein's philosophy which shows the latter to be a kind of therapy, and identifies the motivation behind Wittgenstein's method as being the

[1] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *'Philosophy' – Sections 86-93 (pp.405-35) of the So-Called 'Big Typescript' (Catalog Number 213)*. Ed. Heikki Nyman. Trans. C.G. Luckardt and M.A.E. Aue. Published in *Synthese* 87: 3-22 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1991. §86 (p.5) – from this point forwards, the abbreviation '*B.T.*' will be used to refer to this source.

endeavour to liberate philosophers from the illusory grip of psychological compulsions which are inherent in the majority of conventional philosophical attitudes.

In this essay I intend to explore whether such a pronouncement would itself be, according to its own criteria, characteristic of a possibly misleading philosophical attitude (in particular, an interpretive attitude towards philosophers and philosophical texts) which is employed in the reading of Wittgenstein; and to investigate whether this attitude undermines itself when employed in therapeutic readings of Wittgenstein, by resulting in interpretations which contain in principle the very confusions which they claim their object is aimed at dissipating.

A therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein is generally considered to be one which involves taking Wittgenstein 'at his word'[2] with regard to particular remarks he makes on the nature of philosophy. Examples of these are sections in the *Philosophical Investigations*, such as §114 and §125, where Wittgenstein seems to suggest that propositions and philosophical uses of language may sometimes give the illusion of describing 'a thing's nature,'[3] when all they are really doing is describing the way in which we see that thing; and that rather than following self-prescribed techniques for philosophical investigation which rest on certain assumptions and getting entangled in our own rules when 'things do not turn out as we had assumed,' [4] we should try to 'get a clear view' of 'this entanglement' in order to find out what it is 'that troubles us' (Ibid). The specific association of Wittgenstein's philosophy with therapy is supported by remarks such as §133 and §255, where he writes that philosophical methods are like 'different

[2] Fogelin, Robert, J. 'Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy'. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. Hans Sluger and David G. Stern (eds.). Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1996. p.35

[3] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1963. §114 – from this point forwards, the abbreviation '*P.I.*' will be used to refer to this source.

[4] *P.I.* §125

therapies,' [5] and that '[t]he philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness.'[6]

Rupert Read describes the therapeutic approach to Wittgenstein's philosophy as an interpretation which asserts that 'Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy is […] not to advance metaphysical theories, but rather to help us work ourselves out of confusions we become entangled in when philosophizing.'[7] This is a sentiment which is expressed similarly by other philosophers sympathetic to 'quietist'[8] or 'negative'[9] views of Wittgenstein, such as Robert J. Fogelin, in his identification of the 'leading idea' in the *Philosophical Investigations* as being the thought that 'philosophers are led into confusion [… due to] a tendency to view language from a skewed or disoriented perspective,'[10] and his assertion that '[t]he proper task of philosophy' is therefore 'to *induce* us to abandon such improper perspectives,' (Ibid).

From these and similar pronouncements it seems that the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein hinges on the idea that Wittgenstein's philosophy, rather than attempting to advance a set of claims or theories, is engaged in suggesting to us a healthier, less misleading, way of seeing – one which will allow us to see everything as it is, instead of confusing us by its perspectival quirks into thinking that there are 'things hidden'[11] which must be delved into in order to achieve clarity.

If what Wittgenstein proposes in his philosophy is a 'way of viewing the world,'[12] then it seems crucial that in reading Wittgenstein we should turn our gaze upon our own interpretive vision and examine the nature of the view which leads us to this conclusion.

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[5] *P.I.* §133
[6] *P.I.* §255
[7] Crary, Alice. The New Wittgensten. London, Routledge. 2000. p.1.
[8] Goldstein, Laurence. *Clear and Queer Thinking: Wittgenstein's Development and His Relevance to Modern Thought.* London, Gerald Duckworth & co. Ltd. 1999. p.xi
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[11] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Preliminary Studies for 'Philosophical Investigations'.* Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1958. p.6
[12] Fogelin, Robert, J. 'Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy'. Op.Cit. p.34

We could describe the therapeutic reading as being arrived at by dividing Wittgenstein's voice into distinct philosophical characters, where certain remarks are taken as being made in a sincere tone (as opposed to others which are claimed to be ironic / provocative etc.); and building up a picture of philosophy by identifying and extracting common elements in these perceived sincere remarks – a picture in which these elements (reinforced by referencing repeated instances of similar phrases and images in Wittgenstein's writing) are brought together, arranged, and synthesised into a whole. By such a therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, we could say that we have found a picture of a picture of philosophy – a '*Weltanschauung*'[13] – created by the assimilation and merging together of certain elements of Wittgenstein's writing into a cohesive representation which is taken to portray Wittgenstein's picture of philosophy.

But would this be an appropriate view to take?

Just as the picture of language that Wittgenstein extracts (at the start of the *Philosophical Investigations*) from Augustine's words should not necessarily be taken to be 'Augustine's picture of language,'[14] shouldn't the picture presented in the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein also be taken, not as 'Wittgenstein's picture of philosophy', but rather as a 'particular picture'[15] of philosophy assembled from Wittgenstein's words, which 'provides' us with a 'point of departure'[16] for 'thoughts of [our] own?'[17]

Here it seems that it is not only unclear that we are acting appropriately in taking the therapeutic reading to be an accurate representation of Wittgenstein, but also doubtful as to whether there is any good reason for us to take the picture it presents to be *Wittgenstein's* picture of

[13] *P.I.* §122

[14] 'since Augustine made no such claims in the *Confessions*' (Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part 1: Essays.* Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. 2005. p.2)

[15] *P.I.* §1

[16] Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning.* Op.Cit. p.2

[17] Preface to the *P.I.*

philosophy – or even a picture at all. Hence, rather than plunging into a discussion of the particulars of the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, perhaps we should first question whether we are comfortable in saying that the therapeutic reading is the kind of picture which we have been tempted to assume it is – and also whether we are willing to say that the view it presents of Wittgenstein's concept of philosophy is a picture in the sense that interpretive expositions of philosophers are frequently taken to be.

Saying that something is a picture is a descriptive expression which lends a particular feel or sense to its object. The notion of a picture brings with it an air of contrived coherence – an assimilation of parts to form a whole – and the translation of things as they are into a discriminative, bounded representation. It also gives the impression of there being more than itself, of the existence of something beyond the picture, to which it refers. In this sense a picture is obscure, as there seems to be something not included in it which nevertheless pervades it and guides its formation. In calling something a picture, one impresses onto it, by the imposition of a characterising perspectival structure, a particular mode of meaning. To call something a picture is to make it available to a certain type of access.

Making something available to a certain type of access has the effect of encouraging a certain type of interpretation, and hence the adoption of a certain sort of attitude on the part of the interpreter. Thus calling the therapeutic reading a picture implies the assumption of a particular kind of approach, not only in our reading of it, but also within the reading itself, in its understanding and presentation of its object.

But what am I doing here? Am I not at this moment also engaged in the creation of a picture – a picture of what it is to call something a picture? And won't any explanation I now give be yet another picture, of what it is to present a picture of what it is to call something a picture?

There is a real danger here of sinking into 'the quagmire of overinterpretation'[18] which results from the attempt to investigate the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein from the outside; as when trying to discuss the therapeutic reading in relation to conventional interpretive criteria, one ends up applying these criteria to internal, Wittgensteinian criteria, which in turn apply to the external criteria by which they are being interpreted. Because of this, it seems that the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein is completely impenetrable via this approach, as we will keep getting caught up in the mechanism of our own interpretation and never make any real headway in our investigation.

But then, what am I trying to achieve by *interpreting* the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein in the first place? Why should I need to 'investigate' it in this manner, as if it were some obscure artefact to be penetrated or uncovered via a conventionally prescribed methodology?

The possibility has just occurred to me that everything I have said up to this point has been a disguised and elaborate act of partial resistance against the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein – a demonstrative refusal to fully accept Wittgenstein's words on their own terms, which has resulted in a convoluted tangle of camouflaged nonsense. I have been attempting to maintain a non-idealistic façade; pretending, even to myself, that I was not engaged in any sort of sublimation either of my own methods or of Wittgenstein's words, while all along I was trying to uncover a hidden meaning in the original quote[19] – an endeavour which led not to the discovery of the 'real' therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, but to an overexposure of my own methodological processes and interpretive mechanisms.

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[18] Biletzki, Anat. *(Over)Interpreting Wittgenstein.* Dordrecht, the Netherlands. Kluwer Academic Publishers. 2003. p.17

[19] Subsequent to writing this, I read Rupert Read's criticism of David Stern's 'intentionalist approach' to interpreting Wittgenstein as 'always looking "behind" Wittgenstein's published words for their meanings' – an attitude which Read claims 'leads him into some serious errors'. (Read, Rupert. Book Review: David G. Stern. *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*. Oxford University Press. 1995. in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Volume XXXV/Jan. 1997/no. 1. p.152)

It seems that I have tried to construct an external 'meta-narrative'[20] of the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein while simultaneously trying to participate in it, attempting to combine the maintenance of an external, 'evaluative'[21] point of view with the development of an internal understanding of the object under investigation. The problem is that in the case of the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein these two approaches are mutually exclusive, since the development of an internal understanding involves rejecting some of what supports and drives the progress of the external evaluation, and the maintenance of an evaluative viewpoint necessitates resistance against entering into the terms of its object.

This is the state of affairs referred to by Anat Biletzki, when she writes that the creation of a 'meta-story'[22] of Wittgenstein interpretation is an endeavour which involves walking 'a thin line of writing *about* […] Wittgenstein interpretations while refraining from *being* Wittgensteinian,'[23] whereas '[i]nterpreting Wittgenstein *means* doing Wittgenstein from within.'[24]

So it seems that I have to make a choice between evaluating the therapeutic reading from the outside, or participating in it from the inside – choosing either to render the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein intelligible according to external standards and assimilate it via conventional analysis, or to engage with it according to its own criteria, first accepting and then using these criteria to re-think the rest of philosophy and illuminate aspects of its methodology which are hidden from conventional view. The outcome of this decision depends entirely on what I want to achieve by my reading in this essay.

I suppose that what I want to achieve is a record of the progress of my understanding of Wittgenstein through the lens of the therapeutic reading – a presentation of the development of my continuing

[20] '[A story of Wittgenstein interpretation] is, in its way, a meta-story, a story *about* [an]other stor[y]' (Biletzki, Anat. *(Over)Interpreting Wittgenstein.* Op.Cit. p.5)
[21] *Ibid.*, p.14
[22] *Ibid.*, p.5
[23] *Ibid.*, p.6
[24] *Ibid.*, p.17

endeavour to grasp the conventional self-entanglement which occurs in philosophising. Clearly, I cannot achieve this aim by approaching the therapeutic reading from a perspective whose formation is governed by conventional criteria, as I would myself be 'entangled in [my] own rules'[25] from the start, and so I must choose to give up my pre-conceived philosophical attitudes in order to enter into the spirit of the therapeutic reading and work from the inside out.[26]

This decision is supported by David Stern's hypothesis that the 'continuing unavailability of Wittgenstein's philosophy'[27] results from an unwillingness to subscribe to the 'change in sensibility' required in the reading of Wittgenstein – a resistant attitude which is perpetuated by 'the expectations of those interpreters who disregard [Wittgenstein's] way of writing, looking for an underlying theory they can attribute to him,' (Ibid).

So, where shall I start in my internal demonstration of the therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein?

Well, so far I have more or less diagnosed my interpretive malady – '[traced] the physiognomy of [my] error'[28] – and prescribed an appropriate course of action. Now I need to participate in my own therapy.

> *DIFFICULTY OF PHILOSOPHY NOT THE INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTY OF THE SCIENCES, BUT THE DIFFICULTY OF A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE. RESISTANCES OF THE WILL MUST BE OVERCOME.*[29]

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[25] *P.I.* §125

[26] Rather than preparing the ground for me to 'resolve a contradiction' via 'discovery', this will 'make it possible for [me] to get a clear view of the state of [affairs] which troubles [me]: the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved.' – 'And this does not mean that [I am] sidestepping a difficulty'. (Ibid)

[27] Stern, David. 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy'. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein.* Ed. Hans Sluger and David G. Stern. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1996. p.442

[28] *B.T.* §87. (p.7)

[29] *B.T.* §86. (p.5)

My original mistake was to avoid accepting these words in favour of an attempt to investigate them – as though I could remove the obstacle they presented to my conventional interpretive attitude by treating the quote as an obscurity resolvable by mere intellectual analysis. Here I was blind to the possibility that it was not something *in the quote* that needed to be resolved, but an aspect of my own attitude. Thus, I will start by taking these words to heart, committing myself seriously to the 'change in sensibility'[30] that the statement seems to require. Though such an alteration of attitude does not feel like it will be either simple or rapid, this point marks my embarkation on a remedial path which will hopefully contribute, via a gradual amelioration of disposition, to the development, or restoration, of a healthier way of seeing.

Earlier, I said that I would have to 'give up' certain philosophical attitudes or approaches; however, this will not be an intellectual 'renunciation' or abstention,[31] but a 'resignation […] of feeling' – an abandonment of various 'senseless' (Ibid) configurations to which I may have formed an inappropriate attachment. It does not imply a denial of things, but rather constitutes a release from incongruous matrices of associations. This self-restraint of expression[32] involves the acceptance of the significant role played by emotion and the will in philosophising – an aspect of which is described by William James in his account of the 'strong temperamental vision'[33] of the philosopher:

> *The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. […] Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries when philosophizing to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his*

[30] Stern, David. 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy'. Op.Cit. p. 442
[31] *B.T.* §86 (p.5)
[32] 'It can be difficult not to use an expression, just as it is difficult to hold back tears, or an outburst of anger.' (Ibid)
[33] James, William. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking.* Lecture I: 'The Present Dilemma in Philosophy'. Project Gutenberg. 2004. E-Book #5116. Harris, S. & Franks, C. (prods.) http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/prgmt10.txt (Accessed 24/04/06)

> *conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more objective pictures.* (Ibid)

Philosophers are not persuaded to agree with things against their will, but rather let themselves be brought around to conclusions by methods which are compatible with their 'own peculiar way […] of seeing,' (Ibid). In philosophising, we think that we are involved in the creation or adoption of objective, perspicuous views through the medium of language, but are often 'blind to the fact that we ourselves have strong prejudices for, and against, certain forms of expressions'[34], and that the 'piling up' of the outcomes of these tendencies 'results in our having a particular picture' (Ibid) or lens.

This is something that I must 'let [myself] be *struck* by'[35] in order to accept that the '[w]ork on philosophy' which I am now engaged in is 'actually more of a work on [myself]. On [my] own conception. On the way [I see] things. (And what [I demand] of them.)'[36]

What I was blind to before was not so much like a fact, but more like a hue or dynamic – a perceptual mode. I failed to recognise the tonality of my way of seeing – the 'shaped-ness' of my engagement with the object of my attention (the distinctive formation of my own 'edifice'[37]) – and it is through such blindness that one runs the risk of being drawn unknowingly into linguistic superstitions or mysticism, where one can begin to believe that language in philosophy does more than just 'put[ing] [things] before us'[38] in a certain way. In this misleading light language appears to be always pointing to something beyond itself, and we take ourselves to be engaged in a continuing struggle which involves both trying to see what others' words are pointing to, and making our own words transparent enough to allow others to peer through them and see into a semantic realm beyond.

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[34] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Zettel*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe & C.H. von Wright. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1981. §323

[35] *P.I.* IIxi (p.224)

[36] *B.T.* §86 (p.5)

[37] *B.T.* §89 (p.11)

[38] *P.I.* §126 *& B.T.* §89 (p.12)

In the *Big Typescript*, Wittgenstein writes that 'People are deeply embedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them from these presupposes pulling them out of the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. One must so to speak regroup their entire language.'[39]

The methodology used in such regrouping is one which acknowledges 'THE POSSIBILITY OF QUIET PROGRESS'[40] afforded by methodical 'demonstrations of linguistic facts,' in place of the metaphysical ideals and 'turbulent conjectures' (Ibid) of conventional philosophy. As such, its effectiveness necessitates a perspectival shift on a grand scale – a revolution of understanding – which will in turn allow more localised regroupings of sense to take place. This abstract reorientation is described by Wittgenstein as a transition from a mistaken view of philosophy as 'cut up into (infinite) vertical strips'[41] which are impossible to reorder, to a less disquieting one of philosophy being divided into 'horizontal […] whole, definite piece[s]' (Ibid), which can be manipulated and tackled with ease.[42]

Once this aspect-shift has taken place, we are free to cultivate '[t]he particular peace of mind'[43] that accompanies the dissolution of various problematic pictures (frames of expression) which have got stuck and are actively obstructing the fluidity of our conceptual functioning in carrying out the free formation and modification of appropriate linguistic models.

This is the 'discovery […] that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to,'[44] because once I have accepted that a large

[39] *B.T.* §90 (p.15)
[40] *B.T.* §92 (p.19)
[41] *B.T.* §92 (p.19)
[42] Robert Fogelin makes a similar observation, where he writes that 'only a complete global reorientation can break the spell of *a picture that holds us captive* (PI, 115). Invoking a comparison with relativity theory, Wittgenstein puts it this way: "(One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated about the fixed point of our real need)." (PI, 100).' (Fogelin, Robert J. 'Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy'. Op.Cit. p.35)
[43] *B.T.* §89 (p.10)
[44] *P.I.* §133

number of philosophical problems may in fact be illusions created by language and started to uncover some 'piece[s] of plain nonsense'[45] by clearing them up in small, manageable chunks ('eliminating difficulties'[46]) as I go along, I have given myself the peace to go at my own pace and resist the impractical urge to solve as much as possible in one go (an urge which results in conceptual distortion by encouraging a readiness to follow misleading paths inherent in language).

I am beginning to feel that I have succeeded somewhat in causing the philosophical problems, that before 'tormented' (Ibid) me and urged me to make distorted conjectures and oversimplifications in a desperate attempt to resolve the intangible conflicts I felt within my own philosophising, to relinquish their dire hold on my intellect. I have calmed the restless mood which caused me to compulsively search for solutions[47], and I now feel fit to undertake the peaceful examination and 'quiet noting of linguistic facts'[48] that characterises a true 'philosophical investigation', without being troubled by the urge to rush the completion of my philosophical work, because I have accepted that it 'doesn't have an end' (Ibid).

Wittgenstein's methodology[49] of 'quiet progress' consists in the steady 'plow[ing] through' of 'the whole of language,'[50] 'destroying […] houses of cards and clearing up the ground […] on which they stand'[51] via 'series of examples'[52] which induce a 'particular peace of mind.'[53] This 'peace of mind' is the progressive result of the accumulated experience

[45] *P.I.* §119
[46] *P.I.* §133
[47] 'When most people ought to engage in a philosophical investigation, they act like someone who is looking for an object in a drawer very nervously. He throws papers out of the drawer – what he's looking for may be among them – leafs through the others hastily and sloppily.' (*B.T.* §92 (p.19-20))
[48] *B.T.* §92 (p.19)
[49] I have used the word 'methodology' to indicate a 'body of practices' as opposed to a single method (http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=methodology) in order to take into account Wittgenstein's rejection of a universally applicable set of principles, or the existence of one, authoritative technique (e.g. §133).
[50] *B.T.* §92 (p.19)
[51] *P.I.* §118
[52] *P.I.* §133
[53] *B.T.* §89 (p.10)

of individual disintegrations of misleading linguistic pictures which have got caught up in the mechanism of our conceptual vision. Individual problems (symptoms) are solved by the 'assembl[ance] of reminders'[54] which illuminate 'the facts of our language;'[55] overall philosophical unrest (the underlying ailment) is calmed by the orderly accumulation of such solutions: 'The philosophical problem is an awareness of disorder in our concepts, and can be solved by ordering them.'[56]

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein seems to disintegrate a large number of misleading philosophical pictures by setting up sequences of '*objects of comparison*'[57] – i.e. 'order[s] with a particular end in view'[58] (as opposed to 'preconceived idea[s] to which reality *must* correspond'[59]) – and applying various 'aspects of organization'[60] to them[61]; freeing up the elements of our misguidedly fixed conventional pictures by 'giv[ing] prominence to distinctions' and resemblances 'which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook.'[62] Wittgenstein is not engaged here in the kind of linguistic 'reform'[63] that would be useful in a 'particular practical' (Ibid) setting – but rather in the dissolution of unproductive (and even counterproductive) linguistic formations which are maintained *solely* for psychological reasons (although these reasons may be unrecognised).

This 'reordering' of language via the recurrent shifting around and interchanging of the components of presented 'objects of comparison' requires a certain detachment from the workings of one's own

[54] *P.I.* §127
[55] *P.I.* §130
[56] *B.T.* §89 (p.13)
[57] *P.I.* §130
[58] *P.I.* §132
[59] *P.I.* §131
[60] 'One *kind* of aspect might be called 'aspects of organization'. When the aspect changes[,] parts of the picture go together which before did not.' (*P.I.* IIxi (p.208))
[61] Causing us to be 'inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures', in order to '[change our] *way of looking at things*.' (*P.I.* §144)
[62] *P.I.* §132
[63] *P.I.* §132

organisational processes of linguistic representation – a quiet acceptance of linguistic peculiarities for what they are, which will allow us to use language in our investigations without getting mistakenly distracted and drawn into its embedded mechanism. These organisational processes are structuring devices that we use in our habitual creation of linguistic pictures – procedures we perform on descriptions which involve drawing together (placing emphasis on) particular associative configurations in order to facilitate '*seeing* [something] in this way or that.'[64] Such processes include metaphors, similes, distinctions, parallels, assimilations, externalisations, contrasts, abstractions, extractions, comparisons, contextualisations, integrations, generalisations, characterisations, elucidations, overviews etc. which are the instruments of our linguistic vision.

> *A simile is part of our edifice; but we cannot draw any conclusions from it either; it doesn't lead us beyond itself, but must remain standing as a simile. We can draw no inferences from it. As when we compare a sentence to a picture […] or when I compare the application of language with, for instance, that of the calculus of multiplication.*[65]

I take these words to refer not just to similes, but to the entire apparatus of composing linguistic views. Once we consider the organisational processes mentioned above not as identifications of essential connections between concepts, but rather as functions of a perspectival mode – one which superimposes or arranges linguistic representations in various ways which have the effect of bringing out dominant strains of elements and allowing others to fall out of view, in order to foreground a particular dynamic or hue – then we are no longer so vulnerable to the threat posed by 'stuck' pictures.

To use an overt analogy: we can think of language as like a microscope or optical frame of some kind, and the pictures in language as lenses or filters which can be superimposed, so that when one looks through the microscope the object under scrutiny assumes a certain quality, or

[64] *P.I.* IIxi (p.208)
[65] *B.T.* §89 (p.11)

strikes the viewer differently, depending on the selection and configuration of the assembled filters. This removes the illusion of linguistic pictures being bound together by an intangible adhesive – semantic glue – which holds its elements firmly in place, and replaces it with the impression of a well-oiled mechanical frame in which perspectives can be freely compiled and decomposed, modified and reassembled (without stretching or distortion occurring), according to the requirements of the situation.

This realisation allows us to function comfortably with our natural, 'uncorrected' way of viewing the world,[66] as we feel free to use language according to our judgement of appropriate modes of expression, and to assemble our linguistic perspectives as we see fit, rather than feeling compelled by convention ('the false system' of expression[67]) to engage in the distortion and over-application of accepted models.

The kind of reading that I have engaged in, and which was the object of my initial, misguided investigation, is commonly referred to as the 'therapeutic reading'; however, this is a somewhat misleading title. This reading can be given the hue of therapy, just as it can be seen in the light of a mechanical repair, an education, a correction of vision, a spiritual conversion, a methodological reorientation, a meditative transition, the unlocking of a safe,[68] the removal of a pair of glasses,[69] the liberation of a fly,[70] or the discovery and extraction of a hair from one's tongue[71] (among other things). All of these cases have important similarities and dissimilarities which, when superimposed, form a particular view of this reading of Wittgenstein; however, what this view 'tells me is itself,'[72] nothing more and nothing less. It 'must remain standing' as a compilation of 'component parts'[73] ('the materials from

[66] Fogelin, Robert J. 'Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy'. Op. Cit. p.34
[67] *B.T.* §89 (p.10)
[68] *B.T.* §89 (p.11)
[69] *P.I.* §103
[70] *P.I.* §309
[71] *B.T.* §87 (p.6)
[72] *P.I.* §523
[73] *P.I.* §59

which we construct that picture of reality', Ibid) – and my reading must also remain standing, as itself.

I cannot 'draw any inferences'[74] from such a construction, which already 'lies open to view,'[75] and neither can I explain Wittgenstein, who speaks for himself. Thus I have come to the conclusion that the insight I have gained through this discussion must be one founded on emotion. And why should that idea be a bothersome one?

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[74] *B.T.* §89 (p.11)
[75] *P.I.* §126

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Book reviews

Not by genes alone: how culture transformed human evolution
Peter J. Richerson & Robert Boyd, *University of Chicago Press*

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What do you get when you cross biology with technology? A mess? You might think so, but Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson would like to persuade you otherwise. *Not by Genes Alone* provides a synthesis of biological and purely cultural approaches to human evolution. The result is Social Learning Theory, a gene-culture coevolution perspective suggesting that the adaptations demonstrated in societies are the product of *both* biological mechanisms of individuals *and* social or psychological mechanisms working at a more general group level. It's an ambitious project with many types of human behaviour to account for, yet their synthesis does not come across as forced. It offers a sophisticated integration of positive and commonsense elements from prevailing theories in philosophy, psychology, biology and other subjects; and an open and level-headed general approach – something not to be taken for granted in this subject area.

The amalgamation of schools does not just apply to the philosophical content of the book. The authors strike a balance between referring to, and analysing, experiments and case studies in the style of Sociology or Psychology, and exploring the more theoretical 'thought experiments' typical of much Philosophy. As a result, the book comes across as offering a practical theory based on concrete evidence. Although evolutionary theorists' experimental methods and interpretation of data have previously been called into question, Boyd and Richerson are open

about the basis for the interpretations they make and how they intend them to support their view. They offer a clear presentation of where they see applications for their theories, so the reader can decide for themselves whether or not they are representative.

Some may find the style (and humour) a little dry, but the book is much more accessible than some previous Boyd and Richerson collaborations (such as their occasionally mathematics-heavy research papers). The theory still has its complexities, but the authors take care and time to expand and expound their ideas rigorously. Consequently, the pace can sometimes seem slow, but this is for clarity's sake: a remedy for the technical complexity often present in mathematical analyses of psychological data. That is, of course, unless you are fascinated by the many discussions of farming practices, in which case forget my last comment: indulge yourself in seemingly endless farming-related insights.

For years, the debate in human evolutionary theory tended to polarise between biological and biologically-independent approaches. The biological case was backed by the weight of Darwinian evolutionary evidence from the animal kingdom, but conspicuously failed to engage with certain aspects of our developmental environment. For example, such approaches have often overlooked the evolution of collective ideas and practices, and have trouble accounting for maladaptation, where evolutionary trends converge towards an unhealthy or dangerous scenario, threatening survival rather than increasing its chances. On the other hand, human populations are comprised of individuals whose biological make up alone cannot explain the speed and complexity with which ideas, practices and information become prominent. It seems there is a need for extra-biological elements in a theory of human evolution.

The structure of the authors' work not only allows the reader to understand their position, it contributes to the argument itself, answering those niggling questions raised by the simplicity of the statements made within. It's one of those books which should be understood as a whole, rather than by taking each section in isolation, though it is easy to do this if one merely wants to find the authors'

opinion on how a specific given aspect of human behaviour works. There are, after all, plenty of examples to refer to for any such idea. However, for an appreciation of the theory as a whole, one needs to understand the cohesive place of each subsection. The book begins with the bold claim that 'Culture is essential'. It transpires that this means 'essential' both to our understanding of human behaviours, responses and idiosyncrasies and to the nature of human development; *and* how these responses influence our interaction with our environment, illustrating trends in behaviour over a given period of human history.

However, biologists can also account for changes and trends in behaviour, so we require evidence that the patterns observed are trends in something substantial – that they are not just the illusion of cumulative effect from the particular biology of individuals in a population. Moreover, we need to see that these trends are in some sense directional, being successful adaptations for the population on the whole. So Boyd and Richerson continue with the chapters 'Culture exists' and 'Culture evolves' respectively. 'Culture exists' demonstrates the wide variation in practices between even populations where biological and environmental conditions are similar. The authors indicate that certain systems of behaviour are preferred by some populations, but not developed in others: such as the differing patterns of land ownership in German American and Yankee farmers. Due to the relative similarity of the biology and environments such variations, Boyd and Richerson suggest, must be of a cultural nature. Some might argue that this is naïve as a default negative analysis and that Boyd and Richerson too readily dismiss the subtleties of purely biological evolution. I suspect that this is a question of source rather than effect. We have been provided with a definition of culture: acquired information (mental states) 'capable of affecting individuals' behaviour'. The patterns displayed in such information are the focus of this section; primarily *that* they come to be, not *why* they come to be. Even the sceptic about non-environmental origins for such variations can recognise, with Boyd and Richerson, the existence of such phenomena.

The issue of *why* we observe such patterns is addressed in chapter three 'Culture evolves'. In general, as in genetic evolution, such trends are due to the relative fitness of the variations available. But unlike on the

purely biological outlook, with cultural variations we have the cognitive ability to *decide*, whether individually or as a society, on *some* of the trends we form. Humans have an evaluative capacity, so it seems natural to me to infer that there can be observation, choice and imitation present in the development of a population trait. This is indeed what Boyd and Richerson suggest. They provide multiple examples of how trends can be transferred between individuals, but they make clear that the processes are more flexible in cultural evolution than is often the case in biological evolution. They discuss at length the notion of biased transmission (when instinctive preferences play a part in the selection of trends) which might yield different patterns of behaviour than predicted by fitness assessment alone. They also address the concept of population thinking: that trends *should* sometimes be considered at the level of trend expression *across* a whole society. Individuals imitate what they interpret, so it is much less clear that cultural traits are distinct packets of information in individuals than is the case with genetic traits. Information in the brain of one individual can differ from that of another, yet yield similar behaviour. This is possibly the most complex chapter as it provides mechanisms for transmission, but it is more interesting for it. We learn some details of the social learning approach and can really begin to place the theory in the overall school of evolution.

The main difference between Boyd and Richerson's approach and purely cultural theories of evolution is the latter's tenet that culture develops independently of biological developments. Boyd and Richerson make it clear that culture does not simply run parallel to genetic evolution, it is constrained by it. Indeed, they suggest biological selective mechanisms originally introduced culture to populations. This is a pivotal point in the theory. It determines the manner in which gene-culture coevolution occurs. Biology limits which cultural developments and responses are possible in given situations, but the development of social practices can still occur at its own natural rate, displaying a greater rate of change than is obvious in the wider genetic limits. This sets the framework for the details of gene-culture coevolution explored in further depth in chapter six; but it also raises questions over the legitimacy of introducing a non-biological element to evolutionary theory. Why should we not just accept the previously-

held view that biology conditions us to react in certain social circumstances, but that these reactions, which we call 'culture', are fully dependent on genetic evolution? At least one answer is that the traditional biological view has problems which may be surmountable with the introduction of cultural evolution.

Boyd and Richerson recognize the difficulties that previous theories such as Wilson's sociobiology have encountered because of their tendency to make generalizations. One such difficulty concerns adaptation itself. The proposition that evolution always favours the 'fittest' variation faces serious counterexamples when applied to cultural practices. As Boyd and Richerson detail in chapter five, 'Culture is maladaptive,' modern societies have trends which appear to favour actively unhealthy traits – and not just traits which are biologically unhealthy, but perhaps psychologically, or even epistemologically, unhealthy as well. Heavy drinking, eating fatty foods and polluting the environment with vehicle fumes are choice examples. We have certain evolved susceptibilities to behaving in ways which have been previously successful in human evolution. However the current condition of society and the environment no longer match the conditions under which such adaptations evolved. Boyd and Richerson propose that this is often due to a tension between the slow pace of genetic evolution and the much swifter cultural evolutionary process. The two have, in some cases, become out of sync. This illuminates the issue of whether Boyd and Richerson were right in dismissing the purely biological evolutionary theory. Some might argue that they should accept only genetic evolution because that is what we can easily identify as an active force in light of these maladaptations. But I would argue that it should be entirely the reverse. If biology alone contained the selective forces of evolution, then we would have to sacrifice a great number of the traditionally useful views of evolution in the face of maladaptation – if the adaptation were in conflict with fitness, and we had no other evolutionary processes to consider, we would have to recognise a paradox and reject much of our otherwise successful and established theory of evolution. Boyd and Richerson give us the opportunity to retain our understanding of evolutionary theory by means of additional evolutionary processes which act upon social practices at a group level. This coevolution is the topic of the subsequent chapter.

'Culture and genes coevolve' examines various particular sociological occurrences, such as altruism, in some detail. However, the driving force behind these particular case studies is the attempt to demonstrate that while culture may be a derivative of the biological evolutionary process, it is not governed by it to the extent that culture loses its independent selective mechanisms. Everyone in a population must be governed by their biological limitations, but there are many different cultural trends which might develop in accordance with wider genetic limitations, so there is no need to assume that the *selective mechanisms* for such traits are biological. Indeed, some trends seem distinctly non-biological in origin, such as the development of motor vehicles, for example. When such traits have no, or only very minor, biological repercussions, one would not expect them to be inclusive or exclusive factors involved in genetic selection. So it seems to me that Boyd and Richerson's emphasis on coevolutionary processes is an important new viewpoint in the human evolutionary debate.

Chapter seven successfully draws together the various elements of Boyd and Richerson's thesis, and makes sure that the reader is aware of the limitations they place on what they're aiming to achieve. It discusses adaptation and maladaptation, and natural versus synthetic selective mechanisms, and also clarifies the authors' intention that their theory pose questions for people who were previously firmly on either side of the traditional genetics / culture evolutionary debate. The synthesis approach is their answer to such questions. They also explicitly welcome ongoing productive questioning of the details of social learning theory, as they have done throughout the text wherever incompleteness in current theory has been apparent. Should we reject social learning theory for this admitted incompleteness? I do not think so. Cultural evolution relies on individual agents as vehicles for traits, even if such traits are displayed at population level. Exactly *how* these psychological mechanisms work is a more general – if complex – problem in philosophy of mind and language. Boyd and Richerson set the reader a challenge – and whether or not you are a fan of social learning theory, it must be admitted that the ground has been prepared for the development of further theoretical details as we continue to evolve our knowledge and ideas.

Boyd and Richerson's project should particularly appeal to anyone who distrusts the simplicity of the famously dichotomous positions in philosophy of biology and evolution, such as the nature / nurture distinction, and to anyone who is interested in questioning *all* levels of our population's development and heritage.

Philosophical dictionaries

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Is there still a role for concise dictionaries of philosophy in the age of Google and persistent internet connections? After all, the short definitions and introductory glosses offered in such bookshelf reference works can rarely match the scope, length or contemporary references of constantly-updated web resources. So can we, excepting those without permanent internet connections or with latent technophobia, abandon traditional printed philosophical dictionaries in favour of online material?

The paper-based market leaders are probably Flew and Priest's ***Dictionary of Philosophy*** (3rd Edn., 2002, Oxford: Pan), and Blackburn's ***Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*** (2nd Edn., 2005, Oxford: OUP). I'm going to take the definition of 'dictionary' quite loosely here, and consider publications that are perhaps more detailed and argumentatively involved than the word might suggest. So the **Blackwell *Companion*** series should also undoubtedly be considered. On the online side, the main contenders are probably the ***Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*** (*sic*, www.rep.routledge.com), the ***Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*** (*sic*, www.seop.leeds.ac.uk), **Wikipedia** (www.wikipedia.org) and **Google** (www.google.co.uk). There are, of course, other choices to be had on both sides – from Warburton's ***Thinking from A-Z*** (2nd Edn., 2000, London: Routledge) and some other introductory books with a reference format, to various publishers'

online gateways onto searchable electronic copies of their paper-based works (e.g. **Oxford Scholarship Online** - www.oxfordscholarship.com and the **Taylor & Francis eBookstore** - www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk). But these do not share the goal of being as widely comprehensive as the others – they are amalgamations of other resources that sell reasonably well (the publishers' websites) or supplementary publications written to cover a perceived gap in existing marketed publications (Warburton and similar). So I will leave them to one side.

So what of the most 'dictionary'-ish of the paper-based dictionaries? Both Flew and Priest's, and Blackburn's dictionaries provide a wide range of definitions and brief introductions. The former has just over 1700 entries, and the latter 3000. Both include a selection of formal terms (e.g. 'logical positivism', 'naturalized epistemology'), author overviews (e.g. Kant, Hume) and common / less-common philosophical phrases (e.g. 'death-of-the-author' in Blackburn, 'limited independent variety' in Flew and Priest). Both cover a large number of the topics covered in mainstream philosophy. Both have some perhaps surprising inclusions from a mainstream undergraduate analytic point of view: 'hatha-yoga' appears in each, as does 'quadrivium' – both welcome inclusions despite being quite unlikely to appear in most undergrads' final exams.

Both have trends in their entries which reflect the differing interests of their authors – notably a higher number of philosophy of religion definitions in Flew and Priest (e.g. 'Hasidism', 'privation'), and a somewhat ethics-slanted choice of unique definitions in Blackburn (particularly noticeable in 'sex and sexual desire', and the greater number of distinct ethical positions defined). Both have surprising omissions – for example 'inference to the best explanation' is not referenced to 'abduction' in Flew and Priest, despite common usage; and neither dictionary has 'intelligent design' defined or even simply referred to in their coverage of 'arguments from/to design', despite this being the modern term most used in popular discourse, and so the first term people are likely to look up. Neither have page numbers (unlike the OED or subsequent English language dictionaries), which has a knock-on effect for citation. Though, given the negative opinion a lot

of markers take on quoting dictionary definitions in undergraduate essays, this is not a disastrous flaw.

So if this were a discussion limited to offline-resources, which dictionary seems 'better'? This is difficult. Flew and Priest's dictionary has been in development longer (since 1979) and is an edition further revised than Blackburn's. But the latter is extremely impressive for only a second edition of a 1994 original. The latter is written in a less dry style and even exhibits humour on occasion – such as in the inclusion of 'Elis': 'deserving immortal fame because… it passed a law exempting all philosophers from taxation.' This is a pleasant by-product of a dictionary being largely the product of a single mind, but I cannot help but wonder whether a second 'custodian', as Priest has been for Flew's original work, would iron out some of the bias in certain definitions. It may be humorous, but it is – in my opinion – simply not alright for an academic dictionary to sum up a definitional paragraph with: 'However, physicists and cosmologists… are still prone to imagine that recourse to a guiding intelligence affords some explanation.' This comes across as patronising to researchers in other subjects (not only philosophers use philosophy dictionaries), is clearly underdeveloped if supposed to be philosophical argument, and is inappropriate if read as objective definition. Worse yet, it is simply embarrassing if one then cross-references the dictionary's definition of what constitutes 'explanation' and finds that Blackburn – as everyone else in philosophy – cannot offer a concise summary of what 'some explanation' certainly requires other than an *explanans* and *explanandum*. So is in no better position, on the evidence included in his dictionary, than those 'imaginative' physicists and cosmologists. Nor is this the only instance of questionable assumptions quite seriously influencing a definition.

In contrast, Flew and Priest break explanation into four distinct types, and summarise the different positions on design arguments without building a commitment to any of them into their definition. Which is representative of their dry, descriptive rather than committed, approach throughout the dictionary. The Blackburn will afford you more laughs, and is if anything a more dynamic read if you (for any reason) decide to sit and read through the book sequentially. But I must admit I have found myself routinely taking down the Flew and Priest when I have

wanted a definition in the last few months, despite the greater number of definitions in the Blackburn. Absorbing one of Blackburn's views without realising it can be disastrous when writing a piece of work.

It is in the context of these established, popular printed works that the various online philosophy resources have developed over the last few years. The market leader in an economic sense is the *Routledge Encylopedia of Philosophy* (*REP*). Though this profitability should not be taken as a necessarily significant indicator – it is the only resource which charges for access. In fact, the *REP* is technically a printed resource with an online presence, and indeed most universities have a copy of the ten-volume print edition (Craig, E. ed., 1998, London: Routledge) somewhere in their book stacks. However, the print edition dates to 1998, whereas the online website that goes with the book is constantly updated with new and revised articles, and very few students have the £2,800 required to buy a personal printed copy (though it falls to below £2,000 second hand). So on balance I am treating the *REP* as an online resource, as this is how most students will use it, via an Athens account or campus-based internet access. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)* is a subscription-free, online-only alternative supported by public and academic institutional donations. Both rely on a very wide range of authors, typically with one author per article, and a set of subject and overall editors working to ensure uniformity of standard and style, and presumably to make sure no important areas are left uncovered.

The *REP* immediately impresses with a clean, attractive interface, genuinely easy-to-use search function and well-organised articles. It also has notably well-known authors contributing many of its articles, lending both a credibility and status to the project. The existence of the print edition of the *REP*, even if it is only rarely consulted, significantly adds to this impression of professional, dependable product, respectable in the field. My test search on 'pragmatism' resulted in a clearly-ranked list of relevant articles, with an introductory piece by Rorty covering the topic itself, and then a list of other articles in which pragmatism played an important part. The process of finding what I wanted to read was fast and painless, the prose style was accessible and helpful, and the article started with a simple historical definition and overview of the

term. More detail was available from reading further, or following links to other articles, and the text was broken down into convenient pages for reading. Though this of course makes printing more difficult. Overall, using the *REP* is a pleasant experience, and its articles are exemplary.

As a free, online-only resource, it is not surprising to find the *SEP* does not feature so many big name authors. That said, I had to read through a large number of articles to find *any* philosopher I had heard of as author. Even the central topics are covered by relatively unknown contributors. It's difficult to not perceive a drop in credibility and status in the articles as a result, but at least the *SEP* provides links to article authors' professional homepages, so that you can assess their credibility for yourself. This is considerably more information than most publishers can include in a print work, or can keep updated on their own reference website. But it's not something you really want to have to check each time, as you read through several articles just to get a feel for a subject. The time commitment required is considerable.

And you *will* be reading quite a few articles, for two reasons. First, the papers in the *SEP* tend to be biographical more often than thematic. My test search on 'pragmatism' turned up a number of articles on Dewey, Peirce, and critical theory, but no overview entry relating all the information on pragmatism or giving an overview of the phenomenon itself. Not so helpful, considering how few philosophy questions ever require a biographical, rather than conceptually analytic approach. And second, it will more than likely take you a few false starts to find exactly what you are looking for. In comparison to the simple, aesthetically-pleasing interface to the *REP*, the *SEP*'s homepage and search functions are deeply unpleasant. The 'free' ethos of the *SEP* is betrayed by its open-source, unadorned, hacked-together design, formatting and overall usage. In addition to looking ugly, it is difficult to imagine why searching on 'pragmatism' should reveal a number of articles with cryptic headings such as '/qt-nvd/.bak' in amongst the more useful English results, even if they are all free to read. And text is simply dumped into a single, sometimes very long, page – better for printing, worse for quickly reading online. The software running the system is basically the same as that behind BUPS' mailing list archives. Honestly,

I think even our system's formatting (put together in a very financially restricted environment) looks better than the *SEP*'s, and offers more useful headings and summaries in its search results. This should be fixed by whoever runs the *SEP*'s computers. It would hardly be expensive to sort out, and the current implementation and interface do somewhat undermine the credibility, and usability, of this international resource. People are used to good-looking, clear and usable sites now – even in the 'free' market sector. Think Flickr (www.flickr.com) or the International Movie DataBase (www.imdb.com). On the internet, as in the book world, looks *do* matter to most people, even on sites with truly great content. If your university does not have a subscription for the *REP*, you will in time be able to get used to the quirks of the *SEP* system. It's just that if you've got the choice, you probably won't want to. Which is a shame, because some of the articles in the *SEP* are well-informed, well-written and insightful.

In contrast, Wikipedia and Google have pretty much nailed the search and interface issues. Both offer clean page design and intuitive, efficient search systems. Wikipedia was founded as a free online encyclopaedia, using technology that is often referred to as 'Web 2.0'. The idea is that Web 1.0 was about reading other people's web pages through a web browser; and Web 2.0 is about being able to also comment on, or amend, those web pages as you read. Wikipedia therefore allows you to actually edit the pages of definitions as well as read them – and these are not just superficial or suggested changes that you make: once you've finished typing, the changes you make 'go live' on the site immediately. Your words and edits become part of the definition. In other words, Wikipedia is a collaborative tool, and its credibility is supposed to stem not from the status and reputation of any given author, but rather from the fact that everyone who reads the pages agrees that they are correct. It is about collaboration and consensus. This works surprisingly well. The definition of 'pragmatism', for example, has been written, rewritten and edited by over 30 distinct individuals. You can tell this from the 'history' log. Its opening section is clear and informative. It is well laid out, although again as a single page rather than a series of shorter pages. It contains some useful subsections and links. However, several of these are 'stubs' – basically placeholders for when someone gets around, or becomes interested enough, to kick off further discussion by writing a

'first draft' article to go in them. This leaves a somewhat incomplete article, and no known schedule for when it might be completed. Which is less than helpful.

However, there are two further issues that present even greater problems. The first is that Wikipedia's credibility rests on temporary consensus. It expects articles to evolve, getting closer and closer to an accurate and comprehensive entry by revision. And as I mentioned above, this model works a lot better than might be expected – there is a great deal of useful and informative material on the site. However, there is a problem in making all editors and authors able to amend articles. If the subject is not particularly popular or mainstream, the number of contributors stays rather low – so individuals, and their personal take on the topic, can end up having a disproportionate influence on each article. This is much worse, in some cases, than the slant Blackburn offers in his dictionary definitions. He is, after all, an experienced academic with an intention to at least be largely fair to the positions being considered. Whereas one article on Wikipedia, for example, accused a former journalist of being a Soviet agent involved in the Kennedy assassinations. The article went unqueried or amended for four months before the journalist himself contacted the owners of Wikipedia and threatened legal action unless someone took the article down. Since then an uneasy 'hybrid' model has been implemented on the site, with certain articles 'locked' to stop diametrically opposed camps from simply editing one another's work out of existence every time an article is amended (particularly in the political and religious topic areas).

Consensus authorship has considerable problems to overcome, based on a consideration of exactly whose, how many, and what level of expertise in judgement is required to 'validate' that consensus. There seems to be a fundamental tension here between the 'experience and expertise' 'ladder' model that academia has traditionally followed, and the 'consensus' 'flat democracy' ideal Wikipedia aspires to. If you cannot be reasonably certain that the definition you cite in an essay will be at least largely of the same opinion by the time your reader gets round to checking it, it seems difficult to recommend that you rely on Wikipedia as a citable source. As a purely learning resource, the credibility, content

and clarity of articles varies too wildly to seriously recommend *on the whole* – there are some excellent individual articles, but you never know in advance what sort of quality to expect. There are gaps, serious biases, and some philosophically poor arguments in place at the moment. There is a deep irony in an article on a consensus-authored site, with the problems noted above, starting its article on pragmatism with an unargued-for assertion: 'given the diversity among thinkers and the variety among schools of thought that have adopted this term over the years, the term *pragmatism* has become all but meaningless.' Wikipedia needs another few years in development before I think we should be considering it for routine use in academic philosophy.

Google, of course, suffers from no 'patchy' problem. If there is something on the web, the chances are it is indexed by Google. The opposite problem can sometimes come into play – simple searches result in an embarrassment of riches. A search on 'pragmatism' results in just under 10 million page hits. These are ranked using a pretty complex algorithm that factors in how many times other searchers have clicked on each link, how long the page has existed, how many other pages refer to that link, and so on. But again, these are substitutes for – mechanical approximations of – academic authority. The same problems of bias and demonstrable inaccuracy – and even error in fact, spelling or grammar – exist on a great number of the pages indexed. Checking and externally assessing credibility becomes a major, time-consuming concern. There is also a relevance problem. Despite Google's powerful and sophisticated search technology, any page that exists is indexed. Nobody removes incorrect, illegal, slanderous, disproved or irrelevant material. I have a biologist friend who was amused to find a search on 'deoxyribonucleic acid' led her to pictures of Pamela Anderson within three pages of results. Google indexes such a large set of pages, it should probably be seen as a deep research tool, or a place of last resort for getting an overall feel for a topic. There are much better sites to check for philosophical definitions.

There is perhaps also a fundamental risk of circularity in simply searching Google or something non-expertise-based for minority-interest technical terms. If you are looking for a definition or introduction to assess a paper or argument, you can often find – in

these specialist areas – that the most popular material has been put together by the author of the work you are trying to assess. In the case of something like the *REP*, this is offset by a professional editorial team and a formal requirement that authors try to be fair to all points of view in their coverage. On raw homepages, or in sparsely-authored and – edited Wikipedia entries, no such requirements are enforced upon writers. So you can end up sometimes assessing a source in the light of an understanding gained from other sources by the same author. The danger here is of circular reinforcement of a given point of view, rather than genuine enquiry and criticism. Though this is also more of a problem in the print world than people perhaps realise. Anonymous reviewers face the ethical dilemma of recognising papers or books as the work of an acquaintance more often than many students realise. This is particularly so in the less-populous specialist areas of philosophy, or when an outstanding position has been developed and refined by a relatively high-profile author through a series of talks and / or conference appearances. But it is even more pronounced in the online world, where a Google search to make sure you are up-to-date with the latest developments in certain topic areas can sometimes turn up an online copy or summary of the very paper you are trying to review. I find this as distracting as working from a library book that somebody else has underlined – even if I concentrate and try to use my critical faculties fully, I end up at least paying disproportionate attention to the passages somebody else has picked out before me. It at least ends up framing what you initially focus on, rather than leaving you to neutrally find your own areas of interest right from the beginning.

Overall, the considerable problems mentioned above help to explain (or perhaps simply to justify) the notable continued hesitancy of tutors to see students relying on purely online philosophy resources. One of online resources' great advantages, though, is the additional in-depth material available within an extra couple of mouse-clicks. This is not something short printed dictionaries can match for more than a handful of entries, but of course there are specialist printed introductory works of philosophy that offer precisely this depth of information within a given subject area. The Blackwell *Companion* series is probably the best-known philosophy brand in this area, each *Companion to…* offering a considerable depth of material, impressive author list and topic focus

that is difficult to find elsewhere in the print or online world. For example, the *Companion to Philosophy of Mind* (Guttenplan, S. ed., 1994, Oxford: Blackwell) features original articles by – amongst others – Chomsky, Churchland, Davidson, Dennett, Dretske, Fodor, Lewis, Peacocke, Putnam and Searle. You are very unlikely to find these names writing for a purely-online resource, as the traditional publishing model Blackwell follows is still superior financially and prestigiously than any current philosophy web resource. Not all *Companions* have a dictionary layout – many follow an encyclopaedic or 'collected essays' format instead – but all have such well-constructed, thoroughly-populated indexes that they can be used in pretty much the same way as a reference dictionary. They are therefore worth considering for your bookshelf, and at around £20-£25 for a new paperback, or under £10 for a second-hand paperback, it is feasible for students to accumulate a reasonable library of *Companions* through their study career. But balanced against the credible contributors' list, lucid and accessible prose, and relatively comprehensive subject coverage is of course the relative age of some of the books themselves. For example, a lot has happened in philosophy of mind since 1994, of which the relevant *Companion* must unavoidably remain silent. The *Companion to Ethics* is even more superannuated, still in its 1993 first edition. There is no website to keep these books updated in the fashion of the *REP*. The *Companion* series, for this reason alone, is perhaps not the bargain it at first appears. They can – most of the time – still provide a reasonably good starting point for an essay, if accompanied by an up-to-date university reading list or a well-structured web search. But they are fundamentally outclassed by the REP, with its continuing updates, equal lucidity and accessibility, and similarly high-profile contributors.

So there's a brief overview of the current situation. Print dictionaries offer both credibility and quick informational overviews, but they cannot offer regular updates, more than a couple of thousand definitional entries, or particularly great depth of coverage if you decide to take your reading further. Of the online offerings, the *SEP* is a functional, if somewhat uncomfortable, source of information. But if your university subscribes, the *REP* is more credible, more usable, and more valuable as a citation if trying to convince a traditionally-minded reader, due to its print foundation. Wikipedia is a good source of

understanding if cross-checked with other, properly-reviewed and edited sources, or working in a popular and well-known area of interest. But it can also lead to informational dead-ends, and even misrepresent issues if the writers' consensus is biased. The technology used is very good, though, and some sort of collective effort between the *SEP* and Wikipedia would be a tempting product. Google is the ultimate tool for finding information (or at least opinion and citation), but the problem is always assessing the credibility (or sometimes even authenticity) of what you are reading, and not being led astray during searches. My recommendations are therefore to keep a copy of Flew and Priest near your desk, to bookmark your university's access page for the *REP*, or spend some time learning to live with the *SEP* if your university won't find the money to give you access to the *REP*, and to keep an eye on the developing editorial policies (and personnel) of Wikipedia. I cannot see much of a future for the Blackwell *Companion* series in the face of the online *REP*, *SEP* and Wikipedia. And I certainly wouldn't rely on unchecked Googling for introductory information on philosophical topics. It's also worth checking out your department's own website for particular materials and reading-lists tailored to your course.

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Submitting a paper to the BJUP

Most papers we publish will be 2,000 – 2,500 words in length. However we will consider papers of any length. We would suggest that you limit your submission to a maximum of 5,000 words, though, since papers longer than this are often better dealt with as a series of shorter, tighter, more focused essays.

What we're looking for in papers that we publish is actually quite simple. We like work that is:

- carefully structured
- argumentative rather than merely descriptive
- clearly written
- knowledgeable about a given subject area
- offering a new argument or point of view
- not just written for area specialists

As a general tip, don't write with 'This is for a journal, I must be technical, formal and use lots of jargon to show I know my subject...' running through your mind. Explanation to others who may not have read the same authors as you, clear laying out of thoughts and a good, well-worked-out and -offered argument that says something a bit different and interesting: these are the key characteristics of the best papers we've received. Don't be afraid to tackle difficult or technical subjects – we're all keen philosophers here – but do so as carefully and clearly as possible and you have a much better chance of being published.

Most of our papers are analytic, but we are delighted to accept and publish good papers in both the analytic and continental traditions.

We accept papers electronically as Microsoft Word .DOC or Adobe Acrobat .PDF files. If you have problems sending in these formats, please contact us and we will try to find another mutually acceptable file format.

Papers should be submitted via email to **bjup@bups.org** and should be prepared for blind review with a separate cover sheet giving name, affiliation, contact details and paper title.

Don't worry about following the journal's house style before submission. The only requirement we have in advance is that you follow English spelling conventions. Any other requirements will be made clear if your paper is accepted for publication.

Please do not submit papers for a BUPS conference and the journal at the same time. We'll make suggestions for rewriting or restructuring papers we think could be publishable with a bit of work. Please do not re-submit a particular paper if it has been rejected for a BUPS conference or the BJUP.

Reviewing papers fairly is a difficult and time-consuming job – please give us a couple of weeks and do not submit your paper elsewhere in the meantime.

We run the journal on the minimum copyright requirements possible. By submitting work you license BUPS and the BJUP to publish your work in the print and electronic versions of our journal, and agree to credit the journal as the original point of publication if the paper is later published as part of a collection or book. That's all – you are not giving us copyright over your work, or granting a licence to reprint your work in the future. We're philosophers not lawyers, so we hope that's pretty clear and fair...

*(But they can't have closed *all* the cafes, surely?)*

Issue 1(3) - July 2006

Style and voice in Hume's philosophy
Chris Kassam
Do we have a natural right to our pre-tax income?
Laura Biron
Inverted / absent qualia and the problem of epiphenomenalism
Edward Grefenstette
Is there really a Cartesian circle?
Guy Bennett-Hunter
Can individuals be responsible for what is done by other members of their social group?
James Souter
Getting round to reading Wittgenstein: an introduction
Robert Charleston & Andrew Stephenson
Knowledge, scepticism and Wittgenstein's private language argument
Robin Dunford
Immediate concatenation in the Tractatus
Nick Tasker
Wittgenstein, therapy and changing your philosophical attitudes
Jessica Woolley

Plus: Book reviews, editorial, and event information

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